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Gender Politics: A Case Study of Feminism in Iran

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GENDER POLITICS: A CASE STUDY OF FEMINISM IN IRAN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (International and Comparative Politics)

By

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      I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY SARA ABIGAIL HOFF ENTITLED GENDER POLITICS: A CASE STUDY OF FEMINISM IN IRAN BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (INTERNATIONAL AND COMPARATIVE POLITICS).

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ABSTRACT

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The literature on feminism and Islam shows that there is a distinct relationship and conflict between identity groups in Iran. An alliance between Muslim and secular feminists has been observed in the past in Iran; however, a breakdown of the alliance has occurred in recent years. It is my assumption that in order for feminists in Iran to unite, several principles of Iris Young's communicative democracy and coalition building practices have to be applied. Communicative democracy stresses that individuals' ideas often change when interaction with other people and their experiences occurs. Further, communicative democracy emphasizes the importance of recognizing the differences in culture and social perspectives as a resource for achieving an understanding in certain democratic discussions and processes. This study analyzes the ways women's identities are constructed in Iran and how interactions between the different feminist groups change or shape politics in that country. In other words, why have Muslim and secular feminist groups in Iran experienced a problematic relationship despite similarities in their agendas and how can feminists overcome such problems?

This case study of feminism focuses on four different periods in Iran's history. The first two case studies will analyze the mechanisms of the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911) and the Islamic Revolution (1979). In the period from 1990-2001 there was an alliance between secular and Muslim feminists in Iran, and together they accomplished several changes to better women's lives. However, a break in the alliance occurred following an event in 2000 when several secular feminists were arrested in Iran. Further, the study will make recommendations

for building successful relationships among feminists by using Young's framework of communicative democracy.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

GDP Gross Domestic Product

GEM Gender Empowerment Measure

IRP Islamic Republican Party

LMI Liberation Movement of Iran

NGO Non-governmental organization

LIST OF NON-ENGLISH TERMS

Ayatollah High ranking title given to clerics

Chador Outer garment or open cloak worn by women in public spaces

Fegh/Fiqh Islamic jurisprudence

Feghe Poya Dynamic Islamic jurisprudence, new school of thought

Hadith Oral traditions relating to the words and deeds of the Prophet Mohamed

Hijab Modest dress for women

Mahr Bride price

Majles/Majlis The Iranian Parliament

Mujahadid/Mujahadin fighter in the holy war

Mullah A Muslim who studied sacred law and theology

Ramadan Islamic month of fasting

Shah Persian term for a monarch (leader)

Shari'a Body of Islamic religious law

Shia Denomination of Islam

Ulama Educated Muslim legal scholar; arbiters of Shari'a law, religious leader

Qur'an Central Islamic text

Zanan (Women); Independent Women's Magazine

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I. Introduction

Statement of the Problem

An historically complex relationship between gender, feminism, democracy, and politics exists in Iran today. In the past, women in Iran have come together to discuss and articulate ideas to better women's lives. The focus of this case study is to examine and analyze the mechanisms by which feminist and democratic goals are reached and identity groups are formed between secular and Muslim feminists in Iran. This chapter will cover key concepts, outline the current extent of gender inequality in Iran, and explain the methodology that will be used to analyze the problem.

Despite reforms in the area of family law and the ability for women to hold seats in parliament, women in Iran experience unequal treatment based on their gender. According to the United Nations Human Development Report (2008), the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) ranks Iran at 87 out of 144 countries. GEM calculates whether women take an active part in economic, social, and political life. Although women are widely educated in Iran and can vote, they do not have the same political rights as men. Women often face systematic discrimination in social and legal matters and are further barred from serving as judges. Although women qualify and try to run for public office in Iran only a few have been elected in the past as they are often "routinely excluded from running for public office" (Freedom House Report, 2008). The below table shows Women's status in Iran during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s in several different institutions of government and public life.

Table 1. Women's Status in Iran

	1976/1977	1986/1987	1996/1997
% of female literacy rate from total female population	35	52	74
% of female higher education graduates	30	31	34
% of females employed in state enterprises	29	29	32
% of female members of *Majles* (Parliament)	7	1.5	5
Number of women's newspapers and magazines	2	2	10
Number of female journalists	50	Not available	400
Number of women's publishers	0	0	398
Number of women's NGOs	13	Not available	137

Source: Povey, 2001, p. 47; Iran Statistical Yearbooks (1978: 66, 1998: 86 , 2000: 120, 601); Khorasani, A. (2000); Zanan Magazine (2000, No. 60); Shahidi, M. (1998).

Gender inequality certainly impairs democracy in Iran. The definition and universality of democracy and the legitimacy involved within the complex concept of democracy have been argued for decades. However, democracy usually entails certain key categories and indicators people have used to detail the meaning of democracy such as accountability, the rule of law, universal suffrage, separation of powers, and civil liberty. Some of these democratic values can be interpreted as contradicting the rules, laws, and traditions of Islam, which can be understood

to restrict women from being active participants in politics. It is important to note, that there are widely divergent interpretations of what Islam has to say about appropriate roles for women. Women have played important roles in Iran before, during, and after its revolution.

There have been several women's movements in Iran thus far and, according to Mehrdad Darvishpour (2001), secular women were instrumental in presenting women's demands and improving women's lives in the past. Secular feminists often have neutral views about religion but argue that under a theocratic government, as observed in Iran, women's emancipation is impossible (Moghissi, 1996). Muslim feminists propose liberal interpretations of Islam and work actively to adapt religion to modern society, arguing that the perception of Islam today as a religion that oppresses women is not necessarily the true meaning of Islam (Darvishpour, 2001). Muslim feminists therefore propose a modern re-interpretation of Islam and argue that much of the *hadith* and *shari'a* is a patriarchal interpretation of Islam (Darvishpour, 2001). Further, many politically active women, who neither identify as Muslim or secular feminists, have worked closely with feminists in Iran towards collective goals. These women will be referred to as non-feminists or other politically active women. It is important to note that Muslim feminism should not be confused with the term Islamic feminism. Despite their differences Muslim and secular feminists have at times actively worked together to challenge gender constructs and have been able influence reforms in favor of women (Povey, 2001). However, due to political and cultural differences among feminists that include religious beliefs, a breakdown of the alliance between Muslim and secular feminists occurred in early to mid-2000 (Povey, 2001).

Scholars continuously debate the definition of feminism and the changes in the concept across geographical boundaries. Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor (1999) explained that

> "Feminism" is a contested term even in the present, and historical literature is full of
> kinds of feminists who would surely have had a hard time finding common ground: Nazi

feminists and Jewish feminists, Catholic feminists and Islamic feminists, socialist feminists and utopian feminists, social feminists and equity feminists, imperial feminists and national feminists. (p. 363)

The authors describe how the concept evolved with the emergence of different women's movements and the diversity in language, goals, culture, strategies and ideas. Consequently, such diversity can lead to some women being unable to identify with the theory of feminism. It is therefore important to note that several women in Iran who are in favor of women's liberation are reluctant to call themselves feminists as some women define feminism according to "their political views and their level of secularism or religiosity" (Povey, 2001, p. 63). As a result, some women, such as *Zanan* editor Shahla Sherkat, prefer to use the term "indigenous feminism" rather than Muslim feminism as it links women's rights issues to the cultural specifics of Iran which preceded Islam (p. 64).

The Research Question

Why have Muslim and secular feminists in Iran failed in their efforts to promote equality and other democratic values? There are several factors, both internal and external, that influence the lack of liberal democratization in Iran such as theocratic government principles and foreign relations with the West, but for the purpose of this case study the focus remains on the relationship between Muslim and secular feminists and their influence on political change. This will further be accomplished by analyzing women's roles during four periods in Iran. Ziba Mir-Hosseini (1999) argues that women in Iran who adopted principles and ties to feminism have experienced a constant struggle as Muslim women since secular feminism argues that women's emancipation is impossible under a theocratic government as observed in Iran. The Muslim aspect of their identity is sometimes described by scholars as oppressed while their feminist

identification is perceived as "progressive and emancipated," yet as religious people they reject this negative characterization (Mir-Hosseini, 1990, p. 14). Grappling with this complexity, feminists in Iran need to reach an understanding about solutions to their collective problems and oppressions. In her model of communicative democracy, Iris Marion Young (1997) argues for participation in coalition politics as a form of feminist praxis that permits its participants to forgo differences and build alliances. Could such an alliance, based on shared challenges, focus on grouping women as a collective rather than as groups that imply assigned identities such as secular and Muslim feminists?

Several other sub-questions arise when analyzing why Muslim and secular feminists in Iran have failed in their efforts to promote equality. It is important to examine how feminist groups in Iran have interacted in the past and what changes occurred due to such interaction when a successful relationship was present. Another essential sub-question involves the results of such an alliance as it is important to evaluate how the alliance between feminists shaped politics in Iran.

When returning to the initial concept about identity politics, did feminist consciousness raising have an influence on women's identities and equality in Iran? If so, how was such influence possible and in which way was it carried out? After evaluating Young's analytical approach it is crucial to examine if the strategies of the approach are most effective at bringing about social change in theocratic Iran and even if secular and Muslim feminists united, in what areas do they have the most and least chance at success in promoting change? The sub-questions will help in analyzing the relationship between Muslim and secular feminists and assist in testing the hypothesis.

Methodology

This qualitative case study of women's activism and feminist groups in Iran will be descriptive in nature, analyzing several units in order to link data to my research question. According to King, Keohane, and Verba (1994), one of the advantages of in-depth case studies is "that the development of good causal hypotheses is complementary to good description rather than competitive with it" (p. 44). The authors further state that case studies should deal with real world topics and contribute directly to specific scholarly literature. The literature on Islam and feminism is vast and there are some valuable studies of gender politics and women's movements in Iran but this study fills a gap by analyzing the relationship between two feminist groups in Iran. Further, the application of the theory of inclusion and communicative democracy can benefit other groups of women that might be split due to class, religion or tradition, regardless of geography.

In this case study, several methods will be used to analyze feminism in Iran, the relationship of the feminist groups, and the shifts in gender equality over the period from 1905 to March 2008. I will collect data by analyzing previously recorded interviews of women and published government documents as well as a variety of other secondary sources. The operationalization of the research will include using Young's theory as a framework to analyze and define the history of feminism in Iran and further apply the principles of communicative democracy to analyze contents of interviews and statements made by feminists in Iran. Several variables, such as collective goals, collective identity, communication, and political affiliation will examined to determine which factors contribute to a success or failure in social actions and the relationship and efforts of feminists in Iran.

The following section will summarize Young's major points in regards to communicative democracy and I will apply these concepts to the relationship between Muslim and secular feminists in Iran.

Ideally, participants in communicative democratic discussions acknowledge forms of political communication that include greeting, rhetoric, argument, and storytelling and avoid external exclusion (Young, 2000, p. 53-54). Further, members aim at solving a collective problem while promoting inclusion by acknowledging social differentiation (Young, 1997, p. 40). This is accomplished by encouraging different groups to voice their needs, interests, and perspectives before other members of the discussion (Young, 2000, p. 119). Communicative democracy engages in building coalition among feminists and other groups by facilitating the promotion of agency and effective institutional change, which eventually leads to a shared commitment rather than a shared identity (Young, 2000, p. 14, p. 18). Further, it aims at explaining the possibility of communication across wide differences of culture and social position while including the expression and extension of shared understandings (Young, 1999, p. 132 -133).

In summary, the case study will examine different cases during the period from 1905 to March 2008 so as to assess the previous and current state of the alliance between Muslim and secular feminists. It will identify what variables are present in the relationship between Muslim and secular feminists in Iran when they accomplished collective goals that changed legislation surrounding issues such as family law (divorce and custody of children). On the other hand, the research will also show what variables were absent (or present) in the stage where a breakdown of the alliance between Muslim and secular feminists in Iran was observed. The mechanisms involving the relationship between Muslim and secular feminists in Iran and their differences in

identification with culture, gender, class, ideology, religiosity, and political agendas is important

to examine in order to advocate and promote ways of how feminists and women in Iran can unite

on the basis of shared commitment.

II. Literature Review

The literature on gender, feminism, and Iran is extensive and points to several challenges when combining traditional western values of democracy and women's rights under an Islamic theocracy. Every author presents a different view with an emphasis on specific aspects of gender and Islam; however, certain themes and areas of concern are common trends throughout the articles and books included in this review. The themes selected for this review are the representation of Muslim women, Islam and feminism, the re-interpretation of holy texts, gender politics and democracy in Iran, the relationship between Muslim and secular feminists, views and interpretations of democracy, communicative democracy, and women as a social collective. The review will conclude by suggesting the use of Young's theory of communicative democracy as a form of feminist praxis.

Representations of Muslim Women

In recent years, the image of the Muslim woman has become distorted, with the emergence of popular books such as *Not without my daughter* (1991) only further giving into stereotypes of Muslim (and Iranian) women. However, scholars critical of ethnocentrism argue that the image of the veiled woman fails to relate the oppression of women in the east and west. In the literature, the custom of veiling is a constant descriptor used by authors to explain female subordination and oppression as viewed by western powers. But the symbolism associated with unveiling also signals political change. The western discourse has been called "Orientalism" by Edward Said (1979) wherein the "Orient" is produced discursively through false interpretation. Said describes how the views of the Middle East by westerners were distinctively formed by

colonization and imperialism. Such views are ethnocentric and fail to accurately depict certain aspects of eastern cultures.

Chandra Mohanty (2003) makes similar statements by criticizing western scholars and the construction of the "Third World Woman" as part of a political and discursive hegemonic entity (p. 34). Further, Mohanty asserts that western feminism fails to differentiate between the difference in oppressions and diversity of non-western women which varies depending on history, culture, and geography.

For the Islamic country of Iran, the western view of veiling is constructed around two events in Iran's history. During the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979), the Shah legislated an Unveiling Act in 1936 to represent change and further strengthen ties with western countries. This act prohibited women from wearing the veil in public and the law was, at times, enforced violently by the Pahlavi police (Naghibi, 2007). According to Naghibi (2007) and other feminist scholars, the Unveiling Act of 1936 was met with a positive response from reformists and western scholars alike; however, it is noted that some women felt robbed of their Muslim identity and therefore were indirectly bound to their living quarters (Naghibi, 2007). After the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, the clerical leadership introduced compulsory veiling and an Islamic dress code, which has also been strictly enforced across Iran ever since.

The mystery surrounding the veiled woman in popular literature, and the political events that are reflected in women's dress establishes a distinct view of the Muslim woman. For Iranian women in particular, veiling has become a part of their identity as Muslims, women, or feminists, directly and indirectly affecting their everyday lives and decision making processes. It

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is important to note that not all women in Iran agree that veiling is a negative custom as it has been embraced by some women.

Islam and Feminism

In recent years several scholars have researched the idea of Islam and feminism. While some authors focus on how Islam is a religion that limits women's rights and their freedom, scholars such as Iman Haschim (1999) support the argument that Islamic texts are supportive of women's rights. The anti-western and anti-imperialist discourse that occurred before and after the Islamic Revolution further divided Islam and feminism, forcing women "to re-examine and redefine the relationship between their faith and feminism, thus opening a new phase in the politics of gender and the politics of feminist theorization in Muslim societies" (Tohidi, 2002, p.171).

In the literature, the relationship between feminism and Iran is often compared to the relationship between Islam and the west and scholars list several historical obstacles as reasons for this difficult relationship. Hashim (1999) describes the history as one of "conflict and mistrust," and further criticizes how colonizers have historically misinterpreted gender positions in the Middle East (p.7). Leila Ahmed (1992) describes how stories of the poor and unequal treatment of Muslim women were used by colonizers to damage the image of Islam and rationalize colonialism. Hashim (1999) further provides a brief overview of the history of Islam and women's representation in the *Qur'an* but criticizes how feminists, western feminists in particular, have referred to Islam as a cause of women's subordination.

Feminism, or an indigenous form of it, can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century in Iran. Janet Afari (1996) details the impact women's organizations had on the

outcome of the Constitutional Revolution that occurred in the period between 1905 to 1911. Women, mostly relatives of secular reformists, expressed their desire to vote and even spoke out against the *hijab*. During this period, privileged Iranian women worked alongside western women in order to support women's rights and suffrage. Nima Naghibi (2007), states that "Elite Iranian women and western women mobilized the discourses of modernity and of sisterhood to argue for the unveiling of women and for their rights as citizens of the new nation during the Constitutional Revolution." (Naghibi, 2007, p. 40). According to Afari (1996), women's organizations and support during the Constitutional Revolution played a major role in pressuring politicians in the resistance against Russian influence and the survival of the constitutional government of Iran.

Scholars have historically disagreed about the structure of revolutions and social movements and their dominant features as political, social, economic, or cultural causes for change (Moghadam, 1995). Naghibi (2007) argues that the idea and impression of motherhood and its importance to national progress were adopted by Iranian modernists during the early twentieth century "by embracing the role of mothers as vital to the modern nation" (Naghibi, 2007, p. 41). Motherhood became a concept that signaled modernity. However, the author explains that at the root of "all the nation's problems" were the practice of veiling and segregation as perceived by the west, and later in Iranian women's discourses (Naghibi, 2007, p.41). An extensive literature on revolution and social movements exists today; however, scholars such as Valentine Moghadam (1995) have observed the absence of gender perspectives and women's involvements in such revolutions and their aftermath. The author notes that "the study of revolution has not yet systematically considered the prominent position assumed by gender, the position of women, family law, and the prerogatives of men" (p.329).

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The debates about Islam and feminisms include religious representation of women's rights and women's active roles in political changes in Iran. It is important to examine the literature on women's roles in revolutions when discussing feminism in Iran as many women were active members during the Islamic Revolution, and later participated in opposition to Islamization. However, it is evident that in-depth studies are still needed in order to address specific motives of women's involvement during social movements in Iran. The literature about Islam and feminism yields insightful information about political affiliation and collective identity of women in Iran.

Re-interpretation of Holy Texts

One trend in the literature related to feminism and Islam involves the debates between feminists and clergy members in Iran and the difficult relationship between Islamic believers, political involvement and action, and religious authorities. Mir-Hosseini (1999) researched examples of collaboration between feminists and clergy members in Iran. Her findings show that *Shia* clerics are "being compelled to respond to modern realities concerning women" (Tohidi, 2002, p.170). Such modern realities include debates involving higher literacy rates and educational levels among women as well as political and social presence from women (Tohidi, 2002).

Scholars such as Iman Hashim call for a re-examination of Islamic texts and gender narratives in order to welcome feminist theories and viewpoints into Islamic culture that can provide a basis for the development of democratic values and equal rights for women (Povey, 2001). The debate surrounding this re-examination is important when researching the relationship and split between secular and Muslim feminists. Identification with the practices

and teachings of Islam and *shari'a* law are constant factors for women who either view themselves as Muslim or secular feminists. Ziba Mir-Hosseini (1999) also argues that a feminist re-reading of the *shari'a* is possible. A new interpretation could provide "Islamic alternatives" for modern problems to adequately address the changed status of women and their fight for equality (p. 285). While conservatives continued their traditional interpretation of *fegh*, which outlines women's roles in religion, reformists began to discuss alternative interpretations. One of these Islamic alternatives is *feghe poya*, a term used to describe a new form of Islamic jurisprudence. Povey (2001) explains that supporters of *feghe poya* believe that Islam can be adapted to the modern world. Mir-Hosseini (1999) argues that the debates with clergy members are important to social change in Iran as it constructs room for women's issues to be discussed in the framework of Islam.

On the other hand, Povey (2001) explains that many secular women believe that equality in law for women cannot be achieved despite of new ideas such as *feghe poya*. Povey quotes Mehrangiz Kar, a prominent secular lawyer in Iran, who states that Muslim reformers who support a dynamic Islamic jurisprudence believe that "women and men have been born to play different roles in life and therefore must be subject to different laws and regulations within family and society" (p. 55). Such statements reflect the little room for compromise between Muslim and secular feminists at times.

However, feminist readings and reinterpretations of the *shari'a* texts and the *Qur'an* have resulted in a shift in gender discourse raising awareness of outdated laws concerning issues such as family law. Further, supporters for the reinterpretation are searching for Islamic alternatives for the changed status of women in the Muslim world that occurred over the last centuries (Mir-Hosseini, 1999). According to *shari'a* law, custody rights to children are to go to the male kin.

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This law had a tremendous effect on women from all social classes and backgrounds, particularly during the Iran-Iraq war, as many widows, although supporting the Islamic state, demanded the right to legal custody of their children (Povey, 2001).

Mir-Hosseini (1999) explains that these feminist re-readings of the old texts all share an "oppositional stance and a defensive or apologetic tone" despite their diverse variety (p. 285). The author argues that the re-readings are oppositional as they resist "western" values which were promoted by secular elites in the past. Further, the re-readings take an apologetic tone as they try to justify and explain the gender inequalities found in *shari'a* texts (Mir-Hosseini, 1999). According to Mir-Hosseini, a "feminist" re-reading of the holy texts is possible "when Islam is no longer part of the oppositional discourse in national politics" (p. 285). The author explains that a re-reading almost becomes inevitable as the custodians of the *sharia'a* texts, who are in power in Iran, will have to address the goals of their own agenda. One such goal is to "restore women to their true and high status in Islam" and to further address their claim to have liberated women in Iran (p. 285).

The current debates between clergy members, feminists, and reformists, along with the various arguments that call for a modern feminist interpretation of the holy Islamic texts shows that certain inequalities for Muslim women have been identified and addressed. The debates relating to the re-readings of *shari'a* texts could potentially account for conflicts between Muslim and secular feminists as some secular feminists oppose the integration of religion and politics, yet most Muslim women are unable to abandon their religious duty. A new interpretation that addresses the modern discourse of the Iranian woman may help overcome contentious relations conflicts between the two groups that are due to religious identification.

Gender Politics and Democracy in Iran

The literature on gender politics in Iran, and specifically women's support of the Islamic Revolution, lists numerous women as participants in the opposition of the Shah for various reasons such as political deprivation, economic deprivation, and a sense of self-identification with Islam and the loss of Islamic values under the Pahlavi regime (Moghadam, 1995). After the revolution, several laws were established that altered gender relations in Iran and further privatized female roles (Moghadam, 2003). Povey (2001) points to the relationship between gender and feminism in Iran and its impact on democracy. The author explains that the demand "by women for democratic rights in general and removing gender bias from the male dominated structures of institutions as a process-making democracy is meaningful to the majority of citizens" (p. 65). Scholars such as Povey do not necessarily see democracy as an institutional position but as a part of a broader distribution of power and gender equality in Iran. It is therefore often stressed in the literature surrounding democracy and women's rights in Iran that secular and Muslim feminists must come together to work towards shared ideological goals (p. 65).

Valentine Moghadam (2003) states that women working towards democracy "have used secular language and pointed to international conventions and standards, thus challenging the dominant political ideological framework" (p. 219). The author also discusses political liberalization and policy shifts in the 1990s by pointing to the number of women working in public sector and emphasizing Iran's current position on family planning and the availability of contraceptive devices provided by the government. By 1995, campaigns were implemented to advertise the benefits of smaller families in the Islamic Republic which then resulted in a decline in fertility rates. Moghadam (2003) explains that in 2000, 74 percent of married women

practiced family planning and that "both urban and rural women enthusiastically welcomed the idea of family planning and made effective use of free seminars and contraceptive devices provided by the government" (p. 211).

Povey (2001) argues that Iranian women's support for reform has played a crucial role in "eroding the legitimacy of authoritarian rule and promoting democratic issues" (p. 69); Moghadam (1995) accredits the death of Ayatollah Khomeini as leading to a "gradual secularization of the Islamic Republic" (p. 353). Elaheh Povey (2001) has extensively evaluated women during institutional changes by comparing women's status within selected institutions such as education, media, and employment in three historical periods in Iran (the 1970s, the 1980s, and the period of 1990-2001). After Iran's revolution in 1979, some reformists were afraid of a backlash created by violent demonstrations for democratic change and therefore discouraged social demonstrations and collective actions by groups and students. Povey (2001) accredits the various sponsored religious women's institutions for the rise of gender politics and Muslim feminism in Iran. She describes two factors as having an impact on gender awareness in Iran: the policy of *hijab* and sex segregation and the politicization of women in the Iran-Iraq war. Other authors refer back to Iran's war with Iraq and the advances of women's rights in that period as a direct result demanded by war widows who fought to be entitled to their husband's wages or salaries. Therefore, Povey (2004) credits the material effects of Islamization involving women's demands to be entitled to their husband's wages and the war with Iraq as dominant factors contributing to the rise of gender politics in Iran.

Women have been and still are visible participants in politics in Iran and have directly contributed to certain institutional changes in the past. Their continued activism shows a desire for changes in the laws and the Constitution of Iran and for the betterment of women's position

in society. An understanding of the history of women's roles in politics and their support for democratic principles is important for researching the relationship between Muslim and secular feminists. These groups have had parallel agendas in the past and familiarity with this history may help to explain why their combined efforts failed to reach their full potential in attaining specific goals.

The Relationship between Muslim and Secular Feminists

The collaboration between secular and Muslim feminists and non-feminists is a common theme in examinations of gender politics in Iran. Povey (2001) describes such collaboration and states that "despite their diverse views on gender, feminism, secularism and democracy, they identified with each other and collectively pursued their gender interests" (p. 48). Azadeh Kian (1997) credits Islamist magazines such as *Zanan (*Women*)* as a contributing factor for an emerged "gender solidarity between secular and modernist-Islamist women" (p. 91). However, the differences between Muslim and secular women in Iran can be traced back to the period of the Shah.

The modernization of Iran under the Shah resulted in a direct split between "modern and traditional lifestyles" (Moghadam, 1995, p. 340). The ban on the *hijab* was just one of the many factors that contributed to the differences that divided women in Iran. This is important to the research on feminism in Iran and the relationship between Muslim and secular feminists as the split was further observed in the identity building of feminist groups into secular and Muslim alliances that continued through the Islamic Revolution and the years beyond.

Popular magazines such as *Zanan* have helped women come together to promote women's rights (Kian, 1997). The aim of such magazines is to reach secular, religious, and rural

women by promoting the status of women and pointing to shortcomings in the legal, social, and economic status of women in Iran (Kian, 1997). According to Kian (1997), editors of such magazines bring Muslim and secular women together by arguing that the status of women is not due to the *Qur'an* but the interpretations of holy texts by religious authorities. Povey (2001) explains that *Zanan* "played an important role in changing laws and regulations" by publishing articles on women's rights issues within family law (p. 59).

One of the concrete achievements of the alliance between feminists in Iran and the involvement of female lawyers is the legal age of consent, a change that was advocated by many women with very different political views and religious backgrounds (Barlow and Akbarzadeh, 2008). The old law allowed for girls who have not reached the age of consent, 14 years of age, to be married to a man with the consent of her father. However, the reformed law states that girls under the age of 14 have to receive permission from a civil court before getting married (Povey, 2001, p. 53). The publisher of *Zanan* (Women) magazine, a Muslim feminist, explains the vast amount of letters she received of Iranian women pushing for a reform of the age of consent. Secular feminist and lawyers further pressed to reform this law with the help of the new discussions of *fegh poya* (p.53).

Moreover, both religious and secular women generally agree on rules about the number of wives men in Iran should be allowed to marry. According to Povey (2001), in the late 1990s and 2001 "both religious and secular women agree with each other that men should not be allowed to marry four wives and an unlimited number of temporary wives, as is suggested by the *Shari'a*" (p. 57). This problem has been raised and addressed in the past, at which point religious women argued that the number of wives was a religious issue. The changes in opinion show that women in Iran have altered their views towards certain Islamic laws that are oppressing in

nature. Other areas in which secular and Muslim women have worked together include issues

involving *mahr* (bride price), allowing women to work as research judges in universities,

indigenous women's NGOs (non-governmental organizations), divorce law, and child custody

law (Povey, 2001). However, feminists in Iran are still divided on the nature of certain reformed

laws, Islamic jurisprudence, and *feghe poya* as many secular women do not support an

integration of politics and religion.

The division of Muslim and secular feminists was evident following a conference in

Berlin in March 2000, when, upon their return to Iran, several secular feminists (including Shirin

Ebadi) were arrested. One of the feminists arrested, Shahla Lahiji, explained that their arrest was

due to their attendance at a conference in favor of women's rights and was essentially a human

rights issue and that they should therefore have been supported by Muslim feminists (Barlow and

Akbarzadeh, 2008). The events surrounding the arrests have been noted as having contributed to

the split between Muslim and secular feminists as some secular feminists felt "betrayed by their

womenfolk" (Povey, 2001, p. 66). Lahiji states that "If they were arrested I would have

protested and raised my voice against their imprisonment, even if I disagree with them on what

they stand for" (Povey, 2001, p. 66). Povey argues that although the split between Muslim and

secular feminists in Iran has ideological and material roots an alliance in the future can "play an

important role in the process of democratization in Iran" (p. 66). It is therefore important to

examine the ideological and material divides that hinder a possible alliance between feminists in

Iran and their combined effort to work towards democratic goals.

Views and Interpretations of Democracy

The definition and universality of democracy and the legitimacy involved within the complex concept of democracy has been argued by scholars for decades. However, democracy usually entails certain key categories and indicators people have used to detail the meaning of democracy such as accountability, the rule of law, and universal suffrage.

The definition for democracy varies depending on how one conceptualizes democracy. Larry Larry Diamond (1999) argues that democracies "offer the best prospect for accountable, responsive, peaceful, predictable, good governance," and that the restriction of unlimited power ends genocide and mass murder of innocent victims (p. 3). He further believes that a universal theory for democracy is possible which could help counties in transitions. This view contradicts Dankward Rustow's (1970) assertion that transitions to democracy do not occur in a "world-wide uniform process" as they differ in social classes, different political agendas, and different solutions (p. 345). Rustow also argues that democracy requires at most a singular background condition, national unity, which he describes as an agreement by the vast majority of citizens "as to which political community they belong to" (p. 350). Gutmann and Thompson (2003) detail different values of democracy that involve deliberation and civil engagement by citizens in order to make policy (deliberative democracy). Unlike other forms of democracy, that emphasize the voting process, deliberative democracy stresses public deliberation. Diamond (1999) also supports an argument for a push from below when addressing "civic" engagements in bringing about change and civil society's influence in democratization (p. 265). The author stresses the importance of citizen involvement in politics by explaining the varying effects and results of civil engagement. Further, Diamond states that in order to maintain liberal democracy, "the political system must also provide for a rule of law, and rigorously protect the rights of

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individuals and groups to speak, publish, assemble, demonstrate, lobby, and organize "(p. 219). The author emphasizes the importance of civil society by outlining twelve ways in which civil society develops, deepens, and consolidates democracy (p. 240).

A key assertion that scholars have made about democracy is that it opens government to a vast range of people, unlike other forms of government which are often directed to accommodate and reflect the interest of a select few (elites). Democracy therefore provides a platform for political agendas that have appeal to a broader spectrum of voters. Scholars of democracy often mention specific institutional guarantees under democracy, such as the right to vote.

Despite their differences, Muslim and secular feminists have at times actively worked together towards democratic goals. They challendged gender constructs and have been able to influence reforms in favor of women (Povey, 2001). However, due to political and cultural differences, such as their level of religiosity, a breakdown of the alliance occurred. The literature on democracy and Islam shows that scholars vary on opinions about the compatibility between the two.

Vali Nasr (2005) argues that Islam and democracy can co-exist by introducing "Muslim Democracy" which integrates "Muslim values and moderate Islamic politics" (p. 14). The idea aims at changing "Islam's relation to politics" rather than changing religious values all together (p. 15). Larry Diamond (1999) explains political culture as the "predominate beliefs, attitudes, values, ideals, sentiments, and evaluations about the political system of their country" (p. 163). He hereby identifies key factors that should be evident should democracy be implemented (moderation, accommodation, cooperation, and bargaining successfully). Religion and national identity have arguably been dominating factors in persistence towards democracy. Therefore, Nasr (2005) suggests that political change will evidently precede religious change (p. 16),

welcoming the idea of marrying democracy and Islam in countries where national identity and

religion are prevailing factors in the resistance towards adopting western democratic values (as

observed in Iran). Such a religious change can be in the form of a formal separation of church

and state, or a modern adaption and interpretation of Islam.

Democracy, with its varying concepts and key categories, most certainly leaves room for

argument and improvement. However, Iris Young (2000) explains that the aggregative and

deliberative models of democracy stand "center-stage" in contemporary political theory (p. 19).

Both models share certain frameworks of democracy, but for them the focus is more on the

process of decision-making rather than its institutional frameworks.

Young (2000) explains that democracy is often associated with a forum of openly

discussing interests, views, and preferences, which will then hopefully lead to an agreed result or

policy. The deliberative model uses democracy as a form of "practical reason," whereby

participants of this model suggest proposals to certain problems and then argue for the

acceptance of the proposal in order to convince others to accept their ideas (p. 22). Here, the

actual democratic process is mainly a forum in which conflicts and problems are openly

discussed; members challenge arguments and eventually come to conclusions to problems. One

of Young's criticisms of deliberative democracy involves the inclusion of members in such a

democratic process, as it is only legitimate "if all those affected by it are included in the process

of discussion and decision-making" (p. 23). Further, Young argues that all members in such a

discussion need to be politically equal and included on equal terms. This inclusion also needs to

give participants the opportunity to openly express and discuss individual interests.

Young explains that deliberative democracy aims at entering into a discussion with the

goal of reaching an agreement. It therefore has to be understood that when entering into such

political deliberation, members have to believe or know that the aim for the discussion is an agreement to problems under debate. Young calls this process "reasonableness" and argues that reasonable participants "cannot come to the discussion of a collective problem with commitments that bind them to the authority of prior norms or unquestionable beliefs." (p. 24). In other words, reasonable people participate in discussions to solve problems that aim at reaching a goal. Such participants have to maintain an open mind and have to be willing to change or alter their opinions, if other members of the discussion persuade them that they were initially incorrect. Further, participants cannot put their own individual preferences above others'.

One of the biggest problems Young seems to find with the deliberative model of democracy is what she refers to as the "privilege argument" (p. 37). The author states that arguments with premises and agreed upon forms of communication often times does not consider frameworks of complex social structures that may prevent inclusion of some interests as "these cannot be voiced with the operative premises and frameworks" (p. 37). Young argues that the model of communication at the core of deliberative model of democracy draws from an institutional context of the "modern west" that includes scientific debates, courts, and modern parliaments (Young, 1996, p. 123). Once again, reason itself is questioned as to how it applies not only to societies in the western world but further to other cultures and social classes as reason often times directly translates into exclusion. Young explains how institutional forms, rhetoric, and rules in Greek and Roman philosophy have been "elitist and exclusive" and defined reason in the modern world (p.123). Further, such institutions have been male and class dominated. Young therefore concludes that debates in political settings are often not open and free enough to compel people to express their goals in accordance to their understanding. This particular

criticism is important in how it applies to democratic communication and, according to Young, general rules of argument can ensure against such inclusionary flaws. Furthermore, articulating political thought in democratic discussions requires norms of speaking represented by privilege and "highly educated people" thus excluding certain social groups (Young, 2000, p. 38). Young argues that speech privilege is often connected to social privilege or other differences among participants. Because of this and deliberative democracy's other failures, Young offers a new model, which she calls communicative democracy.

The principles and values of democratic forms are important to the research about feminism in Iran as many women work towards democratic goals that can eventually lead to the betterment of women's rights in Iran. The literature on Muslim and secular women's groups often involves a discussion about bringing democracy to Iran and the difficulties of applying democratic values to an Islamic society. Young attempts to resolve this problem by offering a new form of political communication, communicative democracy, that may help feminist groups in Iran to work around their complex relationship in order to unite on women's goals.

Communicative Democracy

Young's theory of communicative democracy examines collective identity and the importance of communicative practices in the construction of identity groups. Communicative democracy aims at addressing problems Young sees with social differences in participants of political discussion. Members may have certain culturally biased conceptions of discussions that can lead to exclusion and further silences or devalues people or social groups (Young, 1996). Communicative democracy is concerned with the ways communications, speech, and gestures of women and minorities are oppressed through power relations.

Young suggests not to start out with the goal of unity, but to begin the political discussion with the difference of cultures and perspectives (p. 124). Communicative democracy is based in the idea that "people's ideas about political questions often change when they interact with other people's ideas about experience" (p. 125). Young explains this by arguing that an assumption of prior unity will eventually prevent the need for "the self-transcendence" (p. 125). If political coalition-building and discussions are successful because a prior unity of shared goals between participants exists, then none "need to revise their opinions or viewpoints in order to take account of perspectives and experiences beyond them" (p. 125). Therefore, participants of communicative democratic discussions begin their coalition-building despite differences of interest and culture with the goal of eventually creating a common interest that can be shared by all members.

Communicative democracy acknowledges forms of communications that include greeting, rhetoric, argument and storytelling and further is engaged in building coalitions among minorities (Young, 1996, p. 119). With greeting, the author means simple phrases such as "Good Morning," "How are you?" and "Welcome" (p. 129). Young further explains that when resolving conflict across cultures establishing trust and respect is vital for successful political discussions. Nonlinguistic gestures such as handshakes, hugs, and giving and taking food is also mentioned as being part of the greeting process (p. 129).

Rhetoric, according to Young, creates the audience, the speaker, and the occasion of the discussion as the rhetorical speaker attempts to appeal to the "particular attributes or experience" the audience may have (p. 130). Rhetoric is used to get attention and to keep attention in order to pull the audience in and, hopefully, set the tone for successful democratic discussion and problem solving. When participants differ in aspects such as class and culture

misunderstandings or a lack of understanding often occurs when conflicts are discussed. Young therefore believes that if storytelling is included, that is, narratives that reveal and explain particular experiences of participants in democratic discussions, political debate will be more effective as such narrative can induce compassion while maintaining a distance between members (p. 131).

When discussing democracy and difference, Young (2000) lists several ways in which certain forms of democracy, such as the aggregative model, have previously had a tendency to restrict discussion that have cultural biases. This is a problem in many democratic discussions as society is made up of a variety of people with different cultural backgrounds and convictions. The author also criticizes certain aspects of deliberative democracy that "promote a conception of reason over power in politics" (Young, 1997, p. 62). By this she means that the process of political discussion consists of a "reasoned argument" whereby all participants have to be "free and equal" (p. 62). However, this deliberative assumption does not address the social differences between participants that might prevent members from acting as equal. Young calls this an "internalized sense of the right one has to speak or not to speak," and points to the "devaluation of some people's style of speech and the elevation of others" (Young, 1997, p. 63).

In Iran, several Muslim women's groups are sponsored by the Islamic state, therefore having more influence and power than secular feminists in areas relating to women's rights and social and political advancements. Several factors mentioned in Young's critique of identity groups and coalition politics may have led to the breakdown of the feminist alliance in Iran. Young's argument and theory are therefore important to the research concerning feminism in Iran and for rebuilding an alliance between Muslim and secular feminists. The principles of communicative democracy can be applied to power relations that exist within women's groups in

Iran and aid in identifying the difficulties surrounding the relationship. Such power relations include political access, affiliation, and state sponsoring.

In conclusion, Young's model of communicative democracy improves upon the principles outlined by deliberative democracy as it recognizes that when political problems are to be solved across cultures and classes, different dialogical styles are necessary in order to adequately address collective problems and foster shared understandings.

Viewing Women as a Social Collective

Identifying social differences in political discussions is only one problem that applies to the relationship between Muslim and secular feminists. Another is the problem of viewing women as social collective. In *Intersecting Voices*, Young (1997) discusses the dangers of referring to women as a single group and further argues that when searching for common characteristics of women or their oppressions some women will eventually experience exclusion.

Throughout feminist theorizing, it has become clear that there are certain stipulations when attempting to view women as a social collective. In the past, theorists searched for attributes that would link all women into a group. However, criticisms were brought forth by women of color and women of different social classes throughout the last decades. Young explains that there are certain logical problems when attempting to define and categorize women (p. 13). Her criticisms are also evident in other feminist theorizing, as Chandra Mohanty (1991) has argued that feminism has previously assumed that women are "an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location, or contradictions" (Mohanty, 1991, p. 55).

Judith Butler (1990), drawing upon postmodernist theories, argues that attempting to define gender identity will have results that lead to exclusion and further devalues certain practices and discourses of a group (p. 18). Butler further states that

> Gender can delineate a unity of experience, of sex, gender and desire, only when sex can be understood in some sense to necessitate gender. The internal coherence or unity of either gender, man or woman, thereby requires both a stable and oppositional heterosexuality. Thus we see the political reasons for substantializing gender. (p. 23)

Young, now faced with the dilemma of having to be able (according to feminist theory) to describe women as a social collective but knowing that this is impossible without "false essentialism that normalizes and excludes" proposes to think about gender as a "seriality" (Young, 1997, p. 31). Unlike groups which share objectives and directions, "series" are social collectives "whose members are unified passively by the objects their actions are oriented around" and also by the results of the effects of such actions (p. 23). Women fit into this definition.

Young therefore argues against the essentialist approach of viewing women as social collective that "treats women as a substance," but rather for positioning women as a social collective which is limited by structural relations in a given country. Viewing women as a seriality also avoids problems associated with identity construction and women who, through self-ascription, belong to a particular group along with other women who similarly identify. Such a particular group could consist of women who first and foremost identify as Muslims and secondly as women. However, some women do not believe that being women is an important part of their sense of self, but rather believe culture or ethnicity to more important factor in defining their identity. In such a case, principles of communicative democracy are important as women can come together on the basis of shared goals for all women in Iran. Young explains that often women do form groups by moving from a seriality to shared understanding and mutual

acknowledgement and viewing each other as having experiences or purposes in common. Feminism, according to Young, draws upon "the experience of serialized gender, which has multiple layers and aspects" (p. 36). Young therefore argues that there are several different feminisms, with several groupings of women, many of whose purpose is to politicize gender and work towards changing power relations between women and men in certain areas of everyday life. Women also will always be part of another seriality or group that can bring them together, such as class, race, religious beliefs, or nationality. Therefore, Young argues that women's groups will be partial in relation to the series of "woman" as the agendas of a group can never totally encompass all aspects of the "condition of women as a series" (p. 36). Finally, Young concludes that because of the ways women identify, feminist politics have to be coalition politics and further be open to the conditions and experiences of every woman.

In conclusion, the literature about feminism, Islam, and gender politics is crucial to the research about women's groups in Iran as it links together aspects that help in identifying problems in the relationship between Muslim and secular feminists. The proposals from scholars that argue for a re-interpretation of holy texts can further help in bringing together women with different levels of religiosity; this can simultaneously modernize Islam and allow women to maintain their personal relationship with Islam. The research on the relationship between different women's groups in Iran facilitates an understanding of the problems that occurred in the alliance in the past which may hinder a future reconciliation. A historical timeline provides the context necessary to explain current problems and the ways new challenges can be addressed. Young's argument and theory are important to the research on feminism in Iran and the alliance between Muslim and secular feminists as several factors identified in her critique of identity

groups and coalition politics may have led to the breakdown of the feminist alliance in Iran. Such factors include promoting inclusion and solving collective problems. Young has explained the problems associated with certain structural relations in a given country, which are evident in the theocracy observed in Iran. Through religious law, women are inferior to men. Further, since religion plays such a major part of many women's lives in Iran, it is almost impossible to separate religious beliefs and affiliation from their identity as women. Therefore communicative democracy can be applied as a form of feminist praxis that directly addresses the difficulties that arise when collective problems are discussed by women who have commitments to beliefs that are not shared by the entire group.

Methodology

Bruce Berg (2004) explains that historical research goes beyond the collections of facts, data, or figures, to produce a study of certain relationships that have affected the past and continue to influence the future (p. 233). According to the author, historical research involves a process that "examines events or combinations of events in order to uncover accounts of what happened in the past," which then provides the researcher access to an extensive understanding of human behavior (p. 234). As with other research, an important aspect of historical case studies is the collection of data and the interpretation of the information to be analyzed. Berg therefore argues that historical research can answer questions about past events, seek relationships that influenced the past and connect to the present, and provide detailed understanding of individuals, agencies, or institutions (p. 235). Research about the history of feminism in Iran and a case study of the relationship between Iranian Muslim and secular feminists will uncover the variables that may contribute to a successful relationship between politically active women in Iran.

For the purpose of this research, I will look at several variables associated with multiple social movements and social actions in Iran 1905 until 2008. The cases involve women's activism during the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911), the Iranian Revolution (1979), the alliance of Muslim and secular feminists in Iran from 1990 to 2000, and the relationship of feminists since 2000.

Definition of Concepts and Terms

Social Movements and Social Action

Valentine Moghadam (2003) describes the emergence of feminism in the latter part of the 1990s in Iran as a "broad-based social movement for reform" that called for civil liberties, political freedoms, women's rights, and a relaxation of cultural and social controls (p. 215). Social movements are group actions by people with a common goal or ideology and are geared towards creating political change. Social movements are a series of actions, displays, and campaigns by average citizens. Tilly (1999) explains that collective action is not limited only to political facets but that collective action also has a cultural dimension and any collective effort for social change occurs "in the realms of culture, identity, and everyday life as well as in direct engagement with the state" (p.6).

McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996) define social movements as "a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society" (p. 18). Their point is particularly important for this analysis as the variables selected for the cases under review reflect measurements for collective goals and beliefs. Tilly (1999) further defines social movements as having three populations: power holders, participants, and a subject population but also explain the other emphasis, such as ideological change and identity constructions that often overlap with social movements (p. 257). To Tilly, social movements and actions are "a sustained challenge to power holders in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those power holders by means of repeated public displays of that population's worthiness, unit, numbers and commitment" (p. 260). The author measures each display by analyzing a particular set of actions to determine its presence. In recent years, social movements have included public meetings, demonstrations, marches, the creation of associations and coalitions, and mass media statements (Tilly, 1999). A concept that is found in several social movement research analyses is Tilly's mobilization theory.

This theory explores the displays of collective actions of citizens in a given country. However, the structures of social movements are still debated today, as Theda Skocpol (1979) argued that revolutions are not made but rather simply happen. In later years, the author acknowledged the flaw in her analysis as the Iranian Revolution of 1979 distinctively showed that it was brought about by the millions of participants in Iran (Skocpol, 1982, p. 267). Social movement theories are important as they guide in understanding social behavior and more specifically the dynamics behind collective actions that are geared towards changing a society.

Kuumba (2001) explains the flaws in older social movement analyses of leaving out gender as a unit of analysis. The author notes that scholarly analysis on gender in social movements did not emphasize the importance of theory, while social movement theorists basically ignored the gender aspect (p. 49). Studies of women that emerged during the 1970s and 1980s mostly were historical or descriptive and rarely took gender structures and processes into account (p. 49). According to Kuumba, investigations of women during that time focused on making women's struggle visible rather than applying the theoretical models (p. 50). However, social movement researchers and theorists agree that distinctive features and variables exist in social protests and actions. Such displays include a projection of a collective identity, commitment to shared goals, and an overall unity.

Definitions of Variables

Taking into consideration the unique population of Iran and the cultural boundaries in which most politically active men and women work, the variables selected for the case study of feminism in Iran and the relationship between Muslim and secular feminists are the following:

political affiliation, communication and the use of media, collective identity, and collective goals and objectives.

<u>Political Affiliation</u>

Political affiliation is an important factor to consider when determining the successful outcome of social action. Social movement theorists argue that social actions are political in nature as the achieved goal attempts to bring socio-political change (Tilly, 1999). Further, it is noted that political access and parliamentary opportunities define and shape not only the action itself but further influence the outcome. Tilly explains that political affiliation and political opportunities strongly affect the outcomes of social movements. He stresses the facilitating role that is played by institutional power configurations in the mobilization of resources. This is evident when political elites set up groups to support a particular goal and provide financial assistance. Political affiliation can exist in the form of state sponsorship of a particular group or organization or in the form of a direct involvement in political decision processes by members of a group or organization. Further, political affiliation could also mean access to policy makers and financial resources but is also evident by member's attendance at attending political events (Tilly, 2004). People's physical support and participation at protests and demonstrations, as observed in the history of social movements in Iran, is also an indicator of political affiliation.

Gamson (1974) notes that political ideology and affiliation directly shape social protests and their outcomes by influencing strategies and common goals. In the history of social movements, politically affiliated groups have been organized for different reasons. Some groups strictly exist in helping with the facilitation of the movement while others coordinate public protests and demonstrations. Overall, social movement theorists conclude that political

affiliation and opportunities shape social movements and their outcomes and that most successful social movements were initially affiliated with certain political parties.

Communication and Use of Media

Communication and the use of media are essential aspects of successful social action. Utilizing media to facilitate a desire for change can be seen as a commitment by participants of social action. For instance, activists who publish articles repeatedly help to build a space for other people who similarly strive for political change. Tilly (1999) stresses the importance of mass media statements that include publications in books and magazines, pamphlets, music, petitions, the posting or wearing of identifying symbols, and the adoption of distinctive slogans (p. 260). In recent years, analysis about the importance of communication in social movements and protest has also included the use of the Internet. The use of communication can help with association and coalition formation during social movements as it helps to create a space for people to unite over shared goals. Such forms of communication are: demonstrations, public meetings, lobbying, media presentations, publishing articles in magazines and newspapers, and other related forms of interaction (Tilly, 1999, p. 267).

Gamson (1975) also comments on the importance of the communication system during social protests. The author explains that such forms of communication include television, radio, newspapers, newsmagazines, newsreels, and books (p. 166). Many theorists note the impact of "face-to-face communication" as it can also reach a wider audience; examples of such communication include meetings and speeches held at churches, employee gatherings, and rallies at organizational functions (p. 166). In her theory of communicative democracy, Young (2000) further stresses the importance of communication and communication practices in order to

successfully achieve collective interest and goals. This point is crucial to her analytical approach as it helps to overcome social differences that might prevent members from successfully accomplishing shared goals.

Communication, in a broader sense, is defined as messages sent through the media, or via face-to-face interaction that promote social change, collective goals, political actions, interests in policy changes, or other objectives. Communication is not only important to the mobilization of resources and people during social movements, but further helps in creating an outlet for the articulation of shared objectives and goals.

Collective Identity

When reporting on feminist activism, Nancy Whittier (1995) argues for the importance of collective identity in successful social actions and movements. In order for women (and other participants) to feel part of a group, they have to view themselves as having similar problems and interests which in turn leads to their combined effort to accomplish shared goals. The author extensively analyzed the American women's movement over the past four decades. Whittier explains that what made the women's movement successful were the women's "shared allegiance to a set of beliefs, practices, and ways of identifying oneself that constitute feminist collective identity" (p. 24).   Whittier's emphasis on collective identity is shared by several other social movement theorists. Tilly (1999) explains that individuals are attracted to social movements based on the construction of shared identities and that social actions and movements establish the presence of identity in national politics (p. 262). The author compares identity in social movements to political identity and defines identity as an individual's experiences of shared social relations (p. 264). Gamson (1975) maintains that the construction of a collective

identity is an important aspect of social movements and social protests, explaining that the maintenance of such identity and solidarity can facilitate success in social movements. It is noted that the building of collective identity encourages people to think of themselves as being part of a group with shared interests and ideologies. Such people can consist of groups based primarily on shared racial identities, religious identities, sexual identities, or they can be strictly based on member's participation in a specific political action.

Criticisms of collective identity have been brought forth by feminist scholars such as Judith Butler. The author argues that trying to define identity groups, and more specifically groups based on gender identity, may result in the exclusion of certain members (Butler, 1990). Iris Young (1997) further articulates such criticism in her theory of communicative democracy. Young warns against assuming that collective identity has to be a starting point for successful political coalitions. The fallacy of this assumption poses a problem. Members of groups might have culturally biased conceptions of discussions, such as forums and debating techniques. As a result, some individuals' ideas about political discussions can have an exclusionary effect on other members by devaluing or silencing them. Therefore, Young suggests that people not start out with the goal of unity or a forced collective identity, but begin political discussions with an acceptance of their difference of cultures and perspectives (p. 124).

In summary, social movement theorists overall agree that identity groups give participants a forum in which their opinions and interests can be voiced. Further, identity groups give members a feeling of unity in a collective agenda. Collective identity is crucial to the mobilization and success of social movements and protests and further helps in analyzing members' commitment to a collective goal, but can also pose a problem as political activists are not always able to unite collectively based upon shared identities.

Collective goals, interests, and objectives have been noted by most social movement theorists as being an important factor in attaining a successful outcome. Tilly (1999) discussed collective goals in conjunction with collective identity as common or shared goals are often seen as factor in building coalitions eventually lead to the creation of shared identities. Collective goals are crucial to the organization of social protests and political relationships as they help in facilitating a sense of community and togetherness. The outlining of goals and objectives further helps participants to articulate action plans, strategies, and tactics to attain their desired outcome. Collective goals often arise from an interpretation or discussion of a collective problem by a certain group of people. Such goals are then discussed in private settings or rallies, but also in publications and other media outlets. Groups and organizations often clearly state their objectives and goals during their participation in social movements, social protests, or political coalitions. Overall, Tilly (1999) asserts that the expression of support for a shared demand is an important aspect of unity and predicator for the successful outcome of social movements (p. 260).

Definition of Success

It is important to determine how the data about feminism and social action in Iran will be measured and analyzed. For the purpose of this research, success will be defined as the achievement of a relationship or combined effort that produces a change in policy or government. Several authors such as Tilly (2004) and Gamson (1975) researched the mechanisms associated with successful social movements and social actions, each using different variables to analyze the relationships involved in social actions. Giugni, McAdam, and Tilly

(1999) explain that most existing studies about collective action focus on the concept of success, or to what extent social protests fail or succeed. The authors explain that although it is a legitimate and important aspect of the research to determine whether group actions succeed or fail in regards to their initial goals and objectives, it is also important to remember that social movements are not "homogeneous entities," meaning that each case is different in regards to organization, goals, and outcomes (p. 7). The danger lies in attributing the success (or failure) of social movements entirely to the group effort and assuming that goals and ideas are collectively agreed upon thus failing to recognize the complex relationships and individuals that are involved in social action. Further, other factors, having little to do with the movement, might also have contributed to the result. Researchers in the past have correlated social movements and action with a direct change in a given political environment further focusing on policy outcomes as they are "easier to measure than changes in social and cultural arenas" (Giugni, McAdam, and Tilly, 1999, p. 8). Changes in social and cultural arenas are difficult to identify immediately after a change in government as it takes different methods to analyze such information, including extensive interviews and observations over a longer period of time.

Tilly (1999) explains that the study of social movements has certain methodological difficulties when trying to measure the impact of collective action. The problem is in establishing "a causal link between a given movement and an observed change" (p. 10). The author states that some of these difficulties can be overcome by making methodological choices. Such choices include gathering data about the actions of other actors such as rulers, political parties, interest groups, and the media (p. 10). Further, variables such as political opportunity and affiliation need to be taken into consideration when conducting research on social action. It is also important to

set up a comparative research design that can show the effect of multiple variables during different times on different observed phenomena.

Gamson (1975) suggests that we resolve these problems by simply asking whether the group received what the group sought during a social protest. Furthermore, observers and participants in social action may have different ideas and opinions on whether a given action resulted in success. The author explains that the group's own viewpoints and goals should be the starting points for assessing the achievement of benefits (p. 34). However, groups might also make false interpretations and characterize results as successful for political gains. It is important to note that goals are always defined by the group or organization seeking policy change. Gamson therefore warns against false interpretations by outside sources as to the success of a given social movement or social protest.

Application of Young's Theory

Iris Young's principles of communicative democracy will be applied as a framework to understand the relationship between Muslim and secular feminists in Iran in more depth in the next chapter. This is important as her theory can help to determine what variables were present during their successful relationship that resulted in changes in policy during the 1990s. Further, analyzing the relationship between feminists with Young's analytical approach and variables will help in deciding what future approach might be most useful for feminists in Iran. For the purpose of this case study, the principles of promoting inclusion and coalition building were selected for analysis. In order for members of groups to work together they have to promote inclusion of all individuals by showing a commitment to equal respect for one another. This can be as simple as agreeing that all members have the right to express their opinion publicly. The

building of coalitions is evident by a shared commitment to goals and objectives that can be in the form of attending political meetings. Essentially, participants in coalitions aim at reaching understandings about solutions to shared or collective problems.

Social movement theorists use several different variables to analyze what factors contribute to successful outcomes of social movements and actions. Political affiliation and communication are noted for their important roles in the mobilization of participants of social movements, while collective goals and collective identity are recognized for contributing to a sense of unity among members. However, it is critical to include new analytical theories, such as communicative democracy. Such theories help in examining additional factors that are important when analyzing complex pluralistic populations, identities, and relationships as found in Iran. In the next chapter, I will discuss what variables were present during the four periods selected for this review and further evaluate in depth what factors affected the successful relationship between feminists and non-feminists in Iran.

IV. Analysis

Analysis of Variables

This chapter will analyze the variables and the strength of their presence within each case selected for this study. Women's political affiliation, communication, collective goals, and collective identity during the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911) will be examined. The same variables will be analyzed for participants in the Iranian Revolution (1979) and the alliance of feminists in Iran (1990-2000). The variables will then be examined for the period since the end of the alliance of feminists. Finally, Young's two principles of communicative democracy, promoting inclusion and coalition building, will be used to add another element to study the successful relationship of feminists and non-feminists in Iran in the period of 1990-2000, in order to see if there are any lessons that can be learned to help promote the renewal of such a relationship in the future.

Analysis of Political Affiliation

Historically, participants of social movements in Iran have had different political affiliations. Affiliation is an important variable in order to determine the outcome of social movements and what factors contributed to successes of failures. The political affiliation variable is present when groups of people come together in political settings.

During the years just preceding the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911), several political groups were formed in Iran, all of which had ideas and objectives aimed at reforming Iran's government (Afary, 1996). From 1794 until 1925, Iran was ruled by the Qajar Dynasty, which, towards the end of their reign, had lost several Persian territories to Russia and Great Britain after Imperial wars (Gheissari and Nasr, 2006). However, Iran, unlike many neighboring

countries during that time, was never colonized. Mozaffar al-Din Shah Qajar ruled Iran from 1896 until 1907, during which time Iran faced a financial crisis. His extravagant lifestyle combined with Iran's financial situation caused him to borrow money from Russia and sign away rights to valuable mineral and other concessions to foreign countries, which in turn gave them control over most of Iran's industry (Daniel, 2001). This resulted in early protests led by religious figures as well as educated elites and members of the aristocracy who feared that Iran would eventually be dependent on foreign countries or completely fall under their control.

Most of the political groups that were formed immediately before the Constitutional Revolution consisted of young intellectuals who were influenced by ideas associated with western liberalism and socialism in European countries. Two of these groups were the National Library and the Revolutionary Committee, both of which had deep nationalist roots and objectives (Foran, 1994). During and before the revolution, Iranians were influenced by ideology of modernization and nationalism, fueled by their dependency on Russian and Britain. Women who were active during the Constitutional Revolution were mostly privileged and came from the upper classes of Tehran. According to Afary (1996), several women were part of the constitutional movements and protests from the beginning and organized strikes but also financially supported other constitutionalists. Initially, women were mobilized by the *ulama* (religious scholars) and participated in anti-governmental and anti-colonialist demonstrations (Sedghi, 2007). Later, women organized their own protests and demanded rights that included education and suffrage rights.

The literature on the Constitutional Revolution mainly analyzes the political role of male participants, sometimes completely leaving out women. However, women played a unique role during the political demonstrations that would eventually lead to the establishment of a new

government. With the limited amount of data on women's official political involvement it is important to look at other aspects of how women were politically affiliated during the time. Charles Tilly (1999) explains that political affiliation is also evident once a group of people identify with a political cause. According to Moghissi (1994) women began to create a precise political identity by participating in the protests of the Constitutional Revolution. Initially, women joined the protests as the main goal was to establish a government with a well articulated rule of law that could possibly bring about social change and therefore establish rights for women (Moghissi, 1994, p. 29).

Another way of determining whether the political affiliation variable is present is to analyze what roles women played during the constitutional revolution and if they were active in protests and political activities. In 1905, several women acted as human barriers in protests to armed government forces and further joined demonstrations while demanding rights for women under a new constitution (p. 178). Other women took up arms in support of the new constitution (Sedghi, 2007). In the early years, women mainly supported two political issues, the establishment of a national bank and the boycott of foreign textiles. Naghibi (2007) explains that the movement exercised a mostly secular outlook and language as many revolutionaries adopted western strategies to articulate their demands. In the early stages of the revolution, women mainly aligned themselves with political groups that were already in existence. However, when the actual constitution was signed in 1906, and lacked of language that reflected gender rights, women began to organize themselves apart from governmental parties.

Price (2000) explains that women held meetings in Tehran and collectively adopted resolutions and goals that called for establishing educational institutions for women and girls. Several women's societies and groups were formed including the Anjuman for the Freedom of

Women, which was supported by elite women (Afary, 1996). The group's main objective was an educational reform for women in Iran. During this time several women campaigned and petitioned not only for women's rights but also further supported other causes such as the prohibition of European commodities. Several men within the *majles* and outside of national politics supported women's rights issues, such as education and unveiling, as they viewed them as crucial to modernizing Iran. However, Moghissi (1994) explains that the majority of men opposed women's emancipation and even denounced the formation of certain women's groups (p. 30).

Besides the inner political groups and coalitions of women that were established in Iran during the Constitutional Revolution, several democratic parties were formed as well. One of these groups was the Democrat Party which mainly had a social democratic agenda but also included members with religious backgrounds (Afary, 1996). The main program of the party was a "desire for a modern capitalist state" and it further called for the secularization of politics in Iran (p. 269). Several women supported the ideological goals of the Democrat Party as goals of the group also included a broad range of civil rights and education for all (including women).

Social movement theorists stress the importance of political affiliation and the effect that political groups have on outcomes. Overall, women's participation during the revolution showed that women were fellow political participants in the national struggle for liberation at the beginning of the Constitutional Revolution. Later, women formed their own groups and demanded several rights as women, separately from their male counterparts. They did so by articulating their demands in coalitions they formed. The analysis shows that the variable of political affiliation for women during the Constitutional Revolution is <u>present</u> in the sense that they had political aims.

Political affiliation during the <u>Iranian Revolution</u> in 1979 is two fold. Initially, over two million people, including clerics, men, women, students, and children across the spectrum of social classes and ideologies marched in the streets in opposition to the Pahlavi regime (Gheissari and Nasr, 2006). The Pahlavi dynasty, which came into power through coup d'état, ending Qajar dynasty, ruled Iran from 1925 until 1979, and Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (commonly referred to as the Shah) was the last monarch to rule Iran. However, it is important to note that the Shah did not have a legitimate claim to be royalty as his father did not become Shah until after his birth. Towards the 1970s, Iran experienced economic shortages and inflation, but the main criticisms against the Shah were of his relationship with the West, the westernization and secularization of Iran, and the use of oppressive tactics to maintain his rule. Political tensions erupted in 1977, when oil revenues dropped and the Pahlavi regime consequently cut back financial support to the *ulama* in Qom (Gheissari and Nasr, 2006, p. 64). This brought together religious activists and pro-democracy anti-Pahlavi forces in what would become the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

Supporters of the revolution included Constitutionalists, Marxists, Islamists, and feminists as well as citizens who would not directly identify with a politically active group or ideology (Gheissari and Nasr, 2006, p. 80-84). On the other hand, thousands women marched for their rights during the revolution of 1979 (Darvishpour, 2006). These women demanded equal rights, both politically and socially, in what would become the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to Foran (1994), four distinctive factors led to the outbreak of the Iranian Revolution (dependent development, the repressive state, economic downturn, and the world-systemic opening). The culture and ideology that dictated the course of the revolution helped political groups to formulate their demands and to mobilize themselves for protests.

However, distinctively organized political parties were not present, as they received no support from the current regime. Protests and marches were led by other political or religious figures, such as Ayatollah Khomeini. He had a history of criticizing the Pahlavi government as well as the economic exploitation and secularization by the west. Ayatollah Khomeini became the symbol and face for *Shia* Islam and the Iranian Revolution and millions of people identified with him and his vision for Iran. On the other hand, the democratic Liberation Movement of Iran (LMI) emerged with a Paris-educated leader, Medhi Bazargan (1907-1995). The LMI had several social goals and Bazargan is credited with founding Islamic modernism as his works called for democracy and socialism within the framework of Islam (Foran, 1994, p. 174). More radical groups included the Islamic Mujahidin and the Marxist Fada'ian groups. The ideas of these several different political groups eventually merged temporarily and mobilized and facilitated the millions of Iranian citizens in the actual protests that occurred between 1977-1979 (Foran, 1994). This was possible because people could individually identify with certain aspects or objectives of political groups but eventually only agreed on one common goal that united them (to overthrow the Shah). Protest leaders during the revolution had limited access to policy makers of the Pahlavi regime but kept close contact with revolutionaries outside of Iran.

Naghibi (2007) explains that although many women initially marched during the revolution in support of the overthrow of the Shah, the same women later "marched against the misogynist policies of the Islamic regime and the insults of supporters of the religious right" (p. 92). Many women were alarmed by oppressive language used by clerics that hinted at re-establishing women's honor through veiling. Women increasingly became aware of this problem when the first calls were made in February of 1979 to enforce *hijab*. Protests were organized by middle-class leftist and liberal women, most of whom were politically active in one of the newly

formed women's associations (Moghadan, 2003, p. 98). However, little to no support for these women came from the main political groups of the time, as the overall ideal and goal of the Iranian Revolution was to overthrow the current government. The discourse of the revolution then was based on a predominately Islamic articulation of a new government that strategically left out rights for women and further imposed restriction upon them. Overall, the variable of political affiliation is <u>present</u> in this case as millions of Iranians supported the political protests during the Iranian Revolution. It is evident that, just as during the Constitutional Revolution, women's political participation does not directly translate to an establishment of women's social and legal rights. Women's participation during these two periods (Constitutional Revolution and Iranian Revolution) was therefore only encouraged by traditionalists if their service helped the overall goal of the liberation of Iran.

In the years preceding the <u>alliance</u> of feminists (1990-2000), Iran's political climate was marked by the Iran-Iraq war which lasted from September 1980 to August 1988. Iran has elections; however, elections are not entirely free and fair as they are controlled by the Ayatollah and the Guardian Council. The president of Iran is not the most powerful official in Iran. This role is outlined in Iran's constitution and is held by the Supreme Leader (Grand Ayatollah) who is the highest political and religious authority in Iran. The supreme leader appoints the heads of governmental posts, to include the chief judge, the commander of the armed forces, and the jurists to the Guardian Council (Gheissari and Nasr, 2006). This is important as the Guardian Council ultimately decides what bills discussed in the *majles* become an actual law

Toward the end of the 1980s, Iran experienced a period of reform that afforded individuals more flexibility to be politically active. In July of 1989, Ali-Akbar Hashemi-

Rafsanjani was elected president and served for two terms until 1997. According to Gheissari and Nasr (2006), this period was significant for Iran's state-building as internal economic, social, and political developments drove the state and society in new directions (p. 105). The authors note that the election turnout was only 53 percent of the electorate, therefore making him vulnerable to a conservative backlash (p. 111). Although Rafsanjani was conservative, he supported a moderate position internationally for Iran and attempted to build good relations with Arab countries as well as other Central Asian countries. Domestically, Rafsanjani supported a free market economy and gave greater power to the bureaucracy, therefore promoting its independence from ideological politics (p. 114).

The Rafsanjani period (1989-1997) was transitional for Iran as it produced new outlooks on government in comparison to the postrevolutionary phase but did not construct a new framework for dealing with state and societal relations. The Rafsanjani Presidency attempted to produce a modern state within the politics of the Islamic Republic but disregarded the structural inheritances between Islamic ideology and modern society (Gheissari and Nasr, 2006, p. 127).

Gheissari and Nasr (2006) argue that by the late 1990s, Iranians placed demands on the political system that the Islamic Republic could not accommodate (p. 129). The Iranian people changed significantly in the decade leading up to the 1997 elections as immense gains in literacy, women's participation in the economy, and urbanization of population occurred. This, and other factors, account for the voter turnout in 1997 which led to the election of the reformist president Seyed Muhammad Khatami. Khatami's speeches during his campaign referenced women's status in Iran, democracy, civil society, the rule of law, and further advocated cultural reforms (p. 133). However, the most powerful political positions and decisions still belonged to the religious elite, led by the Ayatollah Khomeini's successor, Aytatollah Khamenei.

Povey (2001) noted that during the alliance of Muslim and secular feminists in Iran (1990-2000) many Muslim feminists were politically affiliated with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Several religious NGOs and women's groups received (financial) support from the Islamic Republic. Muslim women's group had a direct relationship with policy makers in Iran and therefore had an advantage in reaching goals and objectives. On the other hand, the leadership of Iran took an oppositional approach towards secular women's groups for existential reasons. Azadeh Kian (1997) states that after the Iranian Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini encouraged Islamist women's activities in the public sphere, therefore endorsing women's political rights. Khomeini "was persuaded that women's loyalty would inevitably draw the support of their male family members for the regime" (p. 77). Secular feminists, although politically active, had little to no support from the government or main political groups in Iran. Kian (1997) explains that Ayatollah Khomeini strongly criticized the opposition of the traditionalists (by secular women) and launched a campaign in the mid-1980s in order to "purify" the government of secular women who worked in private and public sectors (p. 77). In this campaign, the Ayatollah blamed the opposition, and therefore secular women, for having ties to the west that corrupt the government of Iran (p. 77). Kian also notes that the majority of female members of the Parliament of the first to third *majles* came from established religious families in Iran. They therefore had a larger influence on politics and outcomes as their families had long standing relationships with policy makers in Iran.

According to Tilly (2004) political affiliation is indicated by access to policy makers but also by attendance at political events and meetings. Regardless of the treatment that secular feminists and women received by the leadership of Iran, these women's groups actively participated in public protests for various causes and goals. Secular women often collected

signatures and campaigned for women's rights in the streets of Tehran (Barlow and

Akbarzaddeh, 2008). In 1997, millions of women voted for the liberal cleric Muhammad

Khatami, thus actively participating in politics. Also, thirteen reform minded women were

elected at the end of the 1990s to the *majles*, therefore forming a link between the Islamic

government and the demands for gender rights by women in Iran (Barlow and Akbarzadeh,

2008). Both Muslim and secular feminists were either politically affiliated or politically active

during the period of 1990-2000 further indicated by the presence of the communication variable.

Therefore, the political affiliation variable is <u>present</u> in this case.

Since the <u>end of the alliance</u> after 2000, Muslim feminists have had the same or similar

access to policy makers as in the past (Povey, 2004). What began as a reform in the 1990s,

eventually ended in a conservative backlash. Khatami's strong presence during the polls did not

translate to a similar presence in the executive branch of the government and the conservative

leadership quickly limited Khatami's room to maneuver (Gheissary and Nasr, 2006, p. 138).

Conservatives regained control of the *majles* in 2004, when the Guardian Council disqualified

several reformist candidates (p. 141). In June 2005, the conservative mayor of Tehran, Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad, was elected president. In the first three years of his presidency, Iran's real gross

domestic product (GDP) fell short. Further, Ahmadinejad advocated changes to Iran's family

planning policy that would modify existing birth control policies. According to Human Rights

Watch (2007) the respect for basic human rights in Iran, specifically freedom of expression and

assembly, deteriorated in 2006 under Ahmadinejad's Presidency.

During this time, women in the *majles* were predominately conservative and even

reversed some of the policies that were previously made by reformist minded women. Religious

feminists maintained that women's subordination in Iran is a direct result of misinterpreted Islamic law by men. They therefore continued to campaign for a re-interpretation of holy texts. Muslim feminists did not call for a separation of church and state but believed that the divide between Islam and women's rights can be eliminated through a feminist re-reading of the holy texts. Religiously oriented feminism continued to demand practical changes for women in Iran, while secular feminists and women emphasized the importance of a structural change in politics in order for women to be awarded the same rights as men. This is important as Iran's constitution specifies that women's rights should be administered by the state's official interpretation of Islamic law (Barlow and Akbarzadeh, 2008).

Although women are elected to the *majles*, Shirin Ebadi (2006) describes the space allocated for women in the Parliament as an empty room without doors or tables, questioning how women are able to discuss legislation for the betterment of all women if they are not even provided with an adequate space to do so (p. 186). This might be understood a reflection of how women's issues are dealt with in Iran in general. Secular feminists have remained politically active (which is evident by their continuous support and fight for women's rights). They continue to collect signatures for specific women's rights (i.e. education, travel, *hijab*) and submit to political publications. Secular and Muslim feminists also continue to attend political gatherings both in Iran and in other countries and relate to each other on the basis of practical changes for women. The political affiliation variable has therefore been <u>present</u> since the break of the alliance.

Analysis of Communication and the Use of Media

Scholars of social movements and social action stress the importance of communication and the use of media in order to facilitate shared goals and interests and to give participants a space to articulate their demands while creating a sense of community. The use of communication can be measured by analyzing the amount of published journals, newspapers, and other forms of media during each case under review.

During the <u>Constitutional Revolution</u> (1905-1911) women adopted secular language and a non-religious discourse in order to articulate equal rights in Iran. Mehrdad Darvishpour (2001) analyzed several collections of women's writings during the Constitutional Revolution and notes that women who wrote articles during that time used secular language. This parallels with other language found during the more general demands of constitutionalists during that time that mainly described a desire for a modern government, influenced by secular language of the west. Women contributed articles to publications such as *Peyke Nesvan* (The Messenger of Women), *Zaban-e Zanan* (The Language of Women), and *Name-e Banovan* (The Women's Letter). The first narratives on women's rights were published by middle-class women (Moghissi, 1994, p. 32). The content in these publications was broad covering issues such as education, child care, and national progress, thus reaching a wide selection of women. Several progressive newspapers of the time (such as *Qanun, Soraya*, and *Nida-yi*) published articles by male and female writers who demanded gender rights (Price, 2000). In 1910, *Danesh* (Knowledge), the first female produced journal was published in Iran (Moghissi, 1994). The effective use of communication helped women during the Constitutional Revolution to articulate their demands and create a space for other women to express their struggle. The use of media therefore gave women a forum to become politically active and maintain a relationship with members of reformist

organizations. In 1911, the book *Freedom of Women*, written by an Egyptian activist who supported emancipation, was translated into Persian (Price, 2000). Further, Afary (1996) explains that several national newspapers were published that detailed women's patriotic support for the liberation of Iran during the Constitutional Revolution, thus reaching a wider population of women who were unable to attend political meetings in the capital.

After the constitution was signed in 1906 and women publicly began demanding educational reforms for women, many conservative members of the *ulama* (religious scholars) opposed them. Women published letters of protests to argue that opponents of women's education had no basis for their attacks (Afary, 1996, p. 190). Further, a national newspaper (*Habl al-Matin*) published a letter by a woman who publicly challenged the religious opposition by *ulama*, further using the media to raise awareness (p. 191). The Constitutional Revolution combined with women's publications helped to stimulate gender consciousness among female activists in Iran. What initially started as participation in the larger agenda of liberating Iran eventually shifted to articulating women's oppression and their own struggle. Moghissi (1994) notes that more than 20 women's periodicals were published in this period, each of which criticized an aspect of women's inferior position in Iran (p. 35). Further, the communication effort helped in mobilizing women's protests and demonstrations during the Constitutional Revolution. Women organized themselves to protest against *hijab* and collectively demanded the right to vote. Afary (1996) and Moghissi (1994) conclude that women's rights activities immensely increased in numbers in the decade following the Constitutional Revolution. Considering the level of activity regarding various publications and protests attended and organized by women, the communication variable is present during the women's involvement in Constitutional Revolution.

Communication during the Iranian Revolution is evident by the vast organization of public protests and demonstrations that occurred in late 1978 and early 1979. Several opposition groups and organization emerged during the revolution including the National Front of Iran, the Tudeh Party of Iran, and the Organization of Iranian People's Fedai Guerillas (OIPFG). The Iranian television covered the protests of the Iranian Revolution on a mass level and newspapers and magazines published extensively on organizations, groups, and news relating to the revolution (Mir-Hosseini, 1999). The Iranian newspaper *Kayhan* received over 40,000 letters when they asked, "What is wrong with Iran?" in 1977 (Foran, 1994, p. 176). Publications during the time preceding the Iranian Revolution were credited by several scholars for the successful facilitation and mobilization of masses during the actual protests that followed. Further, poets and prominent writers organized meetings in Iran that lasted around ten days and attracted 3,000 to 15,000 listeners (p. 176). On the other hand, the newspaper *Ittila'at* published an article in January 1978 that slandered Khomenei, which then led to fatal fights between 4,000 and 10,000 people (p. 179). The initial protests of the revolution were also organized through the traditional social networks of religious conservatives.

The Iranian Revolution further unfolded in the area of televised news, shedding light on current regime problems while also broadcasting western thoughts on government and democratization (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi, 1994). Activists communicated via underground leaflets and newspapers, often in the form of religious chants and commands. The success of such communications is evident by the fact that on 28 March 1978 simultaneous demonstrations occurred in fifty-five places in Iran (Foran, 1994). Several social movements scholars extensively researched and reported on the mechanisms of the Iranian Revolution,

whereby the mobilization, communication, and use of mass media is often credited with being crucial to the success of the revolution. Tilly (2004) explains that slogans and depictions of unity are aspects of communication during social movements. Documentary footage of newsreels made during the revolution and analysis of Iranian biographies reveal distinctive slogans that were used during the protests. Such slogans include the common chant "*Marg bar Shah*" (Death to the Shah) which was often heard during the revolution by the masses to publicly show and voice their discontent with the current regime (Satrapi, 2000; Ebadi, 2006; Sedghi, 2007).

In their book *Small Media, Big Revolution*, Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammadi (1994) detail the important role that small media (leaflets and audio cassettes) played in reaching the goal of overthrowing the Shah. This is mainly because national television and newspapers were heavy censored by the regime and revolutionaries were forbidden to broadcast their protests. Taking into consideration the predominant use of mass media during the Iranian Revolution, the variable of communication is <u>strongly present</u>.

Communication during the <u>alliance</u> of Muslim and secular feminists in mainly evident by articles submitted to various magazines and the amount of literature about the women's press in Iran. Povey (2001) explains that in the period of 1990-2000, women's issues were discussed in the media due to a "degree of freedom of expression" (p. 57). The author notes that women who published represented different political views and discussed socio-economic and socio-political issues. This was mainly possible as then-president Mohammad Khatami loosened several media restrictions and previous censoring. Moghadan (2003) explains that the women's press grew immensely after the Iranian Revolution and "included newspapers, magazines, and women's studies journals such as *Zan, Zanan*, *Jens-e Dovvom*, *Farzaneh,* and *Hoghough-e Zanan*" (p.

218). The women's press in Iran translated classic feminist essays from authors such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Virginia Woolf, and Alison Jagger. Female Iranian filmmakers produced several documentaries that depicted women's struggle in Iran in various settings. In the film *Divorce Iranian Style* (1998) Kim Longinotto and writer Ziba Mir-Hosseini document several weeks in an Iranian divorce court, outlining the proceedings of a woman trying to divorce her husband and another woman fighting for custody of her daughters. Both women in the documentary are confronted with the gender biased laws in Iran and the cultural repercussions of divorces. *Runaway* (2001) is yet another documentary about a group of young girls who run away from their homes and end up in a women's shelter in Tehran. The film focuses on the struggle of women who oppose abusive and biased power of their male family members, but also the Iranian theocracy. Both films show women in empowering roles thus showcasing a common connection of oppression and overcoming oppression through media.

Secular lawyers such as Mehranguiz Kar and Shirin Ebadi continuously contributed articles on women's rights to several magazines often working hand in hand with the Muslim editor Shahla Sherkat of *Zanan* magazine (Moghadan, 2003). Also noteworthy are the many autobiographies of women that were published during the time, detailing their personal everyday struggles with living in a theocracy. *Zanan*, founded in 1992 by Shahla Sherkat, is quoted by several authors as playing a pioneering role in the rethinking of women's issues and the construction of gender in the Islamic Republic. Azadeh Kian (1997) further supports this claim by explaining that secular women contributed to new Islamist magazines such as *Farzaneh* thus showcasing the possibility of a relationship despite ideological differences (p. 91).

Povey (2004) recounts the many women's organizations and NGOs that emerged between 1990 and 2000 and attributes the relationship of women and feminists to the successes

that these organizations had. By collectively contributing and publishing articles for a shared

cause, women in Iran were able to claim a space in which each could identify with one another.

This view is further supported by Moghadan (2003), who states that "Islamic and secular

feminists alike have discussed, debated, and exchanged ideas through the media, especially in the

lively prodigious women's press" (p. 219). Muslim and secular feminists, as well as other

women, were able to shed light on the reality of their lives by contributing to publications and

articulating new demands for reform. Communication and the use of media peaked during the

alliance of Muslim and secular feminists between 1990 and 2000 and the variable of

communication is therefore <u>strongly present</u>.

<u>The end of the alliance</u> occurred after numerous secular and Muslim feminists as well as

other politically active women, journalists, and intellectuals attended a conference in Berlin in

2000 to discuss the reform movement in Iran. The Berlin Conference was initially approved by

Iranian authorities, but was later considered "un-Islamic (Barlow and Akbarzadeh, 2008). The

subsequent arrests of several attendees had negative effects on the press releases by secular

feminists. Initially, other secular feminists and writers worried that their published material

would cause problems with the government and eventually result in arrests, thus the level of

publishing decreased after the Berlin conference. However, Povey (2001) explains that after

several secular lawyers were arrested and tried behind closed doors (including Shirin Ebadi),

Azam Taleghani (head of Women's Society and Iranian Islamic Institute) organized a meeting in

her headquarters and invited the women who were arrested to speak about their experience (p.

67). This opened up the possibility for a future alliance between feminists in Iran. Religious

feminist Shahla Sherkat (editor of *Zanan* magazine), who also attended the conference and was

arrested soon after, was granted a public trial and successfully appealed her prison sentence (Barlow and Akbarzadeh, 2008). Many secular feminists argued that the harsh sentences meted out to secular women mounted to a human rights violation that should have been condemned by all women. Despite the lack of support by Muslim feminists for their secular counterparts, Muslim feminist Shahla Sherkat stated that her magazine is "still open to Kar, Lahiji, and Ebadi", thus welcoming an alliance (Povey, 2001, p. 67). This statement shows that although a break in the alliance occurred that was based on ideological differences, some Muslim feminists were still supportive of a relationship with their secular counterparts. However, the cause of this ideological divide still has to be addressed by feminists in Iran in order to re-establish a relationship. Although several joint women's publications existed after 2000, the data available for the documentation of the relationship between Muslim and secular feminists and their media interaction is limited. This might be due to several measures taken during the presidency of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that resulted in media censorship. Therefore, for this period of 2000-2008 the communication variable is only <u>slightly present.</u>

<u>Analysis of Collective Identity</u>

Collective identity can be measured by analyzing people's commitment or identification with a particular group. People in such groups can identify with aspects of religion, race, or gender but also by mere participation of a specific social action. Members of identity groups usually think of themselves as belonging to a set of people with shared commitments and goals that collectively work towards achieving said goals.

Sedghi (2007) explains that during the <u>Constitutional Revolution</u> women organized themselves for the first time "as nationalists, to free Iran from despotism and imperialism, and to

liberate themselves, as women and feminists" (p. 50). It is noted by both Naghibi (2007) and

Price (2000) that women came together to collectively pursue their goals, therefore establishing a

group with shared identities. Price, when explaining the history of women during the

Constitutional Revolution, states that women were active in the boycotting of foreign goods as

well as fund raising for the establishment of the First National Bank. Women held meetings to

articulate shared objectives and actively participated in the constitutional struggle. As noted

earlier by Naghibi (2007), most women during the Constitutional Revolution adopted secular

language and were mainly privileged and educated, thus belonging to a specific set of women.

Darvishpour (2001) explained the ideology during the Constitutional Revolution as a modern

compromise of western thought and clerical rule that was inspired by the constitutions of

Belgium and France.

        During 1906-1908 women became active and formed women's groups, opened private

schools, and articulated demands to the *ulama* (Afary, 1996). Women often invited lecturers to

speak about women's rights and notices of such meetings were facilitated by the Democrat Party.

Other prominent and politically active women organized private gatherings in houses to discuss

women's rights. Participation at such events further facilitates a sense of community and

belonging and helped women during the constitutional struggle to identify with one another.

Collective identities were further formed within the shared identities of women during that time.

Afary (1996) tells the story of a group of prostitutes who marched unveiled through the streets of

Tehran while chanting "The constitution has given us freedom to abandon our religious

obligations and live as we wish" (p. 133). According to Sedghi (2007), several hundred women

marched into public galleries, concealing weapons under their veils and demanded Iranian

independence (p. 45). This shows that although a collective identity variable exists, the overall

group of women further has different identities that certain women subscribed to. Women demanded their rights collectively by crossing streets and stopping wagons campaigning for education and their rights to vote. Further, these protests were not only limited to Tehran, but also occurred in Quazvin and Isfahan (Afary, 1996).

A collective ideology existed during the constitutional period. Initially, women joined the countless men who demanded a new constitution and later women formed their own groups and ideologies and demanded educational and political rights. According to Moghissi (1994) women changed their self-image and consciousness of their place in Iranian society and engaged in collective activism with other upper and upper middle class women (p. 31). Further, scholars note that the concept of nation as another factor that women identified with at the time. This concept allowed women and other reformists to create a space in politics and in communities (Foran, 1995). Women who identified with the language and need for modernization then were able to articulate their demands by combining aspects of nationalism and western feminism to frame their agenda. Another way of showing the presence of the collective identity variable is to analyze the ways in which women represented themselves physically during the time. Nationalist women wore traditional Iranian-made garments while supporting the boycott of foreign goods and public demonstrations for the liberation of Iran. Afary (1996) explains that the nationalist discourse that was present during the constitutional period helped women (and men) build a sense of collective honor for their country. Considering the data on collective identity during the Constitutional Revolution, it can be determined that the variable was present.

People showed their support for a new government during the Iranian Revolution for various reasons. Moghadam (1995) explains that reasons for opposing the Shah were varied and

included "economic deprivation, political repression, and identification with Islamism" (p. 341). The revolution was supported by college students, women, Marxists, and Islamists and shows no coherent identity besides a distinctive shared goal. A split in religious identity was especially evident and Moghadam (1995) notes that women were also divided in terms of pro-Islamization and anti-Islamization activists. The author explains that sit-ins and protests were organized and led by "middle class leftist and liberal women, most of them members of political organizations" (p. 341). According to the post-1979 Islamic Republican Party (IRP), the causes of the revolution were not economic but rather based on the failure of the Shah to adhere to Islam (Foran, 1994).

Moghadam (1994) cautions that the revolution should not be seen as an Islamic revolution but rather as populists as the Islamization did not go into effect until after February 1979. Populism is defined by the author as "a petty-bourgeois movement or ideology that posits the existence of an undifferentiated people and is led by a charismatic leader" (Moghadam, 1994, p. 193). Populism is used to overcome an identity crisis by people with different values and cultures in order to evoke a sense of national identity that further opposes the current government. During the Iranian Revolution, this opposition was directed at the westernized economic and political elites of Iran as well as western imperialists (Moghadam, 1994, p. 195). However, it is important to remember that identities in Iran were made up of a complex population of people with strong ideologies, not all affiliated with religious groups. Some authors have argued that the majority of the ideology during the revolution can be summarized as nationalist *Shia* which was fueled by a backlash to the gradual secularization and adoption of western ideology that occurred during the Pahlavi regime (Moaddel, 1992). Gheissari and Nasr (2006) state that "the revolutionary movement in Iran in 1979 was politically uniform, but it as

culturally and socially eclectic in that it included both fundamentalists and secular liberal and leftist elements" (p. 66). This was possible due to a temporary shared goal.

Women during the Iranian Revolution further divided in terms of identity formation. According to Moghissi (1994), women fell into three categories according to their social, class, and ideological backgrounds. Urban working women were attracted by the revolution as they hoped it would improve living and material conditions, but did not subscribe to an identity group or Islamic ideology. The second group of women consisted of the urban middle-class women from religious backgrounds. These women accepted their traditional roles as mothers and wives and would eventually become part of the "army of black *chadors*" who demonstrated in major cities throughout the revolution in support of clerics (p. 57). The third group, the mostly young educated women from new (and traditional) middle-class families, were motivated to participate in the protests by secular nationalist goals. According to Moghissi, these women were not driven to join the demonstrations based on economic reasons and were not committed to a feminist agenda but they mainly aligned themselves with their male counterparts and opposed foreign political domination (p. 58). Through the initial articulation of political demands by several different groups, millions of protesters united in the Iranian Revolution. The ideas and goals that included nationalism, democracy, socialism, radicalism, fundamentalism, and liberalism appealed to a vast range of people. Considering the large number of opposition groups that were politically affiliated with the revolution as well as the absence of data that describes a distinctive constructed identity group to which members ascribed to, the variable for collective identity during the Iranian Revolution is not present.

The variable of collective identity during the <u>alliance</u> of Muslim and secular feminists is <u>not present</u> as women grouped and organized themselves according to their religious views. Although women were able have a working relationship with combined goals and shared commitments, the frameworks in which they articulated their goals often originated in either religious or secular language. Povery (2001) explained that feminists in Iran seek to discuss feminism and forms of feminism openly and to let women decide on their own whether they wish to identify with one form of feminism. The author, who conducted extensive interviews with feminists and women in Iran, further states that women define "the concept of feminism according to their political views and their level of secularism or religiosity" (p. 63). It is evident from the literature and data that the major split between women in Iran is based on either an opposition to a traditional reading of Islam or the problematic principles surrounding a re-reading of Islamic law and constitutional rights of women (Povey, 2001, p. 65). While some Muslim feminists advocate a re-interpretation of holy texts, some secular feminists strictly oppose it, and in recent years have even argued for a structural approach to accomplish goals in the women's rights arena. However, some secular women and secular feminists support a re-reading of the holy texts in hopes that it can produce a gender neutral language in support of women's rights. This is important as it would help other Muslim women in identifying with aspects of feminist thought without feeling as though they must abandon their own religious beliefs. Povey argues that Iran's female population consists of a "plurality of identities" therefore directly recognizing the diverse population that makes up women in Iran (p. 65).

Sedghi (2007) explains that politically active women in Iran come from diverse backgrounds. Women are pro-regime or anti-establishment, religious or secular, come from the rural areas or from the cities, privileged or poor, and overall, differ in their own experiences.

Several different identity groups exist among Muslim women alone. They differ in terms of their level of religiosity, to their stance on gender equality and veiling (p. 247). However, many Muslim women and Muslim feminists fully support the regimes' ideology and try to work on women's rights within the framework of Islam, therefore taking a practical approach. Muslim feminists are usually women who work at universities or other high governmental positions and further run the state funded women's groups (Sedghi, 2007). On the other hand, secular women and feminists oppose the integration of church and state. However, it is important to note that these women are not necessarily non-believers of Islam, but that they consider themselves secular as they view religion as a private matter (p. 248). Secular feminists and secular women come from urban areas and mostly work outside the home. Moghissi splits the group that makes up secular feminists into three further categories: revolutionaries, rebels, and reformers. Revolutionaries, women who were the early opponents to the new Islamic laws that were put in place immediately following the Iranian Revolution, fight the practice of veiling by campaigning for the removal of the law. Rebels, a new generation of women who fight for the promotion of their rights, test the boundaries of modesty codes by dressing in colorful *hijab*. Reformers dedicate their lives to a betterment of women's, civil, and democratic rights (p. 255). Women in this category are lawyers, filmmakers, poets, and journalists and do not work in high governmental positions. Considering the many identities of Iranian women, it is evident that women cannot be categorized into a single (or even two) groups. Despite the ideological and political differences between secular and Muslim feminists and other women, they have been able to form short term alliances on the basis of shared goals for women's rights. However, the variable of collective identity in the time of an active alliance (1990-2000) is not present.

The analysis of the <u>end of the alliance</u> indicates that no coherent identity between Muslim and secular feminists exists. Moreover, after the events that occurred as a result of the Berlin conference in March 2000, Muslim and secular feminists ended their unity. Povey (2001) explains that the events surrounding the Berlin conference as well as the post-parliamentary election period in early 2000 showed that Muslim and secular feminists in Iran are faced with challenges based on "diverse views and vested interests" (p. 67). Such diverse views mainly include differences in political and religious ideology and over the role of religion in laws and politics. Secular women and feminists, who temporarily fought for practical results, have reverted to their previous stance that in order for women in Iran to be emancipated, a separation of church and state is necessary. This structural approach directly conflicts with the Muslim feminists' support of the regime. The nature of their diversity ultimately divides feminists in Iran which directly affects their coalition and combined efforts to work towards democratic goals and women's rights and further emphasizes their differences. Muslim and secular feminists not only have the strict ideological divide to deal with, but further come from diverse social and class backgrounds. The crucial difference between the period when feminists were in an alliance and the period since 2000 is that in the former women were able to come together on the basis of collective goals, thus taking an approach similar to the analytical framework of Young's communicative democracy. Their relationship was based on a shared commitment rather than a shared identity, whereas it seems that since the end of the alliance Muslim and secular feminists have mainly focused on their differences in identity and beliefs.

Additionally, other political events within the country further divided feminists in Iran. In 2006, President Ahmadinejad expressed his wishes for Iranian women to focus on raising their children and to return to their primary responsibilities as mothers and wives (Barlow and

Akbarzadeh, 2008). This statement shocked many women in Iran and indirectly widened the gap

between feminists as Muslim feminists accepted political Islam as a structure in which they live

(Barlow and Akbarzadeh, 2008, p. 22). Dress codes were (at times) violently enforced, and the

shift in gender reforms observed during the 1990s seemed to result in a backlash during the

Presidency of Ahmadinejad.

The events that followed the Berlin conference directly showed the limitations of the

relationship between Muslim and secular feminists as the incident compelled women to back

away from compromise and harden their positions, therefore unable to unite and cooperate on

shared goals. Secular feminists (such as Kar and Lahiji) stress the importance of looking beyond

Islam for sources of women's rights as they believe that assuming that women's rights ought to

be formulated within the language of Islam would mean to be "hostage to a set of ideas and

principles that are grounded in the experience of seventh century Arabia" (Barlow and

Akbarzadeh, 2008, p. 32). This view is shared by other secular women and feminists as their

approaches to reform women's rights have remained an articulation that advocates a separation

of church and state. Scholars such as Valentine Moghadam have argued that religious-oriented

feminists might soon have to adopt secular language in order to fight for women's rights as a

reinterpretation of Islam while challenging patriarchy cannot be realized under a theocracy (p.

34). This is so because the denial of women's rights is a political issue that directly originates

from the power structure of Iran (p. 34). Considering the events that occurred after the Berlin

conference and the clear visibility of a divide between feminists in Iran that is based on

ideological differences, the collective identity variable is <u>not present</u>.

Analysis of Collective Goals

Political theorists argue that collective goals are important to the overall organization and success of social movements and actions (Tilly, 1999). Collective goals aid in building a sense of community among participants and further promote togetherness by working towards shared goals. This sense of community arises when participants realize their collective goals and jointly commit to reaching their goals.

During the Constitutional Revolution women demanded equal opportunities and gender rights (Price, 2000). Darvishpour (2001) explains that women fought for educational rights but also demanded political equality with men. The author further states that other goals included women's rights to employment but also protest against compulsory *hijab*. The practice of compulsory veiling was also discussed and criticized by many women during the Constitutional Revolution. Princess Taj al-Saltanah, a member of the royal family, openly questioned the patriarchal culture present in Iran and opposed arranged marriages and veiling. She argued that "many of the problems of the nation stemmed from the practice of veiling" (p. 196).

Furthermore, Naghibi (2007) states that Persian women "demanded national and international recognition of their rights as women and as nationalists" (p. 31). She also explains that women tried to promote suffrage and demanded rights as "citizens of the new nation" during the Constitutional Revolution (p. 40). The fight for universal suffrage was not officially documented and published until the second constitutional period of 1909-1911, when *majlis* delegate Vakil al-Ru'aya called for women's suffrage during a debate about new electoral laws (Afary, 1996). Before this time, thousands of women were mainly active in supporting the overall causes of liberation, but increasingly became aware of the lack of women's rights in the new constitution. Several women who published in periodicals, such as the social democratic

newspaper *Iran-I Naw*, articulated a need for a feminist element in Iran in order to modernize the entire nation (p. 207).

Sedghi (2007) argues that women during the Constitutional Revolution were advocates for developing political rights for women and further explains that "education was a key to women's advancements and their efforts to restrain patriarchal control" (p. 52). Women writers of the time tried to convince men of the benefits of an educated mother and wife, as did Mary Wollstonecraft over a century earlier during the French Revolution. The argument here was that education for women would ultimately translate to an overall advancement of the entire nation as educated women would be able to "raise more enlightened citizens and make the nation stronger" (Afary, 1996, p. 197). However, most Iranian men did not accept this view and did not support the activism of women during the early twentieth century. The right to an education was supported by a wide range of women as many women were not trained in a profession and had no education, and therefore directly depended on their husbands. According to Afary (1996) many women who left abusive marriages became homeless or resorted to prostitution. Therefore, the goals of women during the constitutional period had material as well as ideological roots. As with the Iranian Revolution decades later, women during the Constitutional Revolution initially supported the overall demonstrations and protest and called for Iran's independence and a new government. However, they later changed their views and goals and demanded the right to education, the unveiling of women, and political equality. The collective goals variable is therefore <u>present.</u>

As previously mentioned, people participated during the protests of the <u>Iranian Revolution</u> for varying reasons. Naghibi (2007) explains that although a range of political groups

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with very different interests were active during the revolution, people agreed on only one point: "the desire to end what they saw as the subjugation of the nation to a corrupt and repressive regime heavily influenced by the west, and by the United States in particular" (p. 90). Participants aligned and temporarily united on the basis of this one goal hoping that their individual agendas would ultimately be addressed as well. Moghadam (2003) explains that in the year leading up to the revolution people in Iran demanded social and political reforms that included free elections. Further, Iranians accused the Shah of corruption and of violating the constitution.

Although several authors note that the demands before the revolution were initially articulated in socio-political terms rather than ideological and religious language, Gheissari and Nasr (2006) describe the tone during the revolution as "a climate for aggressive and confrontational ideological posturing that imparted a particular language and mode of behavior" (p. 78). At first, the revolution was not based in overall ideology or structure. It largely depended on the successful mobilization of people protesting in the streets. These protests and the revolutionary politics were heavily influenced by Khomeini who had a vast following. However, it is important to understand that although Khomeini became the face of the revolution and the unofficial leader of protests, many Iranians did not directly support and agree with his ideological views but rather joined the masses of protests to reach a short term goal.

Also important to note is that veiling, or veiled women, became an important symbol of the revolution as it stood for Islamism, anti-imperialism, and anti-westernism (Sedghi, 2007, p. 199). According to Sedghi (2007), the Iranian Revolution opened a new chapter in women's history in Iran as veiled women became powerful revolutionaries whereas their secular counterparts were devalued and discriminated against during the revolution (p. 200). This is

important as the divide between women, based on ideological differences, is still in place in Iran today. Overall, in 1979, men and women in Iran temporarily united and collectively called for the overthrow of the Shah with the objective of establishing a new government. The variable of collective goals is therefore <u>present.</u>

<u>During the alliance</u>, Muslim and secular feminists had several collective goals and objectives. Moghadan (2003) explains that during the 1990s, women worked on shifts in gender policy and articulated legal strategies for women's rights (p. 210). Women and independent feminists worked on several policies under President Rafsanjani, and in 1992 the High Council of the Cultural Revolution changed several employment policies which in turn supported an incorporation of women in the labor force (Moghadan, 2003). Further, women demanded representation in government and official positions, and after Khatami's election many formerly active women became increasingly involved in the fight for women's rights. Shirin Ebadi, who was removed as a judge by the revolutionary regime after the Iranian Revolution, wrote over eleven books advocating women's rights. She was also the first Iranian woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize (Sedghi, 2007). Many secular feminist, women, and lawyers advocated and promoted human rights, democracy and freedom and believed in the separation of church and state. Several feminists and politically active women (as well as men) started to object to aspects of the traditional readings of the holy text. Islamic law and the legislation surrounding women's roles and rights were an area which secular as well as Muslim feminists sought to improve (Povey, 2001).

Muslim and secular feminists had collective goals and objectives that included issues within family law. Iran's policy of Islamization has affected aspects, marriage, family planning,

divorce, and child custody. In the past, the Civil Code of Iran outlined thirteen as the minimum age a woman is mature enough to marry. However, the age of marriage essentially was left to the judge and in the past girls as young as ten or eleven were allowed to be married (Paidar, 1995). The changes made during the Pahlavi regime in regards to family planning were reversed, which resulted in an immense growth in population. Although women had the right to ask for a divorce on the grounds that their husband was insane, infertile, or imprisoned, divorce proceedings took noticeably longer for women and required additional supporting evidence for their claims (p. 292). Laws about child custody affected women from diverse backgrounds, especially after the Iran-Iraq war when widows felt the discriminatory laws first hand. Many widows were forced to hand over their children to their husbands' relatives, as they received custody by law in Iran.

During the 1990s, Iranian women and feminists have demanded a representation of women in parliament and other political roles but also continued their efforts to further women's educational rights. Mir-Hosseini (1999) explains in detail the many collective goals women in Iran have had in the 1990s and extensively analyses several demands and reforms in the area of family law. The collaboration between Muslim and secular feminists and existence of collective goals is also evident by the vast number of articles that were published in a combined effort in magazines such as *Zanan*. Moghadan (2003) states that such articles openly criticized the subordinate status of women and further called for "the modernization of family law" (p. 218).

However, it is evident that although women and feminists in Iran united based upon shared goals, these goals were only temporary areas of concern that were met with a practical approach, rather than a reformist approach. Taking into consideration the many combined goals by Muslim and secular feminists during the 1990s, the collective goals variable is <u>strongly present</u>.

Since the <u>end of the alliance</u> that occurred in the years following the 2000 Berlin conference, a visible absence of collective goals existed. Rebecca Barlow and Shahram Akbarzadeh (2008) explain in detail the events leading to the ideological divide between Iran's feminist forces (p. 32). The authors explain that Muslim feminists, ultimately committed to Islam, could not unify with and support the secular feminists who had been arrested following the conference (p. 32). This may be due to the relationship between the state and sponsored Muslim women's groups, as these groups directly depend on the state's support and therefore were advised not to campaign for the secular women who had openly spoken out against the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is questionable whether Muslim and secular feminists will ever be able to work towards combined goals for women's rights as secular feminists are not accepted by the leadership of Iran. This could, however, change with the election of a reformist president, as Khatami's presidency marked a period of political liberality in Iran.

Further, the question arises as to how much each group of women can depend on the other in situations that involve national and international political events. *Zanan* editor Shahla Lahiji openly refused to support the secular feminists who were arrested after the conference in Berlin. As mentioned before, secular feminists consequently urge that the articulation of women's rights in Iran must move beyond the religious discourse (Barlow and Akbarzadeh, 2008, p. 35). The divide is also evident in statements made by secular feminist and lawyer Mehrangiz Kar. Kar believes that female members of the *majles*, who were predominantly women with strong religious ties, have taken steps back in terms of achieving collective goals for women in Iran since 2004 (Barlow and Akbarzadeh, 2008, p. 35). For instance, women in the *majles* actively opposed a bill in regards to Iran's joining of the United Nation's Convention on

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the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 2006, thus complying with the state's gender ideology (p. 35). Previously, the bill was heavily supported by reformist women in the *majles*. Further, women in the *majles* articulated (in official letters) their commitment to outlining women's duties according to God, with an emphasis on re-establishing women's dominating role in the private sphere (Barlow and Akbarzadeh, 2008).

This commitment conflicts with the agenda of secular feminists and women. Kar publicly campaigned for political openness and freedom of expression. Sedghi (2007) interviewed Kar and quoted her as suggesting that "religious law-making must contain equality for the rights of all people, including non-religious people" (p. 260). These actions and standpoints conflict with the views of Muslims feminists and other women. Secular activists and feminists have worked on their goals separately from their Muslim counterparts and focused anew on structural approaches to gender rights in Iran. Muslim activists and feminists have also continued their advocacy for what they see as women's rights but articulated their demands within the language of Islam. Therefore, since the end of the alliance, the collective goals variable is <u>not present.</u>

<u>Analysis of Success</u>

Success is defined by several social movement theorists as the achievement of a relationship or combined effort that produces a change in policy or government (Giugni, McAdam, and Tilly, 1999). Although whether social actions were actually successful can sometimes be debatable, for the purpose of this study success will strictly be analyzed in terms of reaching goals that were previously outlined and articulated by the participants of these social actions.

The goals for women during the <u>Constitutional Revolution</u> were political equality, the relaxation of dress codes for women, and the right to education, none of which were directly accomplished during the constitutional period of 1905-1911. The 1906 constitution denied women political rights and specifically deprived women from voting. Further, not only did the constitution put women in the same category as foreigners, minors, criminals, and murderers but it also prevented them from electoral politics (Sedghi, 2007). After the constitution was granted in 1906, women continued to demand and fight for their rights along side other reform minded Iranians. The *majles* did not discuss women's rights until the 1940s and women were not granted the right to vote until the White Revolution of 1963 (Naghibi, 2007).

Although Price (2000) explains that several private girls schools were opened in the homes of politically active women in 1907, most of them were forced to close shortly after their opening. No language was incorporated in the 1906 constitution that granted women further educational rights. Darvishpour (2006) notes that schools for girls were established by Reza Shah during the Pahlavi regime in the late 1920, long after the initial draft of the constitutional in an effort to modernize Iran. Higher education was also forbidden for women until 1936, when female students were first allowed to attend Tehran University (Price, 2000).

During the Constitutional Revolution, women also did not accomplish their goal of the removal of compulsory veiling. Further secularizing Iran, the Shah legislated the Unveiling Act of 1936 that prohibited women from wearing *hijab* in public (Naghibi, 2007). This act was supported by many women, but also meant that more religious women, who refused to be in public without the veil, were bound to their homes.

Although a new constitution was established in Iran in 1906, none of the goals that women demanded and articulated during the constitutional struggle were established at that time,

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and therefore the dependent variable of success <u>is not present</u>. However, it is important to note that a successful relationship between women was observed during the constitutional revolution as women openly communicated and articulated their collective goals.

The two collective goals during the <u>Iranian Revolution of 1979</u> were the establishment of a new government and the overthrow of the Shah, both of which were successfully accomplished. During September 1978 massive demonstrations signaled an escalation of the conflicts in Iran and ultimately marked the beginning of the end for the Pahlavi regime. On September 4, more than 250,000 people called for an end to the dynasty in Tehran, and a half million people did the same three days later (Foran, 1994). Although the state tried to mobilize forces in support of the regime, which consisted at times of over 300,000 people, the pro-Shah proponents were ultimately outnumbered by revolutionary participants (p. 180). An event known as Black Friday claimed more than 3,000 Iranians, as troops fired shots into the crowd of demonstrators. Khomeini, who lived in exile in Paris, continued to communicate his ideological views and demands to followers in Iran. In January of 1979, the Shah was forced into exile and Ayatollah Khomeini returned the following month. Khomeini was initially blocked from entering Iran, but was eventually granted entrance when three to four million people demonstrated in the streets of Tehran (p. 178). After several further armed uprisings, and negotiations with American advisers, the command of the former Pahlavi army abandoned their position. On Sunday, February 11, at 6 p.m. the national radio announced: "This is the voice of Tehran, the voice of true Iran, the voice of the revolution. The dictatorship has come to an end" (Foran, 1994, p. 178). The Islamic Republic of Iran was officially established on April 1, 1979 (Gheissari and Nasr, 2006).

Most scholars who report on the mechanism behind the Iranian Revolution agree that it took a coalition to make the revolution successful. It is further important to note that although the collective goal was reached and a new government was created, the coalition was only temporary and ideologies and followings split shortly after the Islamic Republic of Iran was established. For example, some women publicly demonstrated against compulsory *hijab* and the new constitution because the first draft intentionally neglected women's rights. However, the main collective goal was accomplished, and the dependent variable is therefore present.

Muslim and secular feminists were able to reach many goals during their 1990-2000 alliance. They worked on issues in family law, education, and stronger representation in government. Although such successes cannot be solely attributed to the combined effort of Muslim and secular feminists, the articulation by both sides of shared goals in periodicals such as *Zanan* immensely contributed to newly established policies and legislations during that time. Povey (2001) explains that many combined efforts were articulated when widows of the Iran-Iraq war demanded "the right to keep and raise their children and to be entitled to their husband's wages "(p. 47). Women published books and articles in magazines that documented the life of women in Iran and the material struggles they faced after the war. Price (2000) explains that women who published articles in *Zanan* systematically criticized Iranian legal code and demanded reforms.

Several NGOs were established that worked actively to change regulations involving divorces laws, custody laws, and other family laws (Povey, 2001). Moghadan (2003) states that during the 1995 parliamentary elections, nine women were elected to the Parliament. Further, an overwhelming number of women voted for Khatami during the 1997 election. Povey (2001)

explains that "gender consciousness determined the outcome of the election" as women believed that it would be possible to change laws for the betterment of women under a reformist president (p. 49). Barlow and Akbarzadeh (2008) explain that thirteen "reform-minded" women were elected to the *majles* that year. Many policies in regards to women's rights were amended in the 1990s, one of them allowing women to be legal consultants and assistants to judges (Moghadam, 2003). By 1995, "33 percent of public sector employees were women, and about 35 percent had university degrees" (p. 210). In 1996, 26.6 % of all university students were female (Sedghi, 2007, p. 235). The government permitted women to enter all fields of study in Universities in 1994, lifting a previous ban. In 2000, the educational law of 1985 that prohibited unmarried female students from studying abroad was reversed. According to Povey (2001), many women had been pushing for this reform and both secular and Muslim activists published letters in magazines demanding a reversal of the law. By 2002, 71% of all entry level college students were women; exceeding men's enrollment for the first time since universities were established in Iran (Sedghi, 2007, p.236 and Moghadam, 2003, p. 211).

Both Muslim and secular feminists as well as other politically active women worked on changing the law on the age of consent for marriage for women. During this period, secular feminist and lawyer Mehrangiz Kar reviewed and analyzed *Shia* laws and suggested several reforms to female members of the *majles*. Povey (2001) states:

> The link between women's NGOs, women's media, women lawyers, and female members of the *majles* demonstrates the connection between the elite women and poorer women and the linkages among elite women themselves despite their diverse views on secularism and religio (p. 55).

Therefore, it is evident that women in Iran were able to temporarily work around their ideological divide in order to collectively pursue rights for women. These rights were articulated not only by upper class elitist women, but also through voices from poorer and rural women thus

combining goals across social differences. Other changes in laws occurred with the modification

of *mahr* (bride price) and *nafaghe* (maintenance), which outlines rules in regard to divorce in

favor of women. If a man wishes to divorce his wife, he has to pay her *mahr* index, from which

poorer women particularly benefit (p. 54). Many parallels between the successes of Muslim and

secular feminists and the presidency of Khatami exist as Khatami's reform program was geared

toward political and cultural change and less toward economic change (Gheissari and Nasr,

2006). His reformist government encouraged the publication of magazines and periodicals and

the media seemed to be less censored. Political activism under a reformist president therefore

seemed to help the complex relationship of feminists and non-feminists in Iran. Mir-Hosseini

(1999), Povey (2001), Moghadan (2003), and Barlow and Akbarzadeh (2008) all attribute

successes in changing laws and policies to the combined effort of Muslim and secular women in

Iran. Therefore, the dependent variable (success) is <u>present</u>.

As explained above, distinctively articulated goals were absent after the <u>end of the</u>

<u>alliance</u> of Muslim and secular feminists and other women in Iran. Barlow and Akbarzadeh

(2008) maintain that "religious-oriented feminists were ultimately committed to upholding Islam

as the solution to the plight of Iranian women," which secular feminists could not accept (p. 32).

The authors, as well as Povey (2001), argue that the events surrounding the 2000 Berlin

conference showed the limits of the relationship between Muslim and secular feminists and their

combined goals. Secular feminists, then more than ever, insisted that in order for women's rights

to be established in Iran, the discourse surrounding gender rights must move away from the

previous approach of articulating demands in a predominately religious language to a new and

separate institution. In 2004, a reform oriented member of the *majles* named Fatamah Haqiqatjoo

resigned from her position (Mir-Hosseini, 2004). Haqiqatjoo explained that "a reform within the state system was no longer possible" in regards to women's rights (Barlow and Akbarzadeh, 2008, p. 35).

Further, many Iranian women and men who seek reform in Iran chose to not be part of political processes and protest in fear of the regime (Sydney Morning Herald, 2006, p. 8). Khatami was unable to accommodate the demands of his reformist mandate with the pressure he received from religious leaders throughout his presidency. By the end of his first term in 2001, it was clear that the reform movement "had lost its momentum" due to the conservatives' resistance (Gheissari and Nasr, 2006, p. 142). Thirteen women were elected as members of the *majles* in 2004, twelve of whom were conservative (one independent) (Barlow and Akbarzadeh, 2008, p. 35). This shows a significant change from previous elections, which included women with ties to reformists who were committed to fight for women's rights.

The absence of the alliance between secular and Muslim feminists is not the only variable that contributed to the lack of successes for women's rights in this period. President Khatami was unable to fulfill his reformist agenda, which resulted in resentment towards him by many of his former supporters. In 2003, Shirin Ebadi told an Iranian newspaper: "President Khatami has wasted all the historical chances given to him, and the domestic reform movements have passed him by" (Amuzgar, 2004, p. 81). Further, the election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005 marked the beginning of yet another conservative era for women in Iran. Laws in regards to gender equality were revised to reflect conservative Islamic beliefs by the Guardian Council. Reformist movements were crushed by the hardline Islamists, and several formerly politically active women chose not to participate in politics any further (Barlow and Akbarzadeh, 2008, p. 35). Additionally, the political events following the September 11 attacks have contributed to

difficulties in the fight for women's rights. As feminists remain divided by their religious beliefs, it is questionable how many goals Muslim feminists can actually achieve when trying to articulate gender rights within the framework of Islam. Their practical attempts to do so have failed in recent years and it is therefore important to reconsider strategic, structural approaches that might assist feminists in bringing about gender equality in Iran. Considering the lack of substantial successes since 2000, the dependent variable is <u>not present</u>.

Analysis of Young's Variables

From the previous analysis it is evident that the communication and collective goals variables were strongly present during the alliance of feminists in Iran (1990-2000). These variables have been analyzed by social movement theorists throughout different cases of revolutions and movements. However, it is important to use other analytical approaches when analyzing complex political relationships in pluralistic societies such as Iran. Young articulates such an approach by emphasizing the importance of shared goals rather than a distinct shared identity.

Using Young's framework of communicative democracy, the following section will analyze the presence of two additional important aspects of communicative democracy (promoting inclusion and building coalition) during the alliance of feminists in Iran (1990-2000). As mentioned earlier, the theory of communicative democracy emphasizes the importance of communicative practices when dealing with individuals of different cultural or social backgrounds. This is especially applicable to Muslim and secular feminists in Iran as they not only differ in social backgrounds but they are further divided by ideological differences. Communicative practices are therefore crucial in order to improve the relationship and collectively commit to shared goals and objectives.

<u>Promoting Inclusion</u>

In *Inclusion and Democracy* (2000) Young explains and emphasizes the importance of inclusive democracy, whereby inclusion does not only refer to "the formal and abstract equality of all members" but also the importance of "explicitly acknowledging social differentiations and divisions" (p. 119). This point is important and directly applies to the difficult relationship between Muslim and secular feminists and women in Iran as their ideological divide requires an acknowledgment and acceptance from both sides in order to work together for women's rights. Further, members of political discussions should aim at solving collective problems while promoting such inclusion. This is accomplished by encouraging different groups to voice their needs, interests, and perspectives (p. 119).

The promotion of inclusion during the alliance of politically active women and feminists in Iran is mainly evident by the fact that both Muslim as well as secular feminists contributed articles to periodicals such as *Zanan*. Although *Zanan* publishers were Muslim feminists, secular feminists and all women were encouraged and invited to voice their opinions and interests in the magazine. Each article in the magazines aimed at reaching women from all different backgrounds and social classes. Mehrangiz Kar stated that she wrote articles in order to "have an impact on ordinary women" who often came to see her for legal consultation (Povey, 2001, p. 54). Each issue of *Zanan* included critiques of the law, feminist critiques of films and literature, but also interviews of women and political activists. Therefore, the magazine addressed problems geared to a wide range of women. Women who wrote articles for the magazine also told of personal experiences and the difficulties surrounding their rights in Iran. Such storytelling is further emphasized by Young's articulation of communicative democracy as she believes it to be

a crucial part in building effective understanding between members of different groups. Knowledge of the experiences of others helps feminists in Iran to view political questions differently which in turn helps the overall collective relationship.

The promotion of inclusion is also evident in the political meetings and discussions about women's rights that both secular and Muslim feminists attend. In such meetings, feminists and politically active women formulated goals and strategies to achieve such goals. When asked by Manal Lutfi (2007) about the different feminist approaches, *Zanan* editor Shahla Sherkat stated:

> I do not believe in the division of women. Calling this reformist and that secular and this religious or conservative, for example, does not help. We have complex and interrelated problems and it is best for us that no divisions are made. We are all trying to focus on the goals that aim towards consolidating women's rights. In the future when we resolve these problems we will have enough time to divide ourselves into numerous groups. I think the reason behind our strength and the fact that our movement is effective and has a bigger impact is because we have a variety of different views without being divided (para 8.).

The successful outcome of collective goals, such as the changes to divorce and custody law, further shows that inclusion was effectively promoted during the alliance of Muslim and secular feminists. During their alliance women across the ideological spectrum showed a continued desire for change and formulated demands that affected and included all women. Goals were reached by effectively using communication strategies which further helped in building successful coalitions. Rather than attempting to be grouped into one category, women in Iran united on the basis of common or shared goals and objectives and put aside their differences. This distinction is important to the overall research of social movements and actions that involve diverse people as it shows that goals can be reached if members of a political coalition first unite and commit to shared goals through effective means of communication that promotes the inclusion of all.

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Building Coalition

Besides the starting point of promoting inclusion through discussions and the establishment of shared understandings, it is important for members of political action groups to build coalitions. Coalition practices therefore build upon already established relationships that have been formed by promoting inclusion. Identity politics, an answer to criticisms of essential gender constructs, avoid substandializing gender. However, both Butler (1990) and Young (1997) have argued that feminist politics should not attempt to settle into a unified coalition as certain norms and experiences will have privilege over others (p. 21). Coalitions of women are not necessarily feminist groups as some women who chose to be politically active do not directly identify with the concept of feminism. Young further asks valuable questions, such as: On the basis of what do women come together? What social conditions motivate politics? (p. 21). Young therefore suggests that members of political discussions actively work on their commitment to equal respect for one another, which then can lead to successful coalitions.

Povey (2001) states that feminists during the alliance have tolerated and respected each other's convictions even though they do not share the same philosophy, belief, and thought (p. 91). Comparing this temporary unity to Young's framework shows that women in Iran encountered one another with an acute awareness of their differences, which does not mean they have no similarities. According to Young, this difference is not the same as otherness. She states that this difference means that "each position is aware that it does not comprehend the perspectives of others differently located, in the sense that it cannot be assimilated into one's own" (Young, 1997, p. 67). However, through communication among perspectives and an articulation of their similar goals, feminist and non-feminist women in Iran were able to build upon their relationship and form political coalitions. Women in Iran have discussed and debated

ideas and collaborated on issues that aim to modernize family laws and reforms. Moghadan (2003) states that "this coalition building is considered to be an important step in the promotion of women's rights, and a correction of past mistakes" (p. 219).

However, "understanding" one another does not mean that feminists have come to mutual understanding of their beliefs or principles but rather, that they were able to speak across their differences of social positions and ideology without forming a single new identity. This precise application of "understanding" within pluralistic political groups is important to a successful coalition. Several authors credit the effective coalition and communication efforts between politically active women and feminists in Iran as a reason for the immense turn out of women voters for reformist candidates including President Khatami.

Stressing the importance of a coalition between Muslim and secular feminists, Moghadan (2000) states that the relationship between them "is an illustration of their capacity for dialogue and coalition-building in the interests of the expansion of women's rights" (para 7). A wide range of women were reached through feminist consciousness raising, which occurred through the publication of women's rights articles in the media. Due to the alliance of feminists in Iran, such articles addressed issues that affected all women and allowed them to look beyond their own framework of gender rights while being exposed to new ideas.

The political coalitions of feminists who collectively demanded changes of the government and successfully fought for women's rights during the 1990s further demonstrates that aspects of Young's analytical approach of communicative democracy directly relates to the social demographic that makes up feminists and non-feminists in Iran. The analysis of the alliance shows that feminists in Iran actively worked on promoting inclusion and building coalition but also had strong communicative practices and most importantly collective goals. The

success of the alliance is important as it shows that women do not have to unite in the form of a collective identity but rather unite on shared understandings and goals. Coalitions of feminists and non-feminists in Iran helps women within such coalitions to re-evaluate their stances on gender, Islam, democracy, and politics and not working out their differences to unite, but to come to an understanding that differences exists and to gain a willingness to work collectively on common goals. The actions and strategies that Muslim and secular feminists as well as other politically active women in Iran adopted during the 1990s mirror the analytical approaches outlined in Young's communicative democracy and offer hope for cooperation in the future.

Application of Variables

The table below shows the variables selected and their presence during four different periods of feminist activism studied in Iran. The table also indicates whether the result of such activism was successful or not.

Table 2. Comparison of Variables for Measuring Success

	Political Affiliation	*Use of Media/ Communication*	*Collective Identity*	*Collective Goals*	**Success**
Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911)	Present	Present	Present	Present	No
Iranian Revolution (1979)	Present	Strongly Present	Not Present	Present	Yes
Relationship of Muslim and Secular Feminists (1990-2000)	Present	Strongly Present	Not Present	Strongly Present	Yes
Relationship of Muslim and Secular Feminists (since 2000)	Present	Slightly Present	Not Present	Not Present	No

Application of Communicative Democracy Principles

The table below shows the presence of the variables selected during the alliance of Muslim and secular feminists in Iran (1990-2000).

Table 3. Analysis of Young's Principles

	Relationship of Muslim and Secular Feminists 1990-2000
Promoting Inclusion	Strongly Present
Coalition Building	Strongly Present

The two cases that, also due to other political variables and outside factors, resulted in successful changes in policy and legislation are the Iranian Revolution (1979) and the alliance of Muslim and secular feminists (1990-2000). Both cases show a presence of three of the four selected variables which define successful social movements (political affiliation, communication, and collective goals). It is further evident that the variable of collective identity was absent during both the Iranian Revolution and the alliance of feminists. Although the case analysis of women during the Constitutional Revolution showed the presence of the same three variables (political affiliation, communication, and collective goals), the outcome did not result in success as women's agendas were only secondary to those of the overall goals of the Constitutional Revolution. Further, the variable of collective identity was present during women's involvement in the Constitutional Revolution, but no changes in policy or legislation were accomplished at the time. The analysis shows that collective identity was not a necessary variable in order for social movements and social actions in Iran to result in success, but that communication and collective goals were essential in successful outcomes. Further, the

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importance of promoting inclusion, building coalitions, and creating a space for collective goals became evident when the successful relationship between Muslim and secular feminists was analyzed. This is especially made visible by the fact that feminists collectively contributed to magazines and worked together, despite their ideological divides, to accomplish rights for women. The importance of collective goals and communication is also articulated by Young's analytical approach of communicative democracy and directly applies to the difficulties surrounding the relationship of women in Iran. Young stresses that collective identity does not have to be a starting point of a successful coalitions and is almost impossible when dealing with groups of diverse identities and backgrounds and that successful relationships are possible without it.

V. Conclusion

This analysis of the history of feminism in Iran and the relationship between Muslim and secular feminists illustrates an interesting connection between identity and personal political activism. The variables selected for the case analysis were taken from studies previously conducted by social movement theorists to show the mechanisms behind social protests. Thus far, theorists have argued that collective identity is an important variable contributing to the successful outcome of social movements as it gives members the feeling of being part of a group. Further, collective identity has been seen as a necessary starting point for successful political coalitions. However, in her model of communicative democracy Iris Young examines collective identity but emphasizes the importance of communicative practices in the construction of identity groups. She further explains that some groups have exclusionary implications towards other members of society due to cultural or social diversity. Young suggests not to start out with the goal of unity but to begin political discussions with recognizing the difference of perspectives. Therefore, Young's analytical approach could prove especially helpful to feminists in Iran who seem to be divided on ideological grounds (Young, 1996, p. 125).

This study analyzed the extent to which political affiliation, communication, collective identity, and collective goals were present over four different periods (the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911, the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the alliance of feminists from 1990-2000, and since the break of the alliance of feminists in 2000). The analysis of Iranian women's activism during the Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911) showed that although all four of the variables selected for measuring success in social movements were present, the outcome did not result in success as their goals were not reached. Women during the Constitutional Revolution fought for political equality, a relaxation of dress codes for women, and the right to education,

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none of which were accomplished as a result of their efforts during that period. On the other hand, three variables (political affiliation, communication, and collective goals) were present during the Iranian Revolution (1979), which resulted in a successful accomplishment of goals. What is interesting during this period is that the collective identity variable was not present, thus corroborating Young's assertion that collective identity does not have to be present in order for social movements and actions to be successful. Furthermore, the combination of the communication variable and the collective goals variable was essential to the success of the Iranian Revolution as participants used communication practices to articulate a collective goal and facilitate ways to reach the goal. Similarly, the same three variables were present during the alliance of feminists in Iran (1990-2000), which also resulted in some successes. Communication practices between Muslim and secular feminists were utilized to raise gender awareness and collectively demand goals for all women. As with the Iranian Revolution, the combination of the communication and collective goals variables and the absence of the collective identity variable resulted in successes during the alliance of feminists (1990-2000). The political affiliation variable was also important to both successful cases (the Iranian Revolution and the alliance of feminists 1990-2000) as it showed commitment to collective goals and political activism. Although the communication variable was lightly present during the alliance of Muslim and secular feminists since 2000, the collective goals variable was absent. Perhaps the absence of the collective goals variable during the relationship of feminists since 2000, and the presence of the collective identity variable during the Constitutional Revolution directly contributed to the lack of success in both cases.

The alliance of feminists and non-feminists in Iran in the 1990s shaped politics, raised gender awareness, and articulated women's rights through the publication of magazines such as

Zanan. Some influence on politics was possible when women collectively united on the basis of shared goals. Women's activism flourished immediately prior to and during the first years of the Khatami period (1997-2005). However, despite of all the attempts of various groups to promote democratic principles during this period, a conservative backlash and consolidation of power ended this period of reform. Since the breakup of the alliance in 2000, the political affiliation and communication variables have been present; however, no changes in laws or other successes can be directly attributed to women's activism in this period. It seems as though their relationship took steps back as Muslim and secular feminists could not come together on the basis of shared goals. Perhaps, the reason why feminists where unable to work on collective goals is partly due to the governmental changes, such as the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, but mostly it can be attributed to the ideological differences between Muslim and secular feminists.

The failures in the fight for women's rights are not only due to the relationship of feminists in Iran as multiple factors work against the attainment of gender equality. Such factors include the rules and laws for women outlined by religious documents such as the *hadith* as well as legislation that supports specific gender roles. Any articulations to the improvement of women's rights have to be formulated in the language of Islam and refer to Islamic concepts. Such Islamic concepts are also deeply rooted within society and gender roles are often widely accepted. This makes movements for reform difficult as amendments to laws will further have to be approved by religious leaders. Moreover, parliamentarians in the *majles* take an oath to remain faithful to Islam and the constitution therefore making it complicated to integrate reforms that would alter gender roles. This analysis does not intend to suggest that all women and feminists have ceased to publicly demand women's rights. Feminists and other politically active

women continued individual and group activism since the breakup of the alliance in 2000, but not to the extent that existed during the alliance of feminists. However, a lack of collective goals and agendas between feminists and non-feminists is evident due to the ideological divide between them

The alliance's successes were practical changes for women and none amounted to structural changes in gender relations or in the overall political system of Iran. The lack of substantive policy change, perhaps, is part of the reason why secular feminists find it difficult to unite with Muslim feminists and vice versa. Most secular feminists believe that in order for women's rights to be accomplished, a separation of state and church is necessary. On the other hand, Muslim women believe in accomplishing women's rights within the framework of Islam and support a re-interpretation of the holy texts in order to show that women's rights are compatible with religion. The practical approach is pushed by Muslim feminists who want to work within Islam to better women's lives. Although many secular women and feminists see the importance of practical reforms within Iran, many of them believe that in order for temporary and long term goals to be accomplished, a strategic reform is needed. The strategic approach calls for an overall structural change in politics in Iran. Which approach is more effective?

In answering this question, it is important to take into consideration that many women in Iran still live by the rules outlined in the *hadith* and other religious documents. Their beliefs often prevent them from welcoming the idea of changing women's rights or advocating overall gender changes that would result in different political and social positions for women. This fact supports the need for a re-interpretation of the holy texts to show that Islam is compatible with women's rights. This then could help Muslims to embrace the concept of new gender rights within the framework of Islam. The differences in levels of religiosity and over whether a

feminist interpretation of Islam is possible could bring about significant change to not only the relationship of feminists in Iran, but the overall population. It might therefore be helpful for Muslim and secular feminists in Iran to adopt a pluralist outlook on politics, religion, and women's rights while continuing their communication efforts to discuss shared goals.

The analysis of all four periods support claims by Young that social actions can result in success without groups first having to achieve a collective identity; in other words, groups can succeed without having achieved collective identity by working together towards shared goals and objectives. The relationship between feminists was at one point successful because women had a mutual respect for one another and overcame their differences by focusing on collective goals for the betterment of women. The ways feminists in Iran built their relationships has many parallels with Young's analytical approach of communicative democracy. But the relationship ends on the basis of an ideological divide over which approach is more effective.

In this analysis of variables, the communication variable stands out in all the cases analyzed. Communication practices, such as publications in journals, helped women during the Constitutional Revolution in articulating their demands and establishing a forum to come together on collective terms. Communication during the Iranian Revolution resulted in the mass turnout in protests and demonstrations that eventually led to the establishment of a new government. During the alliance of feminists in Iran communication practices were strongly present and reached many women with different backgrounds. Muslim and secular feminists used communication and the media to raise awareness and articulate shared goals. Young would confirm the importance of such communication practices as it helps groups to not only discuss their goals but also form an understanding and acknowledgment of their differences.

Communication between people with diverse views and backgrounds enables pluralistic societies to form political coalitions and work together on collective goals regardless of whether such goals are short term or long term. This analysis shows that women in Iran throughout the four periods studied were politically active even when they did not unite on the basis of collective identity. However, the successes and outcomes of their activism were successful when they united on the basis of shared goals. In three of the four periods they formed groups, alliances, and coalitions and in all four periods they demanded political and social rights, and stressed the importance of education for all people. Yet it is evident that throughout Iran's history, feminists have been divided on ideological terms as women have temporarily formed coalitions but ultimately subscribed to either a religious or secular articulation of their rights. Overall, this study helps in understanding how women politically organize themselves in complex societies such as Iran during various social movements and protests.

Recommendation for Further Research

The possibilities for further research about gender, social movements, and democratization in Iran are vast. Iran is different than other countries with a Muslim majority as the continued power struggle between religious and secular forces is unique due to the drastic change in government, from secular to Islamic, that occurred over the past one hundred years. Further, the fact that Iran (along with Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Mauritania) is an official Islamic Republic also makes Iran's political structure distinctive. However, each Islamic Republic differs greatly in terms of laws and government. Iran stands out as many Iranians have experienced several significant transformations in the system of government as well as political and civil rights. From the establishment of a parliament after the Constitutional Revolution to

the secular Pahlavi era and the social protests that would eventually overthrow the regime and lead to the establishment of a theocracy. Outside and inside political and social forces certainly had an impact on social change and gender equality. Scholars agree that the attainment of women's rights were either last on the agenda of goals during each period analyzed or not on the agenda at all. The main goal of the Constitutional Revolution was to establish a parliament for Iran and the main goal of the Iranian Revolution was to overthrow the Pahlavi regime. Women's rights were not a priority during either period and were only addressed by women once the movement had already begun.

Studying social movements through a gendered lens has become its own area of research, and Iran's history still leaves for much to be explored. In conducting this research, I faced problems of finding statements by feminists in English and their relationship since the Berlin Conference of 2000. A lack of documented collective goals further contributed to difficulties in analyzing the need for an alliance between Muslim and secular feminists. It would therefore be interesting to conduct interviews with feminists in Iran, now, almost ten years after the Berlin Conference of 2000. Such interviews could help in shedding light on questions that include women's reasons for their continued political activism. What triggers women with strong religious backgrounds to commit to such activism and what differences are there within the group of women with strong religious backgrounds? Further, it is important to analyze what influences state sponsorship has on the communicative practices and the relationships between Muslim and secular feminists in Iran.

Despite Iran's distinctive history, it would also be helpful to compare the mechanisms of feminist activities in Iran to those of women in other countries with Muslim majorities such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, or Tunisia where women have attained unusual levels of gender

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equality for a Muslim country. In regards to identity politics and the study of how women form their political identities, it might also be helpful to interview Muslim women who live in non-Muslim majority countries such as France or Germany and analyze their views on feminist activism within an Islamic framework. One case study of women in Iran cannot possibly explain the complex impact secular ideas and Islamic principles have on people's gender awareness. It would also be useful to learn what effects other media, such as the internet, has on Iranian's society in the age of globalization.

Over the past one hundred years, Iran experienced several shifts in governance including a revolution and a power struggle between religious leaders and secular forces, but also among religious leaders. This struggle has been symbolically carried out by politicizing gender, which is apparent in the veiling and unveiling of women and the many restrictions put upon women. Throughout this struggle, women's activism and interests have been diverse as they participated publicly or privately in organizations, demonstrations, and protests. Iranian women built schools, wrote books and articles, made movies, held seats in parliament, and participated in international conferences. They were divided by practical and strategic goals and by class and ideology and worked on promoting their gender interests on individual or group terms, some within the framework of Islam, some not. Whether opponents or proponents of the government, urban or rural, educated or non-educated, together or apart, Iranian women continue to push gender boundaries and actively work towards bettering the lives of all women. Overall, this study facilitates a perspective on pluralism and democratization not only in Iran, but in other countries with similar cultural, social, and ideological divides.

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