Betwixt and Between Liberalism and Islam:

The Creation of a Hybrid Moral Language as a

Strategy of Religious Resistance to

Competing Hegemonic Femininities in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the motivations of young women who decided to study abroad to escape the headscarf ban (1980-2010) in Turkish universities. After conducting semi-structured interviews of twelve Turkish women impacted by the ban, I argue that the women articulated a *hybrid moral language* culled together from Islamic principles and liberal values, as a strategy of resistance to competing hegemonic femininities in Turkey. One hegemonic notion of Turkish womanhood was characterized by the secular state and its rules promoting unveiled female students; the other espouses conservative Islamic mores for women. Today, a hybrid moral language allows my interlocutors to explain their past resistance, while helping them justify their current lifestyle choices and subjectivities. For some, the consequences of their resistance meant forgoing a kind of "happiness" limited to marriage, domestic partnership and motherhood, leading to an "unhappiness" that opens up new ways of living and being for pious Turkish women. Ultimately, this study claims that the creation of a hybrid moral language can underpin a successful religious resistance in secular environments.

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Introduction

> At the time I liked this guy. He wore a special dress, these green loose pants. It was a sign of being an Islamist, and I liked how he looked. But that day, he just walked up in front of me, and he didn't even look at me. He did nothing. This Islamist man didn't even wait for me. He didn't even support me, so I stopped liking him. If they didn't put the ban, I would be married to him I think. — Feride, 39[1]

Feride not only captures the emotional trauma of the day Turkish women with headscarves learned they must uncover their hair to enter school, she also alludes to a life trajectory the headscarf[2] ban had set in motion. Instead of taking off her headscarf to study, Feride quit school, enrolled in a distance learning program for her bachelor's degree, while her family saved up for her master's education in Malaysia. Unfortunately, upon returning she found that neither of her degrees would be accredited in Turkey, though by then the headscarf ban had been lifted. Today, still unmarried, she helps manage her family's furniture design business in the central Anatolian city of Konya, while nursing dreams of a PhD in Europe. "I feel like I'm just one person and the whole state is in front of me shaking their hand saying stop," she says.

This period in Feride's life has been referred to as the headscarf ban in Turkey or başörtüsü/türban yasağı. It was introduced in universities and public institutions after the 1980 coup d'état, strengthened after the so-called post-modern coup in 1997, and gradually revoked by 2010. The ban was not exactly de jure policy, but was de facto implemented by university rectors and by Turkey's Council of Higher Education. While some public schools never implemented the ban, for example Boğaziçi University, others like Istanbul University had enforced it through "persuasion rooms" (private rooms persuading women to remove their headscarf), dismissals from classes and examinations, even expulsions (Elver 2012, 21). The piecemeal, arbitrary nature of the

[1] Interviewed April 30, 2018

[2] In this analysis, I will refer to "headscarf", "veil", "veiling", and "covering" interchangeably.

ban's enforcement created a climate of uncertainty for veiled students, persuading some to use their family's financial resources to complete their university education abroad.

By speaking to Turkish women in Feride's position, women who studied abroad to circumvent the ban, I wanted to understand their choice to not only confront the state, but also pursue education on their own terms: Is their decision to study abroad, instead of complying with the dress code, an act of resistance in itself? Or, does their decision point more to the deeply embedded conservative traditions that took precedence over the demands of the secular state? More importantly, what kind of self is constituted in this decision to study abroad, and as a result, how is a political subject produced vis-a-vis the state? I believe the link between resistance, adherence to norms and the creation of political subjects can shed light on the Enlightenment notions of agency, choice and free will.

In the West, the role of women in Islam has often been injected into debates concerning the assimilation and integration of Muslim minority communities, with some going so far as to suggest that these women need to be "saved" or "liberated" from the patriarchal structures found within the faith itself (Abu-Lughod 2013). Moreover, the headscarf as a symbol of a majority's anxieties or a minority's resistance in Western contexts is complicated by the histories of those countries from which the headscarf originates. A Muslim woman who chooses to cover her head has found herself in the middle of legal debates concerning secularism, the focus of political rhetoric about the viability of Islam in non-Muslim societies, a barometer of a Muslim country's supposed modernization, not to mention fodder for feminists to discuss the true nature of female agency and emancipation. My goal is not to provide, or even attempt an answer to these issues the headscarf often ignites. Instead, I want to understand how a certain practice (in this case veiling) persists in the face of opposition and rules designed to discourage that practice.

In short, this study is about religious resistance informed by political circumstances—its shape, justifications and consequences. Instead of discussing the headscarf's symbolism across the Middle East (Ahmed 2001; El Guindi 1999), or analyzing its legal and political compatibility with Western liberalism (Bowen 2010; Elver 2012; Joppke 2009; and Scott 2007), I am more interested in the construction of a moral language that justifies one's agency to wear the headscarf within a single majority Muslim society (such as Turkey), and how such language can articulate a religious resistance to competing hegemonic notions of femininity and womanhood found in the intersection of conservative Islamic thought and liberal secularism. I believe this has profound implications for all manner of practices that rely on a hybrid way of being, which often confuses and confounds, as much as it frees and emancipates.

In the Turkish context, the headscarf ban has been studied for symbolizing the secular-Islamist divide, with empirical cases looking at the state's changing discourse, the memories of discrimination, even its psychological effects on the women (Göle 1997; Navaro-Yashin 2002; and Özyürek 2006). This study will fill the empirical gap in the existing literature with interviews of women who studied abroad during the headscarf ban in Turkey, a phenomenon that has yet to be studied on its own. The specific characteristics of these women, veiled with access to higher education abroad, enables an analysis of the headscarf debate in Turkey as it relates to female empowerment and its commensurability with religious tradition. Theoretically, this study aims to add to the discussion of how elements of resistance and social reproduction connect with gendered practices, such as Islamic veiling, and how this produces unique political subjects and subjectivities.

To that end, I interviewed twelve women (ten in English and two in Turkish) who chose to study abroad during the headscarf ban in universities, instead of uncovering their hair, or opting to

forgo an education altogether. The women were educated in Hungary (4), Malaysia (3), the United States (2), Austria (1), Bosnia (1) and Northern Cyprus (1); most received bachelor's degrees, some master's, in sociology, communications, engineering and medicine. The women ranged from ages 28-42 (**Appendix I**). The interviews lasted from one-two hours, delving into why and how the women made their choice to study abroad, specifically the role that family and faith played. I also explored the importance of education for these women, and the ways in which living abroad had changed their outlook and chances in life.

Most interviews took place in coffee shops in Istanbul (four took place over the phone). One of the cafes stood out: EspressoLab in the heart of old Constantinople, now known as Fatih, a district cut by Byzantine walls. In many ways, EspressoLab captures the hybrid sentiments conveyed by my interlocutors. The cafe's track lighting and wooden panels provided a hipster aesthetic to the patrons clad in tight jeans, headscarves and chador, as bearded and pierced barristas served up espresso shots and chilled coffee. Downstairs, I found two prayer rooms separated by gender and a room for ablutions.

When I first started this project, I figured that the women who had the opportunity to study abroad where those necessarily of means. After all, studying in Europe or the United States, places with high exchange rates to the Turkish lira, or in far off countries like Malaysia, must require substantial family investment. What I found instead were women from across the socio-economic spectrum: Some women had parents who had only completed primary school, whereas one woman could count both parents as university graduates; another woman's family owned property in one of Istanbul's most expensive expat districts, while one family sold nearly everything they owned. Depending on the resources available to them, most of the women searched for scholarships, borrowed money from family and friends, and had parents willing to sell properties and assets to

supplement their daughters' education. Moreover, I expected the women to be completely supportive of the current AKP government and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, since he is credited with lifting the ban. Instead, I found political opinions as wide ranging as a self-described Marxist, Muslim feminist who is deeply critical of the government to classical liberals who find the present situation troubling and unfortunate. Few did indicate direct support for the current regime, and most women attribute the ban's end to the efforts of the AKP government. Contrary to prevailing attitudes and anecdotes about the headscarf and veiling culture, my interlocutors all stressed that it was their choice to veil, and that they were not pressured by their families to continue covering their hair; most all women mentioned that it was their "freedom" and "right" to wear the headscarf. The women's fathers emerged as a key source of support and encouragement for their decision to leave the country in pursuit of education.

One of the limitations of this study is its emphasis on Istanbul; a broader geographical survey would be able to pick up on differences in life trajectories, especially in terms of the opportunities afforded to those who live in urban settings versus rural areas. Istanbul as the main metropole of the country has its distinct advantages as an economic and cultural hub, which could have been determined in relation to other Turkish cities. Moreover, language proved to be an illuminating hindrance — illuminating in that by communicating with women who are fluent in English, I was able to get a sense of how they expressed themselves in a language they learned and internalized after their decision to go abroad. Perhaps it was a hindrance because there might have been some aspects of tradition and specific religious concepts that I may have been unable to fully grasp in English; though, the women did occasionally outline certain notions in Turkish when they felt that English fell short of capturing what they truly meant.

In the process, I was able trace and analyze their words with the following themes: (1) The shifting notions of secularism in Turkey (2) The question of feminism with respect to the headscarf and (3) Religious resistance and its consequences. I argue that these women use a *hybrid moral language*, one that bridges liberal principles with Islamic tenets, as a strategy to justify their religious resistance to rules designed to restrict their access to higher education and ultimately, careers. As educated, financially independent pious women, this hybridity continues to influence their life choices and values.

Secularism in the Turkish Context: Laïcité versus Freedom of Religion

In order to contextualize the social and political environment within which the women made their decision to study abroad, I feel it is necessary to provide a brief overview about state secularism, the vision of femininity and womanhood it espoused, and how this shifted overtime with the rise of the current AKP government. Doing so, I hope, will provide the historical backdrop for my interlocutors and put into relief their choice to pursue higher education while wearing the headscarf.

The beginning of this analysis leads to the very beginning of the Turkish Republic itself. Modern Turkey was established in 1923, marked by the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. In 1924, the Turkish National Assembly abolished the Islamic caliphate under the leadership of the country's founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. His followers, known as Kemalists, staunchly uphold his legacy of secularism, or laiklik (modeled after the French laïcité), which saw the establishment of a state body to govern religion and religious life (Diyanet), the transition from a Persian-Arabic script to a Latin alphabet, a ban of the fez (an Ottoman era hat worn by men), the transition from the lunar calendar and clock to the Gregorian calendar and solar clock, alongside a discouragement

of beards, chadors and headscarves in public life. Women, their status and image in society, had been foundational to the newly established nation-state along secularist principles, as Nilüfer Göle describes:

> The representatives of this modern life appeared in photographs as unveiled women, women in athletic competitions, women pilots, women professionals, and women with men, both in European clothing. Even the body language and the body posture of the women portrayed were different from what they had been before the reforms. Advertisements, cartoons and novels depicted women in their fashionable shortcut hairstyles, Western style dresses, using new consumer products, and posing with their husbands in homes decorated with Western style furniture, and in public places such as theatres, restaurants, tea-rooms and streets (Göle 1997, 51).

While changes in language signaled a new way of speaking, reading and writing, women "became the primary conveyors of this new way of living" (ibid). The evolution of female identity in public life — unveiled, mingling with the opposite sex, working as civil servants — demonstrated the principles of state secularism, of which the Turkish military would serve as its primary defender.

During the 1980 coup d'état, Turkey's generals were seen to step in to prevent the chaos stemming from violence between leftists and right-wing nationalists, jailing tens of thousands, disbanding political parties and associations, with activists and students forcibly disappeared (Göle 1997, 47). Political Islam was also seen as a national threat with the country's university campuses serving as a primary outlet for such ideologies (ibid., 233). Turkey's Higher Education Council was established to further regulate the activities of faculty and students, and ultimately enforce the state-military establishment's preferences (ibid., 236; Elver 2012, 17). These included a decree that banned mustaches and beards for male students and faculty, and restrictions on head coverings for females (ibid).

Feyza, a 42-year-old doctor in Istanbul who went to medical school in Hungary during the headscarf ban, explained her feelings about what modernization meant, especially for Turkey's women:

> In Turkey, modernization went through clothes, behaviors, not like research, or the sciences. Modernization, it was kind of a show. Even if you cannot read, or are not educated, if you uncover your head, or wear European clothes, you became modern. You became French. This type of modernization was very wrong. Of course, modernization was needed. I'm not totally against it.[3]

For Feyza, who started an NGO and traveled to New York to attend a UN summit on women, equating modernity with one's appearance seemed unrealistic and unfair. Her experience points to the general resentment I sensed from the women I spoke with, who openly conveyed their dismay and disapproval for the top-down modernization efforts of the Turkish state in the name of secularism. These women felt slighted at the idea that for all their education and qualifications, as working women with financial independence, some in society still saw them as "backward" or not modern enough given the legacy of laiklik. This focus on physical appearance as possibly presenting one's ethics and beliefs came up again and again in our conversations, as the women at once stressed they pursued a life of their choice no matter their headscarf, while also mentioning its necessity to the preservation of their Islamic identity and faith:

> When you learn something, you want to apply it. We know that in the Quran, the holy book for Islam, there's a sentence: cover from your head to your shoulders. So we believe that it's a headscarf. It's a total belief. I started to cover my head when I was 15. I remember my parents saying it's too early, you don't have to do it now. But I wanted to do it. I believed something, and I wanted to live it. — Büşra, 35, a computer engineer who studied in Northern Cyprus during the ban[4]

While it is tempting for me to work within the binary of Kemalist opposition to the headscarf versus Islamist support for it, the history of the secularist state co-opting religion and using Islamic language and symbols complicates the headscarf issue in particular (Akan 2017; Gurbuz 2009; Göle 1997; Navaro-Yashin 2002; and Özyürek 2006). As Mustafa Gurbuz notes in his history of the headscarf ban in Turkey, the state wanted to "control religious discourse in order

[3] Interviewed May 7, 2018
[4] Interviewed May 3, 2018

to limit the effectiveness of Islamic groups' voices in civil society" (244). The secular-military establishment after the 1980 coup did not simply want to remove or reject Islam (243). Instead, it was more preoccupied in thwarting both leftist groups and political Islamists, defining the former as anti-religion and the latter as religious radicals, and in the process "monopolizing Turkish Islamic identity" (ibid). The headscarf ban in this light cannot be seen as a mere casualty of identity politics between secularists and Islamists, but rather as the state's "attempt to establish a hegemonic control" over religion (234). Murat Akan also establishes this link between Kemalist secularists within the military junta and their attempts to foster a kind of "civil religion" that would preserve Turkish society (2017). He mentions that after the 1980 coup d'état, the military had "constitutionalized compulsory Sunni religion courses in the public school curriculum and redefined the constitutional role of state salaried imams as serving national solidarity" (ibid., 135). While the coup, as Akan claims, "cleared the ground of leftist movements and handed society over to Islamist movements to mobilize" (136).

At the same time, women who chose to cover were forced to navigate an ever-changing legal and political environment. To give a sense of their precarious place as university students, I provide a brief rundown of the various rules and regulations designed to address the headscarf.

To start, Turkey's Ministry of National Education in 1981 released its first rules on dress code in schools, stating that female students must exhibit "clean, neat, ironed, plain clothes; plain and no high heeled shoes and boots; head uncovered, hair combed flat with a topknot, no headscarves to be worn while in the building of the institution" (Official Gazette, 7 December 1981, Issue 17537 cited in Headscarf Ban and Discrimination: Professional Headscarved Women in the Labor Market 2011, 33). In 1982, Turkey's Ministry of Higher Education followed suit, also declaring that female students "have their heads uncovered and will not wear a headscarf" in

universities. (Higher Education Council, Circular Order No. 7327, cited in Headscarf Ban and Discrimination: Professional Headscarved Women in the Labor Market 2011, 34). But in the face of student pressure, the Council by 1984 adopted a motion allowing for what it called a modern "türban" (Higher Education Council, Circular Order No. 84.15.527 cited in Headscarf Ban and Discrimination: Professional Headscarved Women in the Labor Market 2011, 34). Hilal Elver considers "türban" to be an invented word, the idea being that it is a fashion statement instead of a political symbol or a religious practice, and as such, could be allowed in universities (Elver 2012, 17). From 1982-1987, a period of relative stability for women in headscarves followed, with see-sawing orders issued by Turkey's Higher Education Council that would at once mandate "modern" dress code, while allowing for the covering of the hair and neck because of religious beliefs. In 1988, parliament also passed a law on the Higher Education Council that would allow for the "türban" and the "headscarf" (ibid., 35), but the following year, Turkey's Constitutional Court would repeal the provision.

This prompted parliament to enact a 1990 law (known as Article 17 in the laws governing Turkey's Higher Education Council), declaring that there will be "no dress code so long as students do not wear outfits that are not antithetical to the laws enacted" (ibid). The Constitutional Court re-interpreted Article 17 in 1992, removing the provision that permitted headscarves for religious reasons. In short, nearly a decade of indecisiveness on the headscarf issue followed, with multiple institutions — Turkey's higher education body, its courts and parliament — providing their own interpretations and prescriptions, while jeopardizing the university prospects of women who chose to wear the headscarf.

Following the "soft" or post-modern coup in 1997[5], the headscarf ban was more strictly enforced and 10,000 female students lost their places in universities, which caused many to continue their education abroad or wear wigs while they were at a Turkish university (Gurbuz, 237). As a result of the "soft" coup, the National Security Council had briefed universities and judiciaries about the alleged rise of Islamic fundamentalism, claiming that a sign of this danger was the headscarf in universities and public institutions (Elver 2012, 19). As Gurbuz notes, "university authorities identified the students who insisted on attending classes with their scarves by marking 'T' signs next to their names. The T's indicated that the students were the 'Türban girls'" (ibid). The use of the word türban should be noted, since it is distinct from another Turkish word for the headscarf, başörtüsü. The authorities designating the 'T' girls were essentially exercising their preferences against women who wore certain types of covering that was allegedly different from a more pastoral, Anatolian headscarf. Where once türban had been defined so as to allow covered women in universities, by the 90s, it had emerged as a boogeyman which symbolized an ascendant political Islam (Elver 2012, 17). The distinction gained "ideological meaning" with türban used by secularists and başörtüsü used by Islamists (ibid). Most of the women I spoke to where either in high school during this period or in the middle of university — many of their educations abruptly ended with the 1997 post-modern coup.

The Politics of Secularism in Turkey

Talal Asad's ideas on how secularism emerged as a precondition for modernity helps situate my study in a broader discussion of how religion enters the public sphere and interacts with

[5] It was called the "post-modern coup" because the military threatened to intervene, but did not actually do so because the elected Islamists agreed to step down as per the military's demands.

politics. For Asad, religion cannot be considered exclusively as a private matter to be separate from the public (Asad 2003, 185). In the case of my interlocutors and their struggles with the headscarf ban, his thinking is prescient, as he states that "a religion that enters political debate on its own terms may on the contrary have to threaten the authority of existing assumptions" (ibid). In a similar vein, the women who wanted to enter universities with their headscarves entered a political debate by challenging the Kemalist secular order by their very presence and visibility, of which the consequences were sometimes violent. For instance, a 2003 Amnesty International report detailed the police crackdown on students protesting the imposition of the ban at Inönü University, citing "excessive force", "beatings with truncheons", and "more than two hundred individuals…detained during and after this demonstration" (Amnesty International 2003). Miray, 33, an academic English instructor in Istanbul who studied in the United States during the headscarf ban, mentioned the beginning of her political activism:

> There was police in front of my school. Imagine, we were 16, 17 [years old] maximum, and the police is waiting in front of the school just for the purpose of blocking students from entering high school. That was ridiculous. Then our parents came with us, and we basically spent like four months, the whole spring semester, staying out of school, just waiting in the street, in front of the gate…We went to Ankara [the capital]. We spoke to representatives. We went to the National Assembly. Lots of campaigns, writing letters, petitions. So eventually they did let us in. In summer time, they opened a 15 day course for us, a condensed study. They basically made us pass, so we thankfully didn't lose that year. But I was really tired at the time…I decided myself to discontinue school because of the ban. [6]

What Miray describes could represent the Habermasian notion of the public sphere within democratic discourse, where "secular and religious citizens stand in complementary relation…springing from the soil of civil society and developing through the informal communication networks of the public sphere" (Habermas 2011, 27). However romantic the

[6] Interviewed April 3, 2018

Habermasian idea that secular and religious citizens of a polity come together to debate, discuss and bargain, the reality is that the winner-take-all style of Turkish politics has neutered this notion of the public sphere. With the AKP's rise to power in 2002, calls for the headscarf ban to be repealed were finally realized through a legislative motion in 2010, and through subsequent court rulings (Head 2010). In 2016, the Turkish military, known as the bastion of state secularism and Kemalist principles, underwent a series of purges after a failed coup attempt, and female recruits with headscarves were allowed to serve for the first time (Sengupta 2017). It is a remarkably brisk transition, because as recently as the late 2000s, the attire of officers' wives and daughters was strictly monitored, as those officers whose wives wore headscarves were reprimanded, even forced to resign or retire (Arik 2015).

In the past decade, as the AKP and its conservative ideology have crept into virtually all aspects of public life, the number of religious schools (Yeginsu 2014) and taxes on alcohol (Gumrukcu and Barut, 2017) have increased dramatically; muftis (religious clerics) have been given the authority to officiate marriages (Bozarslan 2017); and several female judges, ministers and parliamentarians wearing headscarves have taken office, leading the Kemalist old guard to declare state secularism to be on life support. A series of incidents where women were verbally and physically attacked for their choice of clothing have spawned protests and a movement called Kıyafetime Karışma, Don't Mess with My Clothing (Sezer 2017). In keeping with the state's history of openly promoting particular ideals of the female form, President Erdoğan stated that women without children were "deficient", "incomplete", and "denying their femininity" (Broomfield 2016). By cataloguing the rapid speed with which the AKP managed to implement its religious preferences and policies, Murat Akan argues that the party did not achieve a liberal opening within the Turkish Republic, but rather ruled through the law of majorities where the party

failed to defer to constitutional principles or human rights, relying on "made-up procedures or the violation of existing procedures that aimed to enhance the party's hegemony" (Akan 2017, 276).

Banu, 31, studied abroad in Malaysia and now works as a media professional in the Gulf; she reflected on the state of affairs brought about by the headscarf ban, as well as the rising authoritarianism of the government:

> By the way, if you bring Islam into politics, it only harms the religion, because politicians are lying all the time. So people, in the society, not everyone is intellectual enough to understand. That's why I support secularism. It means you don't involve religion in politics. I wish secularism would mean justice for everyone, freedom. Give my freedom to practice my religion in my own way, independently…Don't tell me what to do or not do. Just rule us equally. [7]

Feyza also laments the winner-take-all style of Turkish politics, mentioning the current political environment in universities:

> Everything can be possible in Turkey. Now there are students expelled from university because of their ideas and ideologies. They are now in jail. At the moment, I don't approve of the Turkish state's application on freedom of speech, a lot of basic rights. One day, it could also turn back to women who wear the headscarf. This is the main problem. Fights between politicians and political ideologies shouldn't involve the basic rights of normal people. Of course, there is a race between parties, between ideologies. It could happen in every country. But this fight should not affect basic human rights. But we cannot have consensus on this in Turkey. I don't know why. I'm so angry at this government as well. It's crazy. I cannot understand, and I'm so nervous about it. It's very bad for Turkey. [8]

Both women point to the differences in opinion that exist among my interlocutors who immensely benefitted from the AKP government's efforts to lift the headscarf ban and normalize the acceptance of covered women in public life. By providing the historical context for Turkey's state secularism, alongside the testimony of my interlocutors, I argue that the eventual repeal of the headscarf ban signaled a shift from laïcité to a model based more on the Anglo-American concept of religious freedom. The consequences of which were the formation of a hybrid moral

[7] Interviewed April 16, 2018
[8] Interviewed May 7, 2018

language culled together both from Islam and liberalism, which my interlocutors used to resist not only the state's secularism, but also conservative strictures for women. The women I met represent this resistance, because their decision to study abroad in the face of the headscarf ban marked them simultaneously against laiklik, and against patriarchal religious codes. But before I touch upon the nature of this resistance, I will discuss current feminist debates concerning the headscarf, and what my case contributes to the existing body of literature on female agency and choice in the face of ostensibly conservative practices.

Feminist Discourses on Islamic Veiling

To further analyze the contours of the debate surrounding the headscarf and the women who choose to wear them, I will look at how feminist thought has dealt with religious practices. For example, by asking "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?" Susan Moller Okin argues that the demands for equality among the sexes often cannot withstand the patriarchal norms and practices of most all religions and non-Western cultures. Speaking from the vantage point of minority rights in liberal polities, she claims that feminism, which she partly defines as the "belief that women should not be disadvantaged by their sex", cannot and should not accommodate beliefs and rituals that compromise on this fundamental tenet (Okin 1999, 10). In doing so, she accuses the world's religions, including those of the Abrahamic tradition of not passing this test, and thus these religions should be held to closer scrutiny with respect to the principles of sex equality. In her line of reasoning, practices such as polygamy, genital cutting and honor killings are presented alongside the veil, as she claims that equal treatment is not applied to both men and women in these instances. In response to Okin's demands, Azizah Y. Al-Hibri writes: "A true feminist call to reform in Muslim countries or among Muslim immigrants must respect their religious and cultural sentiments, while recognizing the sanctity of the first and flexibility of the second" (Al-

Hibri 1999, 43). In a similar vein, Lila Abu-Lughod writes in "Do Muslim Women Need Saving?" that Western feminists all too often "presume that just because Muslim women dress in a certain way, they are not agentic individuals or cannot speak for themselves" (Abu-Lughod 2013, 9).

What emerges is a debate as tried and true as Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" where a nameless, doubly oppressed woman is at once oppressed by the patriarchal structures of her own society, and also oppressed by the essentializing, otherizing, not to mention an imperializing force, which in its liberal variant sees her liberation as an important affirmation of its own ideology (Spivak 1987). My goal is not to offer my own salvo in this debate, but rather to present its boundaries as the scaffolding for the justifications the women I spoke with provided for studying abroad. For them, their choices during the headscarf ban negotiated between the norms of the secular state, but also the conservative traditions rooted in Islam that require male companions for women traveling long distances alone. Similar to Okin's prescription that young women be "fully represented in negotiations about group rights" (Okin 1999, 24), Banu reflects on her religious reasoning for pursuing a career:

> So I was asking, if God created me, why would he want me to have that life? At the same time in Prophet's hadith (teachings), working is a big thing in Islam. So my God asks me to work. Work. I asked my father. I also asked some cousins, who are very religious, and they are against women working outside. I see their suffering. Two of them got married at early ages. They didn't go to school. Their husbands cheat on them, and they have no option to go anywhere. They have no money. They have no qualifications. [9]

Banu not only recognizes the "suffering" of her cousins who adhered to strict gender roles that required dependence on men, she offers a religious justification for her circumvention of societal expectations. Interestingly, one of the women I spoke with mentioned that her mother was discouraged from studying nursing at the behest of her brother, and another recalled how her mother was dissuaded by her father from pursuing vocational training. A generation later, the

[9] Interviewed April 16, 2018

daughters of these women would pursue careers in the medical field: after studying abroad in Hungary, one became a physical therapist and the other a doctor. The obstacle of the headscarf ban, along with the changing attitudes of their families, had enabled these women to forge a path of their own, distinct from the rules of the secular state and their family's traditional mores.

It is also important to consider the wide-ranging views offered by secular segments of society, some of whom could not quite believe that the women decided to wear headscarves of their own volition. At the time, newspaper columnists aligned with the ruling center left party, the CHP, often argued that the young women were pawns in a political game waged by Islamists to establish their own hegemony. Mine G. Kirikkanat, a columnist for *Radikal*, writes: "Can your bans be a concept for freedom? By covering your heads and covering your faces, aren't you also being a prohibitionist? Who is the one for freedom? And who is the one for prohibition?…By saying 'freedom', must democracy be applied to enforce your bans?" (Kirikkanat 1998). The columnist essentially touches upon Okin's argument: can practices that prescribe certain behaviors for women really be considered freedom? At the heart of the headscarf ban, was the issue of what democracy should allow in terms of pluralistic notions of religious faith and practice, especially when it comes to women. To extend this analogy further, Muazzez Ilmiye Çığ, a sumerologist wrote in *Cumhurriyet*:

> In Sumeria, more than 5,000 years ago, covering your head was a symbol of being a prostitute of the temple; in continuation of this, it is written in the Quran that you will go to heaven if you cover, or go to hell if you don't cover; why isn't this explained to these youth? Why do they allow the boys to mess with their clothes? Apart from this, what else could they be thinking? (Çığ 1998).

By openly questioning the sanctity of the headscarf, and by providing historical proof of its lineage, Çığ is essentially casting the headscarf as an ancient, pre-Islamic tradition that has no place in modern society, while also casting doubt on its insertion in the Quran. Çığ renders the

practice as culturally borrowed and reified over time, as opposed to a divine ordinance from God. She begins her article by claiming that the Islamists, "For political purposes, by giving money to our girls and women to cover their heads, they are calling this covering a symbol of Islam. The covered ones who abide by this and classify this according to a sect, they call this democracy" (ibid). The headscarf, Çığ emphatically argues, does not have legitimacy within the domains of both Islam and democracy. By her criteria, the claims of the women who want to wear headscarves in universities should be rejected.

The concept of hegemonic femininities is quite helpful in deconstructing the competing notions of freedom and womanhood offered by the secular columnists in favor of the ban to the students opposed. As Mimi Schippers writes: "Hegemonic femininity consists of the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the position of men and the subordination of women" (Schippers 2007, 94). Turkey's Higher Educational Council, under the principles of state secularism, essentially exercised its own version of hegemonic femininity in ruling that female students could not wear headscarves. The headscarf ban was a series of rules and codes designed and implemented by men, and often enforced by secular women themselves. In a sense, it was similar to the femininity espoused by the early Republican period that Nilüfer Göle describes, where the imagery of unveiled women mixing with men was an important symbol for the new power structure established in the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire. This vision starkly contrasted with the homebound, uneducated pious woman imaginary often attributed to conservative Muslims, of which secular women were afraid might become their fate if Islamist men were to subsume their secular counterparts (Navaro-Yashin 2002; Özyürek 2006). I argue that

these hegemonic femininities clashed with the headscarf ban, where the women affected were forced to decide how to place themselves within this competition.

Ayça, a 36-year old media professional in Istanbul, describes the sense of opportunity that emerged with the headscarf ban, an opportunity that some of her friends had passed up:

> If this hijab ban did not happen in Turkey, I don't think I will ever travel abroad, or to be determined that much. It definitely changed my life. It made me who I am today…in the end, I achieved what I had wanted. But there are many friends who got married, some of them got divorced. Some of them, some of my friends, they are still students at an open university, because they are married with kids. They can only be online and take exams and study at home, that sort of thing. All of them, something is still left in their heart. They are trying to fulfill something. There is something empty. That's why I feel lucky that I got this opportunity and achieved my dreams. But there are so many others. Their lives have changed because of this, and maybe not in the way they wanted. [10]

Ayça, a single mother, describes her unconventional path that not only put her at odds with the state's rules for female students, but also pitted her against her friends who had chosen a more traditional route in life. In this sense, Ayça had defied the hegemonic femininities before her by her simple cause of finding a way to get educated while wearing her headscarf. Though, it is still important to understand: Is Ayça's decision merely reproducing and reifying one aspect of hegemonic femininity, one informed by Islamic rules and practices that prize modesty in the form of covering one's hair?

To help answer this question, the idea of standpoint theory helps us frame feminist debates around the headscarf. The principle concern of the theory as Sandra Harding describes, is that knowledge is socially-situated, and with this situated-ness each "oppressed group can learn to identify its distinctive opportunities to turn an oppressive feature of the group's conditions into a source of critical insight about how the dominant society thinks and is structured" (Harding 2004, 7). With this in mind, if we are to construct an understanding of any given society, especially

[10] Interviewed April 27, 2018

through a feminist sociology of knowledge (Oakley 2000), it is incumbent upon us to understand the myriad ways in which patriarchy is produced and presents itself. I believe that it is not enough to simply claim that multiculturalism is good or bad for women, or that the headscarf is an oppressive or liberating piece of cloth, but rather it is more useful to look at how a practice is understood, justified and presented. In short, how does the practice turn political? And what is the standpoint from which the women claim their right to follow a certain practice in public? What follows is an analysis of this standpoint, which I argue is grounded in a moral language that borrows from Islamic tradition and liberalism, and creates a hybrid logic that provides the basis for these women's resistance. This has significant implications for how the self, one's life trajectory, even personal goals and individual ambitions, can comprise a broader resistance to existing power structures.

Religious or Political Resistance?

Do the women represent an instance of religious or political resistance, and does the distinction even matter? In a reversal of Foucault's "where there is power there is resistance" (Foucault 1990, 95), Lila Abu-Lughod calls for the use of "resistance as a diagnostic of power" (Abu-Lughod 1990, 42). Resistance can be individual, uncoordinated acts of subversion of the kind she sees in young Bedouin women in Egypt, similar to the sort of small-scale resistance that need not directly advocate for the overthrow of a political system or its authorities as James Scott suggests in his analysis of peasant resistance (Scott 1987). In a similar vein, the women's choice to study abroad to escape the headscarf ban in Turkey points to the power of the state to prescribe and promote a specific form of acceptable femininity in the public sphere, one in line with the state's interpretation of secularism. By studying abroad, I argue, the young women had circumvented the power of the state by putting up an uncoordinated, survivalist resistance

informed by their faith. For instance Kumru, a practicing family physician, describes the self-confidence she gained from her decision. “The simplest thing is that I would never have studied abroad or left the country if it was not for this ban,” she says. “There were countless people who helped me. I met so many different kinds of people from different cultures. I became open-minded. I became brave. This struggle became my resistance, and for that I am stronger today.” To use resistance as a diagnostic of power, Kumru’s understanding of her resistance points to a state power that tried circumscribing the role of women who wore the headscarf, which leads me to wonder: why was this a potent combination for the state to begin with?

The work of Saba Mahmood allows me to deconstruct this case by analyzing how two competing visions of the self came into conflict with the headscarf ban in universities: a self ethically formed by Islamic practices such as veiling, and a liberal self that maintains a distance between one’s “real desires and obligatory social conventions” (Mahmood 2003, 857). Mahmood also points to the varying possibilities of politics that emerge from this conflict, particularly in conservative societies where submission to an authority or adherence to social custom can be seen as necessary for the self's realization (ibid). With respect to Islamic practices she writes, “outward bodily gestures and acts (such as salat or wearing the veil) are an indispensable aspect of the pious self in two senses: first in the sense that the self can acquire its particular form only through the performance of the precise bodily enactments; and second in the sense that the prescribed bodily forms are the necessary attributes of the self” (Mahmood 2003, 855). For those women who chose to continue wearing the headscarf despite the ban in universities, one can understand how central the practice of veiling is to the realization of one’s Islamic faith, since as Mahmood points out, the veil is not only necessary for forming the self, but is interpreted as an essential attribute of the self. From this standpoint, the outward gesture of veiling cannot be separated from one’s inner faith.

Miray notes this conflict when reflecting on how the ban had enabled her to assess the headscarf's importance to her faith:

> Of course it has a spiritual aspect but it's not only limited to your house or God. It also has a social aspect. It organizes your dealings with people, all kinds of relationships with nature, and other human beings. I came to the conclusion that it's not worth it. I said if I want to be a well educated person I can do it in other ways. But what matters more is my religious status. [11]

Zümrüt echoes a similar sentiment in trying to explain how central the ethic of covering is to her inner faith, saying: "Even when we drink water, we have rules. I have to apply the same rules in my home and outside in society. There's no understanding of separation from my religion and the way I live outside." [12]

I believe that the headscarf ban and its impact on women like Miray and Zümrüt interrogates Mahmood's notion of ethical self-formation not only from a traditionalist religious standpoint, but also one that comes into open conflict with a secular institution. My case presents a specific instance of when the state wants to govern subjects split between the public and private, where religion is relegated to the private sphere, while Miray and Zümrüt refuse to abide by this separation. I claim that when the secular idea of the self competes with an alternate vision of the self ethically formed by Islamic practices, such a bifurcation between public and private faith cannot exist, and an alternate way must be found to reconcile these competing demands. For Miray and Zümrüt, the answer was studying abroad, which represented the ability to pursue education and at the same, wear one's headscarf. On this, Mahmood writes: "The point I want to stress is that the conceptual articulation of bodily behavior in relation to oneself and others differs in these two imaginaries and, by extension, the implications for power and authority vary as well" (ibid).

[11] Interviewed April 3, 2018
[12] Interviewed May 2, 2018

In light of Miray's and Zümrüt's decision, what happens when a religious norm, such as veiling, attempts to breach a space defined as secular, like a university? How is the political produced by this interaction? And what is the nature of this resistance?

Religious Resistance as a Political Act by Political Subjects

I believe the answer lies in part with Judith Butler's idea of the production of political subjects through exclusionary juridical practices (Butler 1990, 4). The interplay of the juridical and productive is key here, because I interpret the headscarf ban to produce pious covered women as political subjects that previously had not been defined. Like for Miray, the ban had raised her consciousness on the importance of the headscarf and emphasized its meaning:

> You also start questioning hijab itself. I started wearing it in middle school as a uniform [in a religious school]. It wasn't a must. It was optional. I was okay with wearing it, but I remember it took me awhile until I fully wore it. There was no force from my parents. I was willing; it was just fine. Maybe because of this I didn't really question it. I had no confrontation in my society, in my environment. Then, when we were asked to remove it [headscarf], I questioned it. Like, how necessary is this? What is it worth? I realized it was much more important than I thought. That was my conclusion. Somebody else may come to a different conclusion, like why am I wearing it in the first place? Maybe I should remove it? My justification is that if they are forcing us this much to remove it, this is not simply a piece of cloth. This has a deeper meaning. Because why? It doesn't stop me from getting an education. Like we're just sitting in the classroom wearing a headscarf, or not wearing it. [She points to me]. You are wearing it on your neck. I'm wearing it on my head. What's the difference? It shouldn't matter. But now that they say that it matters, I say yes it does matter. [13]

While she de-emphasized the importance of the headscarf itself, Feride also discussed how the very definition of a boundary had invited her transgression:

> When I really think about it the problem was not the headscarf. Nobody can dictate to me what I can wear. I'm a woman. This is another part of being a feminist. If they asked me to where red, I wouldn't wear red. This is my body. This is my decision. If you're a man

[13] Interviewed April 3, 2018

> you cannot make any decision about my body. Now, I would probably listen [she laughs]. But at that time I was very rebellious. [14]

What both Miray and Feride describe is how the state, in outlining and codifying the use of the headscarf, had inadvertently emphasized its relevance to their identity and their sense of self. Here, Judith Butler's concept of the juridical system of power is key, which she defines as power that seeks to "regulate political life in purely negative terms—that is, through the limitation, prohibition, regulation, control, and even 'protection' of individuals related to that political structure through the contingent and retractable operation of choice" (Butler 1990, 4). Within this framework, I interpret the headscarf ban in universities as a form of juridical power that attempted to restrict and regulate female dress in accordance with the principles of state secularism, under which the veil had no place in public life. Despite the ban's de facto, rather than de jure enforcement, the exclusion underlines a specific restriction and regulation representative of a juridical system of power, as it was exercised and interpreted by state authorities and their emissaries in higher education.

To extend Butler's analysis, "the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures" (ibid). From this, I understand that the women impacted by the headscarf ban, by the state's juridical power, in turn became political subjects. By singling out the practice of veiling, the state had come to define it as a political act, thereby turning those who veiled into political subjects. In her analysis of Foucault, Butler mentions that "juridical systems of power produce the subjects they subsequently come to represent" (ibid). "The question of 'the subject,'" she writes, "is crucial for politics, and for feminist politics in particular, because juridical subjects are

[14] Interviewed April 30, 2018

invariably produced through certain exclusionary practices that do not 'show' once the juridical structure of politics has been established" (ibid., 5). Thus, the ethical practice of veiling, and a self constituted and structured by this outward Islamic gesture, had turned political through its overt exclusion in universities, and once juridical power was exercised by the headscarf ban. I claim that the byproduct of this was the production of veiled women as political subjects who posed a threat to the secular state, because despite the defined exclusion, these subjects continued forth with their practice in varying forms, such as studying abroad.

A self ethically formed by Islamic practices competes with the state's notion of the secular self, and so for these women, not complying with the state's rules was a necessary option given that their own sense of self superseded that of the state's. Rabia, a 32-year old physical therapist in Istanbul discusses how her belief in wearing the headscarf strengthened her self-consciousness.

> It's about belief. I don't have to actually explain this. If you believe something, you have to go behind it. If you leave it, you will face so many regrets. You are not going to be strong enough. Yes there was a ban, there was a wall. If I ripped off my scarf, the wall is not going to become smaller. It is going to be larger. Maybe in my heart, I will regret, because this is belief. When you leave your beliefs what's left? [15]

I interpret Rabia's actions as a form of *religious* resistance against the state, because she resists as a political subject defined by the state. Rabia is a subject turned political because she chose to veil, despite the ban exercised by juridical power.

By bringing together Mahmood's questioning of the kind of politics that can exist by a self that adheres to traditional, ethical practices, alongside Butler's notions of juridical power and its production of political subjects, I find that resistance is a useful lens with which we can interpret transgressions and subversions of the state's rules when competing notions of the self come into play. That is, when juridical power demonstrates its own understanding of the self and thereby

[15] Interviewed April 19, 2018

turns political a self that does not fit its mold, we can see acts of resistance when subjects continue to exercise and preserve their sense of self no matter the stipulations of the juridical power in force. In dissecting the competing visions of self constituted by the case of the women who decided to study abroad, and consequently, the production of subjects through the juridical power manifest in the headscarf ban, I argue that the women who chose to study abroad in defiance of the state's headscarf ban in universities committed an act of religious resistance to the political structure that not only wanted to define the acceptable role of religion in public life, but also provided a hegemonic ideal of femininity. Studying abroad then became a political act that was produced by the state's juridical power. Concurrently, I claim that the women's decisions constitute a form of religious resistance, because they wanted to preserve an Islamic ethical practice, characterized by noncompliance and circumvention of the Turkish state's secular rules. Thus far, I have established how the women had formed a religious resistance to competing hegemonic femininities in Turkey, proffered by state secularists and religious conservatives alike. I argue that crucial to this religious resistance was the women's articulation of a hybrid moral language informed by Islamic norms and liberal values.

"What am I doing here? Why am I struggling to study? What is there in school?": Articulating a Hybrid Moral Language

Miray in this quotation questions education itself, its necessity, desirability and for her, its limitations. For the women I met, the headscarf ban not only forced them to decide on the importance of covering to preserve their religious identity and Islamic ethics, but it also encouraged them to interrogate the notion of education itself, particularly what being educated meant, and why it was out of reach for them. Doing so allowed the women space and introspection to question their life goals and ambitions, while clarifying their sense of the world and how it

operates. I found that this process allowed the women to thoughtfully and deliberately construct their identities, beliefs and values on a wide range of issues from feminism to capitalism, to politics and the sciences. *I argue that these women were able to articulate a hybrid moral language that borrowed generously from Islamic principles and liberal ideas to varying degrees, and that the women continue to use this language to justify their past religious resistance against the secular state.* In many ways, my interlocutors correspond with Foucault's notion that "thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem" (Foucault and Rabinow 1998). By choosing to deliberate and act on the headscarf ban by studying abroad, by weighing the options available to them, all while assessing the risks and benefits to their values and character, the women were exercising or rather "practicing" their sense of "freedom". I believe that the construction of a hybrid moral language that justifies this self-deliberation and scrutiny was critical to this practice of freedom.

For 28-year-old Enise, pursuing education was part and parcel of what it means to be a Muslim. The headscarf ban had presented an obstacle not just in the choice of her dress, but also by foreclosing the opportunity to study. Both are essential to her identity: Studying in Hungary to continue wearing her headscarf, *and* becoming a doctor, enables her to realize her sense of self:

> As a Muslim, Allah says, you have to be the best in anything you do. If you are a student, you should try to be your best. Plus with education, you can help society and people more. Now, I'm a doctor. Now, I can help Turkish society. That's why my family has always encouraged me to study. I think about how my father was right about this issue. For example, I'm doing a master's in physiology because I want to do research to help my country advance in science. Not only my country, but also to help all human beings. I believe that your worth in this world is how much you put in this world. Before dying what is left? How did you affect other people and their lives? How much benefit did you give this world? I always want to or try to do my best and help other people. That's why I chose medicine. It helps people more. [16]

[16] Interviewed May 2, 2018

Büşra mentioned how her family had actually pressured her to remove the headscarf so she could continue her education, which for her family was seen as more important at the time. She, however, refused to make this compromise:

> My Dad told me to open it, and study. My Dad forced me actually. You should complete your studies he said. Open it, complete it and come back. And I said why would I do something that I don't like to do? And he said I cannot help you, you are on your own and you should do it. And I remember, one of my father's cousins came to our house and he also said, if any problems come up, please do it. Open it and just study. It's more important for your future. [17]

The headscarf ban had created twin pressures for the women impacted: they had to choose what mattered more, their faith or their education, but also decide if the headscarf was worth preserving. What emerged from this wrangling were attempts to make supposedly oppositional choices cohere into a unified logic that would allow the women to pursue education as devout, pious Muslims. For many of the women I spoke to, the headscarf was no longer solely a matter of religious obligation, neither was education just a secular, amoral venture. They stressed how one shaped the other: they could not be good students without keeping their identity as religious Muslims intact, and they could not be Muslims without being educated.

For example, Banu discussed the impossibility of setting up a transaction between the state's rules and the tenets of her faith:

> Like in Islam, you can't calculate things: if you do this, you will get this. I think it was a bit wrong that we thought that if I do this, [take off the hijab], God will not love me. I don't know why, it was a bit strange actually. It's like you are a mother, and you tell a kid, don't eat chocolate, don't eat, and the child goes to his room, and he secretly eats his chocolate, and then he feels guilty - oh, I cheated my mom. It's like that kind of feeling. If I do this, I will change. God asks you do something, and these people [the state authorities] ask you do something, and I exchange it: okay, take my hijab, give my education. Psychologically, you feel so bad. Oh my god, I did a really bad thing. It's not about God will punish you. It's not about this. You don't think: I will go to hell, Allah will burn me, etc. No, it's about all relationships. [18]

[17] Interviewed May 3, 2018
[18] Interviewed April 16, 2018

What Banu stresses is how all aspects — the state, the headscarf, education and Islam — are interconnected, and that to give one up for the other, would leave a lasting psychological imprint, resulting in feelings of guilt, inadequacy and insincerity. In his essay "Algeria Unveiled" (1965), Frantz Fanon also touches upon the inseparability of the distinction of clothing with the French occupation, and how the veil became a target for colonial authorities. "The role of the Algerian mother, that of the grandmother, the aunt and the 'old woman' were inventoried and defined," Fanon writes (37). He mentions that this enabled a "precise political doctrine": 'If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veil where they hide themselves and in the houses where the men keep them out of sight" (Fanon 1965, 37-38). In citing Bourdieu, El Guindi also writes how the Algerian revolution ended "'traditional traditionalism'" for many women (El Guindi 1999, 72). Similarly, the headscarf in the face of the ban no longer remains solely the headscarf, and one's education garners significance beyond the immediacy of being educated. It is as Foucault writes in "What is Enlightenment?" that "to be modern is not to accept oneself as one is in the flux of the passing moments; it is to take oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration" (Foucault 1984). In this sense, these women made a thoroughly modern decision: in choosing to study abroad they had to reconcile aspects of their Islamic faith alongside the necessity of education, which required a self-fashioning that allowed them to be devout, pious women that traveled abroad alone, with most living in Western secular environments. In order to survive the headscarf ban, the women had resorted to a sort of creativity and flexibility in how they saw themselves and their faith.

Ruth Braunstein draws a similar insight in her study of religious liberals in the United States and the moral terrain they pass in advocating for progressive policies while maintaining

their religious identity (2012). She argues for the importance of cultivating a "broad-based moral voice" that at once speaks to multiple religious communities, while also using a secular language of rights and justice that would appeal to allies generally distrustful of religious rhetoric (ibid., 111). Braunstein's study is focused on how religious liberals communicate their ideas to the public sphere (ibid), while my interlocutors used a similar tactic but largely did so for their own internalization, and to make sense of their stances to the world outside of them. The difference between Braunstein's "broad-based moral voice" and what I call a *hybrid moral language*, is that my interlocutors cultivated this language through their own reflections of a decision, not necessarily to persuade different audiences, by drawing from the ethical traditions of Islam and the norms of liberalism. I found that this hybrid language was largely created by them, for them and of them. Still, for the women who studied abroad, articulating this hybrid moral language was key to not only justify their actions, but also to cultivate public and secular support to prevent the ban from being reinstated in the future. One way of doing this was to argue for different conceptions of secularism, as opposed to debating the very idea itself, or advocating for religious law like sharia, as Feyza describes:

> In Turkey, before women with headscarves started studying in universities, an educated woman meant a woman without a headscarf. People never imagined that an educated woman could wear a headscarf…For example in the UK, secularism is very relaxed. You can practice, but you are living in a secular state. France is so rigid. Our republic system came from the French, and this had long term effects, such as an educated woman means wearing modern clothes. We destroyed this image. Oh, you are a doctor and you are wearing a headscarf! It was so shocking for secular perceptions. Personally, I chose to be secular. Everyone should be able to perform their religious practices. [19]

What Feyza presents here is a choice between the secularism practiced in the United Kingdom versus France. For Turkey, in her mind, it is possible to be secular and also respect

[19] Interviewed May 7, 2018

religious differences and distinctions. I noticed that she provided examples from Europe to present her ideal situation for her own country, instead of relying on religious concepts or models from Muslim majority countries in the Middle East. The moral language she cultivates in favor of her headscarf comes not from religious doctrine, but from the language of secularism itself.

Moral Language as a Strategy of Religious Resistance

I claim that what follows from the creation of this hybrid moral language is a *strategy* of religious resistance, where language represents the women's creativity and flexibility to simultaneously circumvent the state's secular rules and the traditional mores expected of them. Johanna Oksala charts a similar logic in her analysis of Foucauldian discourses on power and freedom by writing, "The way to contest this normalizing power is by shaping one's self and one's lifestyle creatively: by exploring possibilities for new forms of subjectivity, new fields of experiences, pleasures, relationships, modes of living and thinking" (Oksala 2005, 168). Though she is careful to note that resistance for Foucault requires ethics and the "practice of the self" (ibid), a unique subjectivity that harnesses such techniques of self-management is also essential to challenge "normalizing power" (ibid). Likewise, I interpret the women's decision to wear the headscarf as a "practice of the self", a practice of their Islamic piety and modesty, which when coupled with their ideas on agentic choice and religious freedom (as explained in the section "Articulating a hybrid moral language"), constituted a resistance to the "normalizing power" of the secular state. Crucial to the formation of this subjectivity I argue, was a hybrid moral language, which the women used to justify their past actions, their present choices and their future aims.

Rabia mentioned the confusing situation for many women in her situation, women who were pressured to take off the headscarf, and those who resisted during the headscarf ban, only to remove it years later:

> Those times people didn't take it [the headscarf] off, but now they are taking it off. Because they were believing at that time, and they were so opposed, they were fighting with the system. They think, because they want me to take it off, I will not take it off. This is a kind of belief. I know lots of people. Now, when they take this headscarf off, people say, you didn't take it off during February 28 [the post-modern coup that ushered in the headscarf ban], and you didn't go to school. Why now? Now everything is okay. People are judging each other. This is so ridiculous for me. Judging. Those days they believed something, maybe they didn't continue to believe? They changed. They just didn't want to do what the system asked them. [20]

What is essential to note here is Rabia's insistence that these women chose at one point to continue wearing the headscarf as a form of resisting the system, only to choose to remove it years later. For her, this is not an inconsistency or a hypocrisy as some would believe, rather she feels the women are simply following the change in their beliefs and acting accordingly. She states that this goes beyond "religious things", that matters of faith are personal and shifting, and thus, not something to judge. Religion and belief here are not public or societal matters, but an agentic choice. I believe Rabia's words point to a subjectivity that views one's religiosity not as a matter for the state or any sort of collective at all, but as a personal endeavor, a more private undertaking.

To get a sense of how Muslim women create and use their subjectivity in different contexts, I want to highlight two studies in particular that touch upon the attitudes of women towards the veil or a religious garment vis-a-vis the mores of society and the rules of the state. A study conducted by Shirazi and Mishra (2010) compared attitudes towards the niqab (full face veil) between European and American Muslim women. The niqab is banned in some European countries, but not in America. This, the authors argue, is crucial to understanding why the European Muslim women they spoke with see the niqab as a symbol of resistance, whereas their American counterparts do not (Shirazi and Mizrahi, 2010). A similar study conducted by Wagner, Sen, Permanadeli, and Howarth (2012) found that Muslim women in majority-Muslim societies

[20] Interviewed April 19, 2018

see the headscarf as a matter of "convenience, fashion, and modesty with little reference to religion", while Muslim women as minorities "see the veil as a way of affirming their cultural identity" as distinct from the broader society (521). My case exhibits elements of both studies: on the one hand, the women viewed the headscarf as their resistance against the state (much like the European Muslim women did with respect to the niqab), but on the other hand, they saw the headscarf as indicative of their distinct identity and values given the secular state's rules, despite the state comprising a majority Muslim society. I believe a key distinction is how my interlocutors constructed a hybrid moral language to cement their religious resistance, and how this language continues to shape the attitudes and behaviors of the women.

For instance, Munira, a 31-year old media professional who studied in the United States, explained how her conception of covered women in Turkish society has changed over time:

> Women have been earning a lot right now. For example, they are not just paying attention to husband and children. They also have self-consciousness. They don't pay attention to the same problems with their family members. It is easy to divorce now. They earn money. They are independent. Like me, for example. For women in hijab, things changed a lot. They will continue to work. They will continue to be a part of social life. Before it was not okay to go to bars and restaurants, if you wore hijab. Now it's so normal. You can even see some hijabi women drinking. For example, I got a tattoo. [21]

What Munira describes are essentially imaginaries for covered women that apparently did not exist before in Turkish society, imaginaries that not only include lives outside of family, but also include practices that go against Islamic rules, such as drinking alcohol and tattooing one's body. As per Munira's description, it is a personal choice to pick and choose what aspects of Islam one can and will follow, an unusual and highly individualized subjectivity. Munira was an outlier among the women I spoke with, most of whom tended to neglect those topics that went against their faith, while stressing that even the decision to go abroad was taken under heavy spiritual

[21] Interviewed April 12, 2018

wrangling. I highlight Munira's words here because I think it speaks to the formation of a specific hybrid language, which for her bridges personal choice with religious covering. This, I argue, is her strategy of resistance, where she will pick and choose elements of the religious while navigating the secular. While Munira and Rabia use the language of personal choice and non-judgment, which points to more liberal framings of personhood, both women stressed to me the importance of the headscarf as a religious obligation. From this, I interpret the creation and formation of a hybrid moral language to be a critical element in their strategies of resistance against the state, and, as I outline in the following section, to what is expected of them within their own conservative social circles.

Consequences of Resistance

I bring in Sara Ahmed's idea of happiness and its diminishing horizons for what feminism can achieve, because it points to the consequences of resistance I noted among my interlocutors. In their efforts to cultivate a life outside of the strictures of family and conservative religious mores, all of the women I spoke to work full time, while three are married with children. Some of my interlocutors stressed their inability to find suitable partners, citing their educational background and experience abroad as significant barriers. Some women spoke of intimidated men afraid of not being able to provide for them. Munira, in particular, opened up about how her attempts to balance a working life with the possibility of motherhood had led her to divorce her husband:

> At the time, my husband was saying I can afford to take care of you, you don't need to work. He was a very jealous person. He comes from a very different background than mine. I always see myself as a working person. It does not depend on someone's choice or decision. If I'm going to divorce, maybe I will get married again. I will like to have children maybe. If I'm going to have a baby, I want to work at the same time. It's not a big problem. It's not controversial. But he's not okay with that at all. We have a lot of

> conflict between us…If you're able to leave your daughter with your husband, then you can work and travel if you have to. It should be normal. But it is not very common. My friends are blaming me as well. They say you are not the person you are supposed to be. You should be in your house. Even if you're working, you should come home before 7pm, that kind of stuff. [22]

Munira describes the pushback she received for diverging from what is expected of her: a housewife who relies on her husband, or at least one with suitable working hours that respects her husband's wishes. She embodies the consequences of her resistance – as a young woman she defied both the state and the conservative customs of society to live and study abroad alone, just so she could continue to wear her headscarf. Today, the upward mobility afforded by higher education, in addition to her dreams of a career, have arguably dampened the prospects of her marriage. Munira's experiences point to Ahmed's notion of "feminist consciousness as a form of unhappiness" (Ahmed 2010, 51), where the image of the "happy housewife" and the "happy slave" is forever punctured by a consciousness of one's lot and an awareness of the myriad powers that keep one in a happy, obliging state that preserves the existing gendered distribution of labor (ibid., 50). Ahmed writes, "opening up the world, or expanding one's horizons, can thus mean becoming more conscious of just how much there is to be unhappy about" (70). For Munira, the imaginary of a working mother mindful of her career and not just her family, clashed with her husband's expectations of her, as well as her friends'. The unhappiness of divorce is the price that Munira must pay for her self-realization and consciousness.

Ayça, a divorced single mother, describes her inability to find a suitable partner once she arrived from Malaysia:

> When I came back, people were trying to match me. They were basically scared. When they heard about me, say my friend came from Malaysia, she studied there, she worked there. Men here, they were like scared. They didn't feel comfortable, because you achieved

[22] Interviewed April 12, 2018

> something, and you traveled all the way. You are not scared of it. You survived. Some men, they are not that brave. When they hear that, they feel inferior. They didn't want to even meet me. [23]

For Ayça, who worked and saved up money for her education in secret before divulging to her parents that she was leaving for Malaysia, studying abroad opened up new possibilities of living. She lived alone for the first time, financed her education, and she credits this self-reliance for the ability to raise her daughter as a single mother. She expressed to me that after her family and her friends criticized her decision to study abroad alone, she now has the "last laugh." Ayça represents Ahmed's call for a feminism that allows for "alternative ideas of happiness" (77) or at the very least explores the "limitation of happiness as human experience" (53).

By trying to forge lives in line with their principles, identities and beliefs, my interlocutors circumvented the state, but also angered those close to them within their conservative social circles. The price of their resistance seems to be the rather conventional outcome of marrying happily ever after, but their self-realization and self-consciousness leads to an unhappiness of the kind that Ahmed claims will open new avenues of being and expand the way women can live (2010). She writes: "Feminist subjects in refusing to be well-adjusted not only mourn the losses but in mourning open up other possibilities for living, as openings that we inherit over generations" (79). While resistance can have its discontents, it also brings new possibilities, different subjectivities, facilitating what I outlined in previous sections, a hybrid moral language for those who choose to resist despite the cost of unhappiness. In this vein, Feride explained to me the consequences of her resistance in her everyday interactions with men:

> In Turkey, women with headscarf cannot be educated. So imagine, with my headscarf, I went to New York alone. I visited European capitals. It's so shocking for some people…When you know languages, when you can travel, some men feel, oh wow, she's so confident, I cannot manage with her. They feel like that. It's not good. They think I

[23] Interviewed April 27, 2018

> would be more free. They think she cannot listen to me. She cannot obey me. They may think like that. For example, it struck me, when I was flirting with someone, he asked me: how did you go there without anyone, how did you go to New York alone? I answered so what? I can. He was a bit shocked at my reaction. He was a bit afraid of me. [24]

If the consequences of resistance require a modicum of unhappiness (in the conventional sense of marriage, children and domestic partnerships), for Feride, Ayça and Munira, their resistance not only redefined what was possible in their own lives, but also provides a blueprint for those caught between competing hegemonic femininities.

Conclusion

After conducting semi-structured interviews with Turkish women who studied abroad during the headscarf ban so they can continue wearing their headscarf while attending university, I found that the women articulated and internalized what I call a *hybrid moral language* that borrowed from Islamic principles and liberal values to varying degrees. I argue that this language was in part a strategy of religious resistance for these women caught between competing "hegemonic notions of femininity" (Schippers): one espoused by the "normalizing power" (Foucault) of the secular Turkish state during the period of the headscarf ban and the other, composed of conservative religious imaginaries of homebound, uneducated women. Today, this hybrid moral language allows the women to help justify their lifestyle choices despite the criticism they may receive within their conservative social circles, while also enabling them to articulate their political beliefs and values. I believe the price of the women's resistance to be a limited kind of "happiness" (Ahmed) defined by the conventions of marriage, domestic partnership and motherhood, leading to a possible "unhappiness" that opens up new possibilities in subjectivity and lifestyle for pious Turkish women.

[24] Interviewed May 7, 2018

I feel this last point is a key avenue of further exploration: how do the increased variety of lifestyle possibilities for pious, covered Turkish women compare to that of their secular, unveiled counterparts? Does the diversification of imaginaries for women who choose to wear the headscarf come at the expense of, complicate, or enlarge what is possible for women who choose not to wear the headscarf? These are questions I could pursue with further semi-structured interviews of women who reject the veil despite being encouraged to wear it by their social circles, and also the current institutional support for covering. Is it really a zero-sum game? What are the possibilities of agentic choice for Turkish women?

Methodologically, this study could benefit from a discourse analysis of periodicals and newspapers at the time. Namely, what sorts of language did outlets advocating for state secularism use, and how does it compare to media siding with the women affected by the ban? What were the competing languages of democracy and liberalism deployed by both sides? As for my interviews, I would have liked to gather more data on how my interlocutors assessed issues currently facing Turkish women, such as domestic violence, labor force participation and street harassment, to name a few. It would be interesting to compare their attitudes to those women who identify as secular Kemalists. If the opportunity allows, it would be revealing to catch up with my interlocutors five years later to see how they changed and/or stayed the same by comparing their language gathered for this study. Moreover, participant observation of workplaces that hire women with headscarves might prove fruitful to analyze how pious women navigate secular work environments, and how their secular co-workers accommodate their religious needs.

Ultimately, these additional paths for research help illuminate what guided me to the women in the first place, women who in their late teens under immense financial and spiritual

pressure chose to study abroad: How do we choose to be who we are? Can we even think of our choices and identities as belonging to us? And if we do, what are the consequences?

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Appendix I

Breakdown of Interlocutor Demographics

Name	Age	City	Occupation	Studied Abroad in…	Marital Status
Ayça	39	Istanbul, Turkey	Media professional	Malaysia	Single mother
Banu	31	Doha, Qatar	Media professional	Malaysia	Single
Büşra	35	Istanbul, Turkey	Computer Engineer	Northern Cyprus	Single
Enise	28	Istanbul, Turkey	Physician	Hungary	Single
Feride	39	Konya, Turkey	Runs family business	Malaysia	Single
Feyza	42	Istanbul, Turkey	Physician	Hungary	Single
Hadise	34	Istanbul, Turkey	Director at a company	Bosnia	Married with one child
Kumru	32	Istanbul, Turkey	Physician	Hungary	Single
Miray	33	Istanbul, Turkey	Academic Writing Instructor	United States	Single/Divorcing
Munira	31	Istanbul, Turkey	Media Professional	United States	Single/Divorcing
Rabia	32	Istanbul, Turkey	Physical Therapist	Hungary	Married with three children
Zümrüt	34	Istanbul, Turkey	Computer Engineer	Austria	Married with one child