THE GREEN GLASS CEILING: GENDER INEQUALITY AND WAHHABI POLITICAL

INFLUENCE

by

BRANDON C. GORMAN

(Under the Direction of Sherry Lowrance)

ABSTRACT

The Green Glass Ceiling: Gender Inequality and Wahhabi Political Influence explores the
relationship between gender development and Wahhabi Islamic political thought, with special
attention paid to those countries most influenced by Wahhabism – Saudi Arabia and the
countries of the Arabian Peninsula, Pakistan, and Sudan. Combined with financial support via
Saudi petrodollars and the proselytizing fervor of fundamentalist religion, Wahhabi social
thought potentially impacts the entire Sunni world. While development paradigm literature
suggests that gender inequality decreases primarily as a result of economic prosperity, this study
examines the international pattern of gender development in terms of income and compares it to
the pattern of gender development among Islamic countries in particular. The results of this
study suggest that countries which are deeply affected by Wahhabi social and political thought
lag behind their economic peers in terms of gender-related development due to the underlying
social, methodological, and theological assumptions endorsed by Wahhabi Islam.

INDEX WORDS: Wahhabism, Saudi Arabia, Gender, Inequality, Education, Shari'a, Islamic
                Fundamentalism, Scripturalism, Petrodollars, Culture, Middle East
                Politics, Islam, Education, Hadith, Women's Rights, Development

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BRANDON C. GORMAN

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BRANDON C. GORMAN

Major Professor: Sherry Lowrance

Committee: Kenneth Honerkamp
                     Ryan Bakker

DEDICATION

In loving memory of the most profoundly influential contributor to my academic career.

Thank you, Me Maw, for everything.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Across the globe, gender-related development tends to be one of the most persistently lagging indicators of social and political development, and many of the countries most often criticized in this regard are those with majority Muslim populations. Ruling elites in countries such as Saudi Arabia claim that discriminatory practices, such as laws prohibiting women from driving or leaving their homes without male escort, are irremovable aspects of their religious conviction rather than truly malicious discriminatory legislation. Many scholars in Western countries argue that it is not Islam *per se* that is restrictive to women but fundamentalist[1] Islamic influences which tend to dampen the effects of the progressive international atmosphere in regards to women's rights in majority Muslim countries. This leads to an intriguing, if not readily obvious, question: what effect do fundamentalist Islamic influences – compared to mainstream Islamic influences – have on gender inequality?

Scholars have noted that gender-related development on an institutional scale varies based on "varying degrees of urbanization, past… external influences, the quality of leadership, [and] the strength of existing religious influences," and this paper will explore the relationship between gender-related development and Islamic political thought, with special attention paid to those countries most influenced by Wahhabism – Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Sudan and the

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[1] Fundamentalist Islam is defined in this work as a set of religious beliefs asserting that the Islam of the Qur'an and Sunna as established scripturally constitutes an appropriate religion and ideology for any historical context. See section entitled *Scripturalism, Wahhabism, and Mainstream Islam* for a full explanation.

countries of the Arabian Peninsula[2] (Peterson 1989, 35). Although current democratic transitions

literature, drawing from the political development paradigm, suggests that gender-related

development increases primarily as a result of economic prosperity, many countries – such as

Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia – defy the assumptions of the development paradigm due to the

tenacity of their patriarchal norms in spite of their relatively high levels of GDP. This project

will examine the overall international pattern of gender-related development in terms of income

and compare it to the pattern of gender-related development among Islamic countries in

particular. I expect to find that countries which are deeply affected by Islamic – Wahhabi, in

particular – influences will lag behind the rest of the world and their economic peers in terms of

women's rights and overall gender development and empowerment.

The Global Status of Gender Development and Empowerment

In discussions of poverty and inequality, the status of women cannot be brushed aside.

The fact that "women still constitute 70 per cent of the world's poor and two-thirds of the

world's illiterates" illustrates the dire situation in which many women find themselves – even in

relation to their impoverished male counterparts (Kumar 1996, 887). Furthermore, the

undervaluation of women's economic contributions is a common occurrence even in post-

industrial societies. Women's worldwide invisible economic contribution is estimated to be

approximately $11 trillion annually or "almost 50 per cent more than the officially estimated $23

trillion of global output" (*ibid*.). This non-recognition of economic contribution is "due to

socially defined gender roles and relationships" in which "women face particular constraints that

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[2] While there exists a plethora of communities around the world where Wahhabism has been a relatively recent import – such as the Muslim minority in the United States – this study will deal exclusively with Wahhabi influence at the governmental level.

men do not" including a limited ability to own resources, access credit, or learn marketable skills (Mehra 1997, 154). The process of development is said to help bridge this gap by perpetrating "the weakening of traditional values… and attitudinal changes in perceptions of the appropriate roles for women" (Matland 1997, 114). In other words, as a particular state develops, women should be "increasingly integrated into all spheres of public life" (*ibid.*).

Since this work aims at exploring unequal development between men and women across the Muslim world, a closer look at the status of women in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries is particularly illuminating. According to observers, "In the formal political system of the Arabian peninsula women do not exist. They are not judges, police officers, army commanders, ministers, tribal leaders or heads of state. They do not sit on tribal councils… municipal councils, or legislative or consultative assemblies" (Peterson 1989, 34). The political and public roles of women in these countries have traditionally been restricted and continue to be so today. While governments in more politically liberal GCC countries like Bahrain may take steps to ensure female cooperation in the public sector workforce, "they remain reluctant to advocate women's rights forcefully or to appoint women to senior positions," leaving many women to "work in traditionally female fields, such as nursing, teaching, social services, and, in recent years, clerical jobs" (*ibid.* 39, 42). In more conservative societies, even these opportunities tend to be restricted to a great degree.

The absence of women from the formal political sphere, no matter how profound, does not necessarily indicate that women are powerless in GCC countries or other Muslim countries. Arab women have traditionally "been a strong, decision-making force within the family" and continue to play this role today (*ibid.* 34). This indicates that although women's political power is severely limited, it is not entirely negligible. Among political elites, Arab wives tend to play

the "first lady" function and "are capable of exercising considerable influence on their husbands and thereby on state policy" (*ibid.* 37). Likewise, the Islamic emphasis on education and the necessity of employing non-immigrant workers in GCC countries has also improved the scope of higher education for women in these countries. Oil revenue has allowed for the establishment of national universities with special amenities for female students, although laws and social norms often restrict women's education to specific fields. That being said, "Social change has lagged far behind the physical transformation of GCC cities and the modification of citizen's lifestyles," caused by the dramatic oil-fueled rise in GDP within these countries, casting a doubtful shadow on the developmentalist assumption that increased socioeconomic development and modernization inevitably results in decreased gender inequality (*ibid.* 50).

CHAPTER 2

ISLAMIC SCRIPTURALISM AND MAINSTREAM ISLAM

As Clifford Geertz discusses in his work *Islam Observed*, all religions find themselves in a continual tug-of-war between validity through scriptural infallibility and an ever-growing disconnect between what is written in sacred texts and the realities of contemporary life. This tension is not a novel aspect of human spiritual life – according to Geertz it is reflected in the formulation of religious beliefs of various civilizations throughout history. Contemporary scholars of Islam tend to argue that "Islam" is a vague and ambiguous concept, as can be seen by the wide varieties of "Islam" practiced around the world, from Morocco to Saudi Arabia to Indonesia. Historically, the conflict between scripture and reality has been alleviated via the culturalization of Islam, or the embedding of Islamic values in pre-Islamic cultural trends (Geertz 1968). A simplified conception of culturalized Islam as practiced by Muslims throughout history can be summed up as follows:

Islam = Qur'an + Sunna + jurisprudential history + customary usage[3]

The scripturalist interpretation, from which Wahhabi and other fundamentalist streams of thought are drawn, effectively eliminates jurisprudential history and customary usage from the equation by delegating them to one of the many categories of *bida'* (human innovation). Well-known scholar of Islam Olivier Roy argues that the scripturalist worldview is widely popular

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[3] The Arabic term for this concept in Islam is *'urf*, which is translated as "knowing," and refers to the customs and practices of a given society. It is the Islamic equivalent of Western "common law" and has traditionally been an important part of the formulation of Islamic belief and practice since Islamic tradition states that, in general, whatever the people of a given society consider "good" is also considered "good" by God.

among Muslims today primarily as reaction to the perceived threats of globalization, modernization, and Western encroachment into *Dar al-Islam*. Given these pressures, Islam must be made palatable to everyone, regardless of geographical location or local culture, in order to survive as a world religion. As a result, Islam "has to define itself solely in terms of religion" rather than as a religion connected to a particular culture, geographical location, or state (Roy 2006, 38). The scripturalist interpretation, unlike local traditions, offers a religious doctrine that is applicable across space and time, although relying on scripture to provide literal day-to-day guidelines has the potential to render religious texts at odds with social reality; subsequently leading to the rigid and doctrinaire implementation of unnecessary and outdated societal norms, such as the subjugation of women or the demonization of out-groups like religious minorities and homosexuals.

While the removal of jurisprudential history and local-level customary usage from the sphere of legitimate religious practice does not necessarily lead to a worldview hostile towards women's development and empowerment, in the case of fundamentalist Islam this tends to hold true. In many instances, scripturalist interpretations do not account for the historical context from which the Qur'an and Sunna were drawn. Asghar Ali Engineer explains that, in the social context[4] of the Qur'an, "men earned and spent their wealth on their women and children and wielded parochial power" and, therefore God "allowed men, in view of the social context and societal values, a slight edge over women" in the Qur'an (Engineer 1997, 297). This divine wisdom, according to Engineer, was manipulated and exploited by male-dominated, parochial

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[4] Scholars of pre-Islamic Arabian culture emphasize the fact that tribal society before the advent of Islam was particularly dangerous to women. Many of the patriarchal cultural traditions which existed in pre-Islamic Arabia were arguably designed to protect women from outsiders and preserve the lineage of the tribe. This can be seen as similar to the rule of matrilineal descent in the Jewish tradition. Without women to bear children for the tribe, the tribe will cease to exist, therefore women must be protected at all cost.

society in order to perpetuate it. In the contemporary Islamic sense, fundamentalist religion and parochial society find themselves in alliance with one another, exacerbating the problem.

The historical development of Islam and resulting Islamic society has played a role in the relegation of women to second-class citizenship status[5] in contemporary Muslim societies. Highlighting the tradition of triple *talaq* – in which a man can divorce his wife simply by declaring her divorced three times in a row[6] – Engineer points out that "this form of *talaq* was prevalent in the 'jahilliyyah' period" but was subsequently abolished[7] with the advent of Islam (*ibid.* 298). In the modern era, however, triple *talaq* has "crept back into the Islamic system in a male-dominated society" (*ibid.*). The fact that "many Muslim women [resent] the law[s] relating to polygamy and triple divorce, [but]… do not favour any change on the grounds of Muslim identity" regardless of the assertion that these provisions violate original Qur'anic legislative intent further illustrates the depth of male domination in many of these societies (*ibid.*). In many instances, Muslim women do not support laws like triple *talaq* in and of themselves but only as part of a general Muslim identity as defined by the male-dominated religious discourse.

Other gender-discriminating religious traditions have been embraced throughout Islamic history in spite of the limiting context of the Qur'an, such as "the legitimation of concubinage and the effective removal of the restraints on divorce with which the Qur'an had specifically been concerned" (Bellah 1991, 154). These traditions were encapsulated and legitimized during

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[5] Ironically enough, the status of women was drastically improved by the advent of Islam during the time of the nascent Muslim community. The subsequent centuries of Islamic history, however, would result (in some cases) in a re-definition of the original Islamic re-definition of the status of women.

[6] While this form of divorce has traditionally included restrictions to protect women from abusive husbands – after a triple *talaq* the couple may not legally re-marry until the woman has married and divorced another man – it is often misused in contemporary societies that allow it.

[7] The Qur'an established rules of marriage, divorce and inheritance that were radically different from Arab society at the time of its inception, including making marriage a contract, explicitly defining the marriage dowry (*mahr*) as the sole property of the bride, and requiring the bride's consent. *Jahili* forms of divorce, such as triple *talaq*, were expressly forbidden by Muhammad, and there is no mention of triple *talaq* at all in the Qur'an.

a specific period of conquest "in which women had come to be treated as booty" (*ibid.*). As Robert Bellah writes:

> Unfortunately, in accordance with the way Islamic law developed, it was the post-Quranic and not the Quranic provisions that became effective precedents in Sharia family law. While a family ideal of mutual respect and obligation between all family members continued to be enjoined as exemplary, in fact practices tending to undermine inner family equality and solidarity and elevate patriarchal arbitrariness were pronounced legitimate (*ibid.*).

Traditional Islam, therefore, presents a "mixed heritage" of equality and patriarchy to modern Muslims, although in the scripturalist realm the more conservative elements of Islamic legal tradition tend to hold the most sway. This is evidenced by the fact that any reforms achieved in the area of women's rights and gender equality "have often been gained in the face of scripturalist opposition" (Bellah 1991, 162).

While examples of fundamentalist hostility towards family reform and the emancipation of women are abundant, the reasoning behind the scripturalist elevation of this area of society to non-negotiable status is less clear. A crucial component of the fundamentalist mindset – not only in Islam but across religions – is the idea that religion constitutes an all-encompassing, infallible, and all-sufficient ideology. Given the relative longevity of contemporary Islamic jurisprudence in terms of gender, marriage, and family, the re-structuring of these ideas requires a critical examination of the history of Islamic law and the formulation of the *Shari'a*. Fundamentalist-minded Muslims avoid such criticism out of the fear that "any such criticism might lead to a critical examination of the Qur'an itself, and so undermine the entire scripturalist position" (*ibid.* 163).

Salafism, Wahhabism, and Institutional Gender Inequality

Various forms of fundamentalism exist in contemporary Islamic thought, although Salafism – and its uniquely Arabian Bedouin counterpart, Wahhabism – is perhaps the most widespread. The Salafi and Wahhabi schools of Islamic thought are tied together with the express purpose of "[dismantling] the complex and intricate structures of law, theology, and mysticism… that had grown up since the completion of the Qur'anic revelation" in order to "find a way back directly to the twin sources of Islam, to the Qur'an and the Sunna" (Algar 2002, 10). Saudi Arabia and the Gulf monarchies are frequently cited as countries particularly influenced by Wahhabi puritanism, with Saudi Arabia often labeled a theocratic state in light of "the Wahhabi religious ideology which inspired the unification of the country [in the] early [twentieth] century and continues to do so until the present" (Al-Rasheed and Al-Rasheed 1996, 97). The impact of Wahhabi thought on the political arena is evidenced by the fact that "even though senior members of the royal family differed in their views, they all were overtly in favour of enforcing Wahhabi practices" during the Saudi Arabian formative years (Nehme 1994, 939). Today, the political system in Saudi Arabia "is held back from pursuing any policy of rapid political innovation" due to the widespread influence of Wahhabi puritanism (*ibid*. 942). This, along with the view that any renegotiation of women's status is tantamount to the destruction of Islamic heritage, serves to legitimize and perpetuate gender inequality on religious grounds.

The collaboration of Wahhabi organizations and the ruling Al-Sa'ud family in oil rich Saudi Arabia has given Wahhabism and its ideological relatives a great deal of theological leverage in the Islamic – and particularly, Sunni – world. Wahhabi ideas on gender relations, for example, have potentially far-reaching implications outside of the Arabian Peninsula. In fact, "in some of its more vulgar forms, the puritan [Wahhabi] trend [blames] women for God's

abandonment of Muslims and the ensuing Muslim predicaments in the modern world" (Abou El Fadl 1984, 7). This helps to associate "any position that restricts the movement or visibility of women with the 'true' Islam" as well as illegitimating any attempt to interpret Islamic sources in a progressive way in regards to gender-development (*ibid.*). Indeed, in many theological circles "the easiest and most effective way to prove one's legitimacy as an authority is to articulate rules that are restrictive to women" (*ibid.* 17). A striking example of this can be found in laws regarding *zina'*, or adultery, in Islamic societies. Many of these laws indicate "that the same type of testimony required as evidence of a *zina'* offence – four male eye-witnesses to carnal conjunction – should be administered in rape crimes" thus regarding raped or assaulted women as criminals rather than victims (Sidahmed 2001, 198). A few *shari'a* judges in various countries have even "argued that it is very difficult if not impossible to have full sexual intercourse with a woman against her will," an idea so far removed from reality it can legitimately be labeled ridiculous (*ibid.*). This thought pattern, if it were widespread, could have drastic effects on the status of women in the Middle East, particularly in countries where the ruling regime has official ties to Islam.

While the analysis of gender-related development in light of Islamic thought may be somewhat controversial and potentially criticized as ethnocentric, this area of analysis was not chosen because of its potentially-damning conclusions but rather due to its salience among the worldwide Islamic religious community[8] itself. Within many Islamic communities, traditional gender roles are considered "so vital to the question of [Muslim] identity that no change in

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[8] Indeed, the proliferation of petrodollar-funded Islam has given the religious establishment in many majority-Muslim countries (and even Muslim minorities in certain contexts) a Wahhabi flavor. Many members of the Taliban, for example, were educated in Saudi-funded *madrasas* and espoused Wahhabi ideas, indicating that Wahhabism can be extremely influential as a religious and societal doctrine given certain sociopolitical prerequisites.

women's status will be admitted" (Engineer 1994, 298). While Wahhabism represents an extreme form of this mindset, these traits are in no way uniquely characteristic of Islam or Islamic states. All religions have the potential to act as a legitimizing factor to social behavior, and both men and women tend to religion "as a flexible resource to support their own views and practice" (Predelli 2004, 473). Especially in the contemporary Middle East, where secularism is largely discredited and any social or political institution must be, at the very least, compatible with Islam in order to be considered legitimate, explicitly religious institutions tend to be viewed as legitimate regardless of their particular theological underpinnings. The Saudi government and Wahhabi doctrine thus exist in a symbiotic relationship with one another, with the regime providing financial support to the ideology via oil revenues while at the same time garnering the gratitude of Muslims and prestige in the Muslim world (*ibid.*).

CHAPTER 3

POLITICAL AND INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF WAHHABISM

Given that many of the assumptions of this study may seem to indicate an insidious deliberateness in the obstruction of equal gender development at Wahhabi hands, a discussion of the background, inception, and rise of Wahhabism is necessary in order to place the Wahhabi movement into its unique historical context. Understanding the historical and methodological characteristics of Wahhabism allows the reader to situate Wahhabi thought amidst the varied sea of Islamic ideologies – including those from which it is drawn, those which it vehemently opposes, and those which vehemently oppose it – and recognize the rise of modern Wahhabism as a unique outgrowth of the encounter between Islam and modernity in a historical context. Likewise, an in-depth analysis of Wahhabi history and methodology will highlight the major differences between Wahhabi-influenced Islam and other mainstream Islamic tendencies, thus reinforcing a major assumption of this study: that of the variation in social and political thought *across* the spectrum of Islamic belief systems. The following chapter will deal with the inception of Wahhabism, its unique theological methodology, and its history in the Middle East as they relate to contemporary Wahhabi thought and its impact on gender inequality across Muslim states.

The Islamic school of thought known today as Wahhabism is founded on the ideas of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792CE/1208H), an 18th century Islamic scholar born in the area of present-day Saudi Arabia known as Najd. While never actually calling for the creation of

a school of Islamic thought based upon his ideas, 'Abd al-Wahhab pieced together his concept of the "true Islam" via a conglomeration of previously-instituted Islamic schools of thought with some minor modifications to fit the sociopolitical context of the Arabian Peninsula during his lifetime (Nelson 2005, 20). While the prerequisite theological ideas were indeed present in mainstream Islam during his lifetime, 'Abd al-Wahhab's contribution to Islamic thought draws upon a particular set of Islamic legal traditions which have profound implications for contemporary Islamic juridical theory and social practices.

First, 'Abd al-Wahhab's conception of Islamic authenticity draws from the Hanbali school on many accounts, including an unwavering insistence on a literal interpretation of the Qur'an and a belief that the Qur'an and *Sunna* constitute the most legitimate sources of knowledge. The Hanbali-Wahhabi treatment of *hadith*, however, arguably has the most profound impact on contemporary Wahhabi thought patterns. The Hanbali school emphasizes the importance of *hadith* over the foundations of juridical argumentation, and Wahhabi treatment of *hadith* takes this line of reasoning one step further by asserting that even weak[9] *hadith* and those with suspect chains of transmission are more reliable than reason and thought[10] (Nelson 2005, 13). Even a casual observer can note the anti-intellectual potential of such a system of thought, and many Islamic scholars argue that the eschewing of long-standing Islamic legal precedents based upon juridic reasoning *(ijtihad)* is not only intellectually remiss but also

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[9] Traditionally, a key aspect of *hadith* interpretation has involved a classification of *hadith* based on biographical studies of their transmitters. Indeed, there exist volumes of biographies with detailed descriptions of interactions between scholars and their relationships with the Prophet which are often deeply scrutinized. The transmissions of Al-Bukhiri and Muslim tend to be considered the most valid, with other transmitters occupying a particular space on the legitimacy continuum based on available historical and biographical information.

[10] Although the immediate implications of this epistemological belief set may not be apparent, subsequent sections of this work will deal with the acceptance of weak *hadith* and the creation and perpetuation socio-political attitudes demeaning to women.

antithetical to a core message of Islam – that of textual authenticity based on authoritative chains of transmission and historical understanding (Abou El-Fadl 2005, Algar 2002).

In the political realm, 'Abd al-Wahhab's teachings are more or less silent. In fact, "immediate concern for the social is largely absent from the writings of Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab," who considered "tyranny and social injustice minor problems" at worst (Dallal 1993, 349). Aside from the assertion that living under a non-Islamic government entails inherent *shirk* (Nelson 2005, 27), Wahhabi thought is more concerned with the actions of individual Muslims within the public domain than holding rulers accountable for the condition of their subjects. In fact, 'Abd al-Wahhab's "enemies were Muslims who held wrong beliefs about God, not tyrants who oppress Muslims" or even people of other religious traditions outside of Islam (Dallal 1993, 350). Contemporary scholars note the insistence on classification of people based on Islamic creed as a central theme in Wahhabi thought, with subsequent determinations based on this preliminary religious classification. Throughout 'Abd al-Wahhab's seminal work, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, readers are reminded that living in a manner other than that described in the text indicates that one is a *kafir* and thereby a legitimate target of *jihad*.

The dichotomization of the Islamic world into "true" Muslims and unbelievers *(kafirun)* in Wahhabi thought has far-reaching and profound implications for those who subscribe to 'Abd al-Wahhab's version of Islam as well as those Muslims looking to establish a sound political base for social and political reform. In the religious realm, strict regulations are required in order to eliminate any forms of traditional Islam not founded upon Wahhabi theological principals. As such, Wahhabi ideology is typically intolerant of most customary usages and beliefs of non-Wahhabi Muslims. On a practical level, this system of beliefs requires physical and societal

enforcement of the prohibition of any inimical practices[11] in order to eliminate all forms of *bid'a* and *shirk* (Schwartz 2002, 69-71). The only religious practices actually endorsed by 'Abd al-Wahhab were those which developed between the time of the Prophet and the third century of the Islamic era with subsequent religions practices or concepts considered dangerous *bid'a* (Algar 2002, 35).

Rejection of any competing belief systems as unauthentic tends to be a recurring theme in contemporary religious fundamentalism. Given that the plurality of traditional Islamic belief systems across the Muslim world consists of practices and concepts arising after the golden era of legitimacy defined by 'Abd al-Wahhab, "the Wahhabi war against the hidden unbelievers of Islam is not only justifiable, but is itself a condition for proper belief" (Dallal 1993, 351). In other words, in order to fully ascribe to Wahhabi doctrine, one must first agree with the absolute incorrectness of other competing Islamic doctrines. As Hamid Algar writes:

> The Wahhabi dismissal of all other Muslims but themselves as non-believers is of more than historical significance… this attitude of monopolistic rejection continues to inform the attitudes [of] Muslims held by contemporary Wahhabis and those under their influence, even when not fully articulated (Algar 2002, 20).

The kinds of absolutist and authoritarian attitudes encouraged by exclusivist Wahhabi thought, according to Algar, have a profound psychological impact on individual Muslims influenced by Wahhabism. This thesis should also hold true in the area of patrimonial dominance as well as the formation and perpetuation of socio-religious conceptions of gender equality and family values. The following section will deal with the political implications of the intellectual

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[11] Wahhabi enforcement of religious puritanism and Wahhabi orthodox has historically included the destruction of shrines and holy places associated with various Sufi practices, the forbiddance of individual supplementary prayers and prayer beads, and the removal of decoration from mosques, among other actions.

underpinnings of Wahhabism outlined in this section and how they influence Wahhabi belief in the realm of gender relations.

The Wahhabi-Saudi Alliance

Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab's message was initially not well received by his contemporaries, although eventually his luck would change. Following a sudden rise in popularity that prompted his exile[12] by the local authorities, he fled to Dir'iyya where he entered into a new alliance with Muhammad ibn Sa'ud, the ruler of the city and patriarch of the eventual Al-Sa'ud dynasty. This alliance proved permanent, and the political entity which it spawned would eventually blossom into the Saudi state although "in its origin… it was simply the political and military arm of the Wahhabi sect" (*ibid.* 19). In 1746, the Wahhabi-Saudi proto-state issued a formal proclamation of *jihad* against unbelievers, relying on the Wahhabi conception of all non-Wahhabi Muslims as *mushrikin* (and, therefore, legitimate targets of *jihad* and conquest). Within fifteen years of this declaration, large areas of the Arabian Peninsula were brought under the sovereignty of the Wahhabi-Saudi proto-state (*ibid*. 22). While the British ordered a halt to coercion and military expansion in 1929 due to their encroachment into then-British-controlled Iraq, by this time the necessary framework for the emergence of the modern Saudi state – both heavily influenced and legitimized by Wahhabi Islam – already existed.

As the state expanded and the power of the Saudi monarchy grew, Saudi kings regularly placed members of the Wahhabi *'ulama* in lucrative government posts and the *'ulama*, in return, issued *fatwas* legitimizing the monarch's actions (Al-Rasheed 2002, 124-5). In addition, the

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[12] During his time in al-'Unayna, 'Abd-al Wahhab is said to have increased his popularity and political visibility by personally stoning an adulteress to death.

Saudi government created the Permanent Council for Scientific Research and Legal Opinions[13]

(CRLO) as the official government institution entrusted with issuing legal opinions in the realm

of Islamic law. The CRLO is designed to play a similar role to that of the other legal opinion

issuing bodies in the Muslim world, such as Al-Azhar in Egypt. In fact, many scholars consider

the creation of the CRLO an attempt to supplant non-Wahhabi sources of legal opinion. The

opinions of the CRLO "often serve as the basis for official state law [with] the Saudi government

often [adopting] the legal opinions of the Council as the law of the land" (El Fadl 2005, 173).

Thus, the Wahhabi *'ulama* and the Saudi state have existed throughout their combined history as

symbiotic sociopolitical institutions, each reinforcing one another's legitimacy through a

complex web of religious proclamations, government appointments, and negotiations between

the *'ulama* and the Al-Sa'ud dynasty.

The discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia in the mid-1930's changed the course of Wahhabi

expansion dramatically. As Hamid Algar writes:

> Intellectually marginal, the Wahhabi movement had the good fortune to emerge in
> the Arabian Peninsula… and thus in the proximity of the Haramayn, a major
> geographical focus of the Muslim world; and its Saudi patrons had the good
> fortune… to acquire massive oil wealth, a portion of which has been used in
> attempts to propagate Wahhabism… [These] two factors, reinforced by partial
> congruity with other contemporary tendencies in the Islamic world, have endowed
> Wahhabism with a degree of longevity (Algar 2002, 2).

Indeed, the main factor separating Wahhabism from other traditional Islamic perspectives –

including other Islamic ideologies – is its relative wealth (and resultant influence). Wahhabism

does not simply encapsulate reactionary or conservative tendencies; it does so with the support of

Saudi petrodollars as well as the legitimizing influence of the custodian of the two holy places

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[13] In Arabic, this council is known as *raabitat al-'ulama*.

and the "relatively successful administration of the mundane aspects of the [Hajj] by the Saudi authorities," along with the aggressive proselytization of Muslim pilgrims to Mecca and Medina (Ochsenwald 1981, 279).

Given the Saudi government's alliance with the Wahhabi religious establishment and the fact that Wahhabi Islam provided and continues to provide "the main legitimating force for the al-Saud family," it is not surprising that the Saudi government utilizes a great deal of oil revenue reinforcing Wahhabi doctrine on an institutional level (Prokop 2003, 77). One of the ways in which the Saudi government does this is via the creation of public schools where Saudi citizens can receive a cost-free, Wahhabi-influenced education designed to perpetuate Wahhabi ideology as well as to support the legitimacy of the Saudi monarchy. In fact, many scholars argue that the educational apparatus in Saudi Arabia is designed to preserve Wahhabi doctrine and "the religious foundations of the [Saudi] regime" (*ibid.*). The Saudi *'ulama* have explicit control over curriculum development, and funding[14] for religious colleges and universities has been on the increase since 1979, continuing even during the collapse of the price of oil in the mid-1980's. In addition, the Saudi government both publishes and distributes textbooks that are in agreement with the Wahhabi worldview and emphasize the divine legitimacy of the Al-Sa'ud dynasty's policies (*ibid.* 78).

A substantial portion of the content of the government-published Islamic Studies textbooks used in Saudi classrooms is devoted to lessons on obedience to the rulers and the head of the household[15], the rejection of non-Wahhabi forms of Islam, and a call to proselytize and

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[14] This funding is not only limited to the religious education of Saudi citizens – in fact, the Saudi government has special recruitment programs including fully-funded education scholarships for poor Muslims and even Western Muslims who are interested in Islamic Studies.

[15] While this type of traditional value-based message is not necessarily derogatory towards women, it does indicate a veneration of patriarchy, which is perpetuated via the Saudi educational apparatus and funded by Saudi petrodollars.

spread Wahhabism around the world (*ibid.* 80). Whether or not these educational socialization programs have been effective at indoctrinating the Saudi public in Wahhabi thought is a matter of debate, but the fact that, by 1986 more than 16,000 of Saudi Arabia's 100,000 students were enrolled in Islamic studies programs and by the early 1990's more than one-quarter of all students in Saudi universities were studying in religious institutions indicates that, at the very least, the message is being heard by a sizeable portion of the population (Moaddel 2006, 81). It is not surprising, given the Wahhabi monopoly on educational curriculum and a society whose "Islamic way of life is rigorously enforced by… religious police," that more than three-fourths of Saudis defined themselves as Muslims above all and 63 percent of Saudis defined themselves as "religious" in a values survey carried out in the kingdom in 2003 (*ibid.*). At the very least, the Saudi educational and social control institutions seem to be performing quite well within the kingdom's own borders.

The Politicization of *Shari'a* Law in Contemporary Muslim Societies

While the links between Wahhabism and the Saudi government have been explored in the previous section, the status of women in Wahhabi thought requires further extrapolation. Many scholars of Islam argue that women's rights are addressed most directly in the realm of Islamic family law – a subset of *Shari'a* law. Since many Muslims, including Wahhabi-oriented Muslims, consider *Shari'a* law to be of utmost social and political importance, an examination of the gender-sensitive aspects of *Shari'a* and their present-day political implications is necessary

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Since the family is the immediate context of childhood gender socialization, the perpetuation of patrimonial attitudes in the government-funded education system may give legitimacy to the institution of male domination both inside and outside of the family.

for a comprehensive understanding of the status of women across Islamic societies, be they Wahhabi or otherwise.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the sociopolitical realities in the Muslim world have been altered dramatically due to the ever-increasing influence of modern Western culture. Since this period, many governments of majority-Muslim states have attempted to reconcile the implications of *Shari'a* law with worldly political governance through a system of "Islamisation" of Western-based, secular legal codes, with governments "tampering with *Shari'a* doctrine as to promulgate its rules through government enactments" as they see fit for their individual state (Al-Muhairi 1996, 34). In terms of family law, however, where traditional interpretations of *Shari'a* enjoy a great deal of societal legitimacy, governments "favored preserving traditional *Shari'a* [interpretations], rather than adopting Western-inspired laws, as had been the case for other fields of law" (*ibid*. 38). The realm of personal status, therefore, came to be defined by the state via the state's interpretation of *Shari'a* law which, given the multiplicity of types of Islam, necessarily favored one particular school of thought over others in its official interpretation. As Butti Sultan Butti Ali Al-Muhairi explains:

> [Every] Muslim government tends to regard the jurisprudential rules adopted in its own models of Islamisation as the correct and final statement of *Shari'a* law. The dissenting juristic opinions not adopted in such legislation consequently lose their status as law, and the legitimacy of any views which differ from the official position is effectively denied (*ibid*. 46).

The contemporary trend in Islamisation campaigns as propagated by many governments of Muslim countries thus lends itself to a type of doctrinal exclusivism. Government legitimacy in the realm of family law rests upon the ability of the government to create a codified body of

Shari'a-based law that fits with its host society's conception of *Shari'a* interpretation, customary usage, social context, and degree of economic development.

Given the importance of jurisprudential foundations on the formulation of *Shari'a*-based laws in the contemporary era, the status of Muslim women living under a Wahhabi-influenced governing system is at least partially defined by the jurisprudential foundations of Wahhabism itself. It has been argued that strict adherence to the doctrines upon which Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab based many of his ideas "created in some cases, especially those concerning the status of women, miserable social conditions" (*ibid.* 39). While this classification suggests that subsequent schools of thought based on Hanbali theology may be harsher towards women than others, it in no way guarantees that Wahhabi thought must necessarily create such miserable social conditions. In fact, the particular theological methodology embraced by present-day Wahhabis could be used as a means to support the expansion of women's rights if applied somewhat differently.

CHAPTER 4

WAHHABI THOUGHT AND THE PERSISTANCE OF PATRIARCHY

As previously discussed[16], the Hanbali roots of Wahhabi thought suggest that even weak *hadith* with suspect chains of transmission are superior to juridic thought and jurisprudence. Given the tendency for Muslim states to adhere to particular jurisprudential rules in their formulation of *Shari'a*-based law and the alliance between Wahhabism and the Saudi state, the nature of Hanbali interpretations of *hadith* have an enormous potential impact on gender-specific social conditions within Saudi Arabia and around the Muslim world[17]. These interpretations tend to be widely known, well-publicized, and generally thought to be accurate by the larger Muslim community. The aforementioned CRLO, in its *responsa* to questions from people all over the Muslim world, provides a telling example of gender-related *hadith* interpretations from a Wahhabi perspective. Given its extremely close relationship with the Saudi government – as well as the fact that CRLO decisions regularly become the law of the land in Saudi Arabia – the opinion of the Council on matters pertaining to women's rights can be considered tantamount to official Wahhabi positions.

Over the years the CRLO has been involved in theological disputes concerning the status of women. True to the Wahhabi insistence that virtue be promoted and vice prohibited, CRLO jurists have consistently supported restrictions for women in public life. According to an ever-

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[16] For a full explanation, see chapter 3 entitled *Political and Intellectual Foundations of Wahhabism.*

[17] The impact of Wahhabi thought on the worldwide Muslim population as funded by the Saudi monarchy will be investigated in subsequent chapters.

growing series of CRLO decisions, women have been forbidden from driving, traveling alone,

pursuing a career in lieu of marriage, wearing high heels, occupying positions of leadership,

visiting graves, or attending mosques other than the ones nearest their homes[18] (El Fadl 2005).

In addition, women are commanded to remain covered, even if covering requires a great deal of

inconvenience, pain, or emotional distress[19]. Women are commanded always to submit

themselves to the will of their husbands regardless of their own wishes. This is not limited only

to familial or economic matters, but also to sexual urges, even if the wives in these cases find

their husbands' urges "annoying, distasteful, or unpleasurable" (*ibid.* 197). Additionally, "the

CRLO frequently asserts that women are the majority of the inhabitants of Hell, and that they are

of a limited emotional and intellectual capacity" in many of their legal determinations excluding

women from public life (*ibid.* 225).

Were the legal decisions of CRLO jurists not based on some form of interpretation of the

Qur'an and *Sunna*, these decisions would likely find little positive echo outside of their

immediate supporters. Instead, the fact that these decisions are supported by certain *hadith* tends

to lend them legitimacy regardless of the authenticity of the *hadith* in question, the lack of

Qur'anic corroboration of the spirit and instructions of the *hadith*, or the actual social

implications of attitudes encouraged by the *hadith*. In fact, many of the *hadith* interpretations

used by CRLO jurists and other Wahhabi advocates have uncertain or controversial roots. A

person frequently cited as responsible for transmitting the Prophet's opinions on women in

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[18] While none of these actions are expressly forbidden (*haram*), the Wahhabi school of thought emphasizes the forbiddance of "doubtful matters" (*mushtabihaat*) which may potentially lead to forbidden practices and behaviors. CRLO jurists and other Wahhabi-minded Muslims defend these restrictions on the grounds that they prevent the kinds of behavior that necessarily leads to sin.

[19] In one such response, a woman is told only to remove her head and face cover in front of her husband despite the fact that her doctor advised her to not to wear them at all due to a skin condition effecting her head and face.

leadership roles is Abu Bakrah[20], a late convert to Islam whose impact on Islamic tradition is described as "disproportionate to his status as a Companion of the Prophet" (*ibid.* 113). Many of the CRLO decisions regarding traditions demeaning to women are substantiated by transmissions from another highly controversial late convert and Companion of the Prophet Abu Hurayrah[21], a man whose transmissions became so distrusted that later jurists either refused to rely on them or accepted them "only if they did not contradict analogical analysis," a caveat which does not apply in the Hanbali-Wahhabi system of acceptance of *hadith* regardless of (or even in spite of) reasoned, logical analyses (*ibid.* 216-217). Needless to say, the opinions of CRLO jurists indicate that Wahhabi theological circles are ambivalent to the crises of legitimacy within their epistemological reasoning.

Dangerous Women: Wahhabi Construction of Social Reality

From an Islamic studies perspective, the representation of women and women's issues in CRLO *responsa* are puzzling. The abundance of social and legal restrictions placed upon women and their undervalued status contradicts the fact that "roughly a third of the early [Islamic] transmissions or legal opinions are by women or attributed to women" and that even the Prophet's wife 'A'isha "[ventured] into the world of politics and armed rebellion" during her lifetime (*ibid.* 230). According to Khaled Abou El Fadl, it is precisely this change in the role of women brought about by early Islam which precipitated the emergence of gender-specific counter-traditions in an attempt to halt the weakening of traditional Arab patriarchy:

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[20] Abu Bakrah (not to be confused with Abu Bakr, the first Caliph following the death of the Prophet) is frequently described by his contemporaries as a conservative who constantly defends the tradition of patriarchy and stubbornly adheres to "whatever he believes is right." For a deeper analysis of Abu Bakrah, see Abou El-Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority, and Women.*

[21] As a side note, Abu Hurayrah also claimed that contagious diseases do not exist. For a deeper analysis of Abu Hurayrah, see Abou El-Fadl, *Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority, and Women.*

> It is reasonable to think that this legacy [of reforming traditional gender roles] was bound to generate opposition, and that the opposition would take the form of traditions warning against a public role for women and speaking of crooked ribs, prostrating to husbands, bad omens, and deficient intellects. These traditions and their counter-traditions are indicative of the vibrant negotiative process that took place in early Islam – a process that most certainly included the re-definition of gender relations (*ibid.* 231).

The counter-traditions mentioned by El Fadl are precisely those used by the CRLO in many of their decisions on women's issues. They are used by CRLO and other Wahhabi-inspired jurists in the same way that they were used as they emerged over the course of history – in an attempt to resist the re-definition of gender relations[22] on Islamic grounds.

Use of these suspect traditions tends to play two separate (but equally demeaning) social roles: (1) making connections between women and social undesirables and (2) casting women as dangerous to society at large. The former usually takes the form of traditions which place women on par with donkeys and black dogs[23], or emphasize the supposed emotional and intellectual deficiencies suffered by women. Many of these traditions have several known variations, some of which add pigs, Manicheans, Jews, and unbelievers to the list of societal and religious undesirables (*ibid.* 226). The sheer variety of these traditions, as well as reports that they faced a great deal of opposition within the early Islamic *'ulama*, indicate that they have historically served "as a receptacle for social condemnation and the hurling of bigoted insults"

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[22] While this terminology may indicate a deliberate plot to keep women oppressed rather than sincere religious conviction, this study does not make any assumptions as to the sincerity of the religious convictions of any CRLO jurist or even the CRLO as a whole. Regardless of the malice (or lack thereof) behind the perpetuation of these traditions, they still play the same social role as they have for centuries: that of reinforcing ideological and theological resistance to social change.

[23] Based on an oft-used transmission by Abu Hurayrah which states that the Prophet said that the passage of a woman, donkey, or black dog in front of a praying man invalidates his prayers.

(*ibid.*). Their continued use among Wahhabi-minded jurists in decisions on women's issues indicates that they serve the same purpose in the contemporary era.

The second role of traditions demeaning to women, that of casting women as inherently dangerous, is grounded in the Islamic concept of *fitnah* – seduction or seductive acts. Women are often depicted as living embodiments of *fitnah* and, combined with their limited emotional and intellectual capacity, they are seen as the ultimate form of temptation. It is the prohibition of *fitnah*, CRLO jurists frequently argue, that makes imperative the restriction of women's access to public life. Women are prohibited from driving, for example, because they may be forced to intermingle with men if they suffer an automobile accident or are pulled over by a police officer. While concern for women's safety is often expressed, the key concern usually revolves around preventing women from unwittingly unleashing their inherent *fitnah* upon the male population, thus reducing the number of opportunities for sexual impiety[24].

By placing women into a social category alongside undesirables and categorizing them as inherently dangerous, these traditions serve to construct a social reality in which women are primarily viewed as socially deficient and dangerous, regardless of actual social circumstances. As Khaled Abou El Fadl writes:

> Arguably [these] traditions are not describing an empirical state of affairs, but are setting a normative principle. The normative principle is that women are dangerous and, whether you can empirically verify this or not, you must accept it, believe it, and act on it. This, of course, takes us to the full circle of construction of reality – by prophesying that women are dangerous and treating them as dangerous, we are never able to realize any reality other than that women are dangerous (*ibid.* 237).

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[24] Many observers note the idiosyncrasy in this chain of logic: women are forced to pay the price for potential male impiety via social restrictions and additional religious burdens.

In other words, by validating the religious legitimacy of such traditions, the concept of women as dangerous intellectually and emotionally deficient social undesirables constitutes a constructed reality in which women are treated as such. Given this fact, it is not at all surprising that attitudes in favor of patriarchy run high in areas deeply influenced by Wahhabi thought. A 2006 values survey indicates that 75 percent of Saudi men believe that men should have priority over women in obtaining employment, 79 percent believe that men make better political leaders than women, 68 percent believe that a university education is more important for boys[25] than girls, and 91 percent[26] believe that a wife must always obey her husband[27] (Moaddel 2006, 89). The clear attitudinal biases towards patriarchy indicated in this survey can be directly linked to the kinds of controversial Islamic traditions discussed in this section.

Propagating Wahhabi Thought Outside of Saudi Arabia

A key assumption of this study is that Wahhabi adherents – including the Saudi government – attempt to actively propagate their ideology. As previously discussed, the Saudi government uses its educational system and control over state resources to entrench Wahhabi thought patterns and social constructs on the domestic front within Saudi Arabia[28]. In order for Wahhabism and its related implications to impact countries outside of the Arabian Peninsula,

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[25] Responses to this question varied a great deal across countries, adding validity to the assertion that different kinds of Islam result in different perceptions of women. 40 percent of Iranian men, 50 percent of Jordanian men, 39 percent of Egyptian men, and 7 percent of American men agreed with this statement.

[26] Less than 1 percent of the male Saudi respondents in Moaddel's survey disagreed with the statement "A wife must always obey her husband," with roughly 8 percent of respondents reporting a lack of preference.

[27] The attitudes in other countries involved in the study are significantly less patriarchal. In terms of other Muslim countries, 61 percent of Iranian men, 85 percent of Jordanian men, and 82 percent of Egyptian men agreed with this statement with 20 percent, 10 percent, and 7 percent disagreeing, respectively.

[28] See section entitled *The Wahhabi-Saudi Alliance*.

however, there must also be a set of institutions dedicated to spreading the ideology on a worldwide scale. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Saudi *'ulama* is straightforwardly states that "propagating Islam in all areas of [the] globe… is the duty of the state and its citizens" (Stalinsky 2002). In this instance, the word "Islam" can arguably be interchanged by the word "Wahhabism" given the context of the Saudi *'ulama*'s relationship with Wahhabi doctrine.

One of the primary ways in which the Saudi government seeks to spread its religious ideology is through NGOs. The Muslim World League (MWL), established in 1962 during the "Arab Cold War" is identified by many scholars as a Wahhabi-dominated institution, especially since the MWL presidency has always been occupied by the Saudi chief *mufti*, the head of its secretariat must be a Saudi citizen by statute, and the organization's self-described mission to "repel inimical trends and dogmas" (Algar 2002, 50). Likewise, the related Muslim Student Association (MSA) of North America and Canada and its affiliates such as the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations (IIFSO), and the World Assembly of Islamic Youth (WAMY) have all been linked, at one point or another, with Saudi-supported channels for the propagation of Wahhabism abroad. As Hamid Algar writes:

> Particularly in the 1960's and 1970's, no criticism of Saudi Arabia would be
> tolerated at the annual conventions of MSA; King Faisal was regarded as a
> fearless champion of Islam. Its numerous local chapters… generally did their best
> to prevent the dissemination of "inimical trends and dogmas" [and]… official
> approval of Wahhabism remained strong; as late as 1980 its publishing arm saw
> fit to produce the translation… of three treatises by Muhammad b. 'Abd al-
> Wahhab under the heading *Sources of Islamic Thought* (*ibid.* 51).

Other organizations, such as WAMY, are somewhat less ambiguous about their connections to Wahhabi doctrine. Indeed, one of its official goals is to propagate Islam "in its purist form,"

which, given the political context of its creation, can be interpreted as an affirmation of its Wahhabi roots (WAMY 1997).

While Saudi-supported and funded Islamic NGOs may serve to spread Wahhabi thought on an international stage, perhaps the most effective mode of propagating Wahhabism globally is the same strategy which has been relatively effective domestically within Saudi Arabia – education. Indeed, following the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia, the "massive influx of petrodollars in the 1970s and early 1980s provided the Saudis with the money to invest heavily in the propagation of their message" abroad (Prokop 2003, 84). This involvement in international Islamic education takes the form of "building and funding new mosques, Islamic cultural centres, schools, and universities, as well as providing generous scholarships and assistance to perform the *hajj*" along with "diffusion of the Qur'an and religious textbooks, as well as the publication and distribution of works by Islamist intellectuals" sympathetic to the Wahhabi worldview (*ibid.* 83).

Saudi, and thus Wahhabi, influence in the realm of education extends from Morocco to Indonesia and East Asia, across Europe, into Africa and even across the Atlantic into the United States. In Central Asia, the construction of Wahhabi-loyal educational institutions began following the Red Army's retreat from Afghanistan in 1989, and as of 2002 there were nearly two thousand Wahhabi schools – directly linked to Saudi Arabia – in Pakistan alone (Schwartz 2002, 184). Indeed, Saudi influence in the Pakistani educational system has historically been extremely strong, particularly along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border (Prokop 2003, 86). In Africa, Wahhabi educational influence is most easily seen in Sudan, although there are Saudi-funded *madrasas* in countries like Mali, Nigeria, Chad, and Senegal, among others (*ibid.* 85). Other parts of the Muslim world such as Bosnia and Kosovo have been somewhat less receptive

to Saudi educational assistance and the Wahhabi indoctrination such an education entails and, thereby, are far less influenced by Wahhabi thought than other parts of the Muslim world.

While funding via Saudi petrodollars indicates a significant amount of sympathy for Wahhabi thought on behalf of receiving educational institutions, the fact that various *madrasas* are funded – at least in part – by the Saudi does not necessarily mean that these schools are actively spreading Wahhabi doctrine. A closer look at the curricula and rules used at these schools, however, does point to significant Wahhabi influence. There are numerous incidences of "schools funded by Saudi charities or the Saudi state [requiring] female students to wear the veil" across the Muslim world (*ibid.*). In addition, the Saudi government regularly provides money for impoverished parents to "enable their daughters to wear 'appropriate' Islamic dress" to school in poor countries, along with actually paying parents to allow their children to attend Saudi-funded Islamic schools (*ibid.*).

As far as curriculum is concerned, a minority of Saudi-funded schools, particularly along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, "differ from traditional *madrasas* in being less concerned with religious scholarship than with a preaching of a distorted version of *jihad*" (*ibid.* 86). These extreme schools are not the norm in Islamic (or Saudi) education, but it should be noted that endorsements of violence and extremism are not necessary for the perpetuation of patriarchal societal norms detrimental to women's development. As previously discussed, Wahhabi theological methodology provides a sufficient basis for the demonization and exclusion of women from public society via the exaltation of suspect Islamic traditions which present women in a negative light[29]. Thus, in societies where things like the veiling of women and segregated education are considered alien by a large portion of the population, Wahhabi educational

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[29] See section entitled *Wahhabi Thought and the Persistence of Patriarchy*.

institutions tend to be less popular than in, say, the Arabian Peninsula. Under largely secularized

populations, such as post-Soviet era Uzbekistan, these alien forces are openly ridiculed and

rejected. As such, "the accusation of Wahhabism situates the accused beyond the scope of

national tradition and insinuates unhealthy Saudi influence" rather than symbolizing a return to

the "true" Islam (Khalid 2003, 591). This social reality indicates that the appeal of Wahhabism

in a particular country is a function of how indigenous[30] Wahhabi doctrine "feels" to its host

population.

Aside from NGOs and educational funding, the Saudi government promotes its

ideological viewpoints via elite-level alliances with governments in the Muslim world that share

at least a few of its puritanical leanings. The most notable of these pseudo-alliances began

during the Cold War, with the Saudi government funding and training resistance fighters from

the Arabian Peninsula to fight Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Following the withdrawal of Soviet

troops from Afghanistan and the eventual Taliban takeover, social realities in the country began

to move in a much more puritanical direction. Hamid Algar writes of Taliban-ruled Afghanistan:

> Likewise reminiscent of classical Wahhabism were measures such as the
> prohibition of small and harmless joys such as the flying of kites by children, the
> insistence on regulating the details of facial hair, the forced performance of prayer
> in congregation, *and the pitiless exclusion of women from all forms of social and
> economic activity* (Algar 2002, 58; emphasis added).

Saudi princes visiting Afghanistan in 1995 and were impressed with the Taliban's

imposition of Wahhabi-style *Shari'a* institutions, eventually returning to Saudi Arabia to

convince the Al-Sa'ud dynasty to support the Taliban. Two years later, the late Mulla Rabbani –

a former Taliban leader – visited Riyadh for a meeting with King Fahd, after which he remarked:

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[30] It is likely that geographic proximity to other Wahhabi countries (Saudi Arabia in particular) will effect the level
of cultural affinity between a host society and Wahhabi practices.

"King Fahd expressed happiness at the good measures taken by the Taliban and over the imposition of *shari'a* in our country" (Fisk 2001). While the Taliban are no longer in control of Afghanistan, it should be noted that the Saudi government made the decision to support the Taliban regime on the basis of theology – Taliban ideology was close enough to Wahhabi doctrine to merit financial and moral support from the Saudi *'ulama* and, subsequently, the Al-Sa'ud dynasty.

CHAPTER 5

FRAMEWORK OF STUDY

The theoretical framework for this work will draw largely on the developmental paradigm which sees political development and modernization primarily as a function of economic development (Parsons 1960). While empirical research tends to support the hypothesis that economic prosperity leads to greater gender equality, developmental theory does not fully explain the variance in inequality across states with relatively similar levels of income (and, thus, modernization). Indeed, "despite dramatic increases in female labor force participation… employed Western women are still clustered in low-status poorly paid clerical and service occupations" (Marshall 1985, 219). Since development theory hypothesizes that increased economic prosperity leads to decreased gender inequality, it fails to account for this variance in inequality across similarly-developed countries, indicating the necessity of alternative explanations.

Susan Marshall's work on development, dependence, and gender inequality in the developing world was designed with such an alternative explanation in mind. Her study, which draws upon development theory, dependency theory, and feminist theory, intends to fill the developmental gap by introducing other variables – such as cultural region and religion – into developmentally-based regression models in order to explore the relationship between economic development and gender inequality. She eventually concludes that "although some of the macroeconomic indicators [of development] emerge as significant predictors of gender

inequality… the most important explanatory variable is cultural region" (*ibid.* 217). She identifies *Muslim* as a cultural region among others, and her study indicates that the regression coefficient for the *Muslim* cultural region rivals that of sub-Saharan Africa in terms of gender inequality.

More recent research seems to indicate that oil rents, not Islam, account for much of the gender inequality in the Middle East. In his work "Oil, Islam, and Women," Michael Ross explores the effect of oil wealth on gender inequality based on a recent study which found that Muslim women with fewer economic opportunities are more likely to support fundamentalist Islam than Muslim women with more economic opportunities (Ross 2008, 107). This realization, founded upon the observation that increased oil production actually decreases female involvement in the labor force via an economic condition known as the "Dutch Disease", potentially explains the variation in gender inequality as a function of oil rents (*ibid.* 109). According to Ross, as oil revenues spur economic development, the subsequent decrease in demand for domestically-produced tradable goods[31] caused by the overall rise in GDP created by oil revenues and increase in demand for non-tradable economic activity[32] serves to limit employment opportunities for women in a gender-segregated workforce. In addition, as the household income rises along with oil production rates, women will have less incentive to join the labor force in search of supplemental household income. As Ross explains, "oil production reduces the number of women in the labor force, which in turn reduces their political influence. As a result, oil-producing states are left with atypically strong patriarchal norms, laws, and

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[31] Such as agriculture and light manufacturing; low-wage jobs which tend to be occupied by women.

[32] Such as construction and financial services; high-wage jobs which tend to be occupied by men, particularly in the developing world.

political institutions" (*ibid.*). Ross' findings support this statement, thus re-emphasizing the importance of economic structure to gender inequality.

This work will draw from the lessons learned from both Marshall and Ross' analyses. While Marshall's conclusion that cultural region accounts for a great deal of the variance in gender inequality across countries of similar levels of economic development, I agree with Ross that the variation in gender inequality *within* a given cultural region – in this case, the Islamic world – requires further explanation. The goal of this work is to show that Wahhabism and other fundamentalist Islamic doctrines account for some of this variance across the Islamic world using a model similar to the one used by Marshall.

As for Ross' conclusion that oil rents provide a more likely source of Middle Eastern patrimonialism than Islamic doctrine, his results are not necessarily in conflict with the theoretical framework of this study. First of all, his study is meant to "consider the relationship between oil and female status *within* the Islamic Middle East" thus allowing him to "control for the influence of both religion and regional culture" (*ibid.* 116). This approach fails to take the variation in Islamic thought and doctrine into account – thus contradicting the concept of individual formulation of religion based in part on subregion-specific traditional beliefs as outlined by scholars such as Clifford Geertz. Ross' study assumes that Islam is basically identical across the Muslim world in order to hold religion as a constant, a necessary component of his methodology. Were Islam theologically monolithic and static, Ross' approach would be arguably more complete. This study, however, aims to explore the variation in gender inequality in terms of different kinds of Islam rather than taking Islam as unitary and given.

Secondly, Ross' assertion that "petroleum perpetuates patriarchy" is consistent with the expected findings in this study, although the correlation between the two is likely spurious given

that Wahhabi influence is correlated with oil wealth, as indicated by the results on Table 1[33],
which illustrates the correlation between OPEC membership, Islam, and Wahhabism in
particular. The results of this table suggest that those countries which have the highest GDP as a
result of oil revenue – and thus the highest oil rents per capita – tend to be Wahhabi-influenced.
This leads to a situation of observational equivalence between oil rents per capita and Wahhabi
influence, rendering the relationship between oil rents and gender inequality as seen in Ross'
study spurious.

Financial support via Saudi petrodollars sets Wahhabism apart from other fundamentalist
Islamic doctrines, and therefore petroleum exports are likely to account for gender inequality on
those grounds, especially given the breadth of Saudi support of Wahhabi religious institutions
around the world. Likewise, Ross' theory is unable to account for the underlying mechanisms
that instituted the patriarchy that petroleum sales perpetuate. His analysis assumes historically
constant levels of inherent gender inequality in traditional Islamic states which are simply
perpetuated by oil rent in the face of economic development. My theory, which echoes analyses
of Islamic studies scholars, assumes a legitimately equality-supporting interpretation of Islamic
doctrine that is stifled by petrodollar-fueled Wahhabi puritanism. The perpetuation of this
system is indeed fueled by oil rents, but the oil rents do not *cause* doctrinaire gender inequality,
instead they allow Wahhabism to spread and gain legitimacy, multiplying its influence.

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[33] Empirical analysis based on the data used in this study indicates a correlation coefficient of .417 for *Wahhabi* and
a country being a member of OPEC. Of the eleven OPEC countries in this dataset (Iraq is omitted), the top four
countries in terms of GDP (and, therefore, oil rents per capita) are all highly Wahhabi influenced. This indicates
that the countries that benefit most from oil production in terms of GDP tend to be (1) majority Muslim and (2)
Wahhabi influenced. See Table 1 for more details.

Operationalizing Wahhabi Influence

While some level of Wahhabi influence exists in most countries across the Islamic world and beyond due to the vast sums the Saudi government continues to spend on Islamic education and charities, this study requires a structured means for identifying those countries with sufficient Wahhabi influence to impact government policy and society at large. In essence, there are a number of factors which contribute to the staying power and depth of influence of Wahhabi thought in a particular country, and these factors can be identified via historical analysis. A truly predictive model of Wahhabi longevity is beyond the scope of this project – the evidence presented here will serve merely to identify which countries will be identified as Wahhabi-influenced for the purpose of determining levels of gender inequality.

As previously discussed, Wahhabi doctrine and methodology are accompanied by a set of specific social norms. These norms channel and regularize behavior within Wahhabi societies, limiting the range of choices of individuals as well as constraining actions. Even "making successful law and policy requires and understanding of the pervasive influence of social norms of behavior" in a given society (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 894). Since these norms are the underlying cause of gender inequality, it is important to understand where and why Wahhabi norms successfully mesh with or supplant norms that already exist within a given country. In order for Wahhabi norms to take root in a society, one or more of the following conditions must be met: (1) Saudi Arabia has a diplomatic interest and a presence in the country, (2) the host society considers Islam an official religion as expressed by its written constitution, (3) puritan, Wahhabi-based norms are similar enough to indigenous norms to be acceptable, (4) Saudi Arabia is a regional hegemon for the country in question, and (5) the Saudi *'ulama* and Al-Sa'ud dynasty officially support the host country government as evidenced by historical statements of

support. Table 2 illustrates the absence or presence of indicators of high Wahhabi influence across Muslim countries.

Islamic identity plays a large role in the determination of Wahhabi influence. Countries with Muslim – particularly Sunni – majorities that wish to be identified as "Islamic" on an international stage are required to follow mainstream Islamic norms in order to stay in the wider Islamic community. As James Fearon argues, "one's identity as a member of a particular social category, and part of the definition of that category is that all members follow certain norms" (*ibid.* 902). The legitimizing influences of the Haramayn and *hajj* as well as the presentation of Saudi Arabia as a thoroughly pious Islamic state serve to bolster the legitimacy of Saudi culture across the Sunni world, thus making Wahhabi doctrine relatively attractive[34]. Combined with "Saudi Arabia's larger agenda of controlling Islamic intellectual and cultural life across the Muslim world," embracing the doctrinaire Saudi-Wahhabi lifestyle becomes an easy method of establishing Islamic identity (Nasr 2000, 144).

Of course not all Islamic identities are the same, and not every country participates in the acceptance and propagation of Wahhabi doctrine. On some level there must be congruence between Wahhabi doctrine and indigenous cultural traditions in order for Wahhabi influence to permeate and persist. The Deobandi school, widely practiced throughout Central Asia, is a somewhat conservative school of Islamic thought. While popular in places like Pakistan and Afghanistan, Deobandi political activism and the rigid enforcement of Deobandi-endorsed rules

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[34] This is somewhat less true in regards to non-Arab Muslims. Saudi Arabia and its religious traditions gain legitimacy among Arab Muslims simply for originating in the "birthplace of Islam." Non-Arab Muslims, on the other hand, seem more likely to resent Arab domination of Islamic cultural, religious, social, and political dialogue. This points to a extra-religious cultural variable that impacts the attractiveness of Wahhabi doctrine in a host society.

and regulations – including limiting education and employment opportunities for women – is a recent phenomenon:

> There appears to be a region-wide radical Deobandi resurgence in the making –
> something akin to the Wahhabi explosion in the eighteenth-century Arabian
> peninsula – extending in the form of an arc from India through Pakistan and
> Afghanistan into Central Asia. It is closely tied to Saudi Arabia both
> intellectually and financially. Its influence, however, extends further (*ibid*. 179).

Deobandi theology, being quite conservative, is therefore compatible with Wahhabism to a large degree, at least enough to seem at least somewhat natural to the host society in places like Pakistan and Afghanistan. It is not surprising that the Taliban, a self-identified Deobandi group, was eventually endorsed by the Saudi government for its piety.

The countries of the Arabian Peninsula are similar in many ways to Saudi Arabia. This similarity is due not only to religious and cultural similarities but also geographical location. Countries like Yemen, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates necessarily fall within the Saudi sphere of political influence. The fact that the United States, the eminent global power, encourages the division of the Persian Gulf region into Saudi and Iranian spheres of influence only reinforces the regional hegemony of the Saudi state over the Arabian Peninsula. International norm dynamics literature suggests that this hegemony lends itself to the entrenchment of Saudi norms in the region. As Finnemore and Sikkink explain:

> To the degree that states and state elites fashion a political self or identity in
> relation to the international community, the concept of socialization suggests that
> the cumulative effect of many countries in a region adopting new norms "may be
> analogous to 'peer pressure' among countries." Three possible motivations for
> responding to such "peer pressure" are legitimation, conformity, and esteem
> (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, 902-903).

Given the region's strongly Islamic (and particularly Sunni) cultural heritage and domination by Saudi political interests, it can be expected that Wahhabi norms are generally well received in the

region. The countries of the Arabian Peninsula are especially vulnerable to this regional peer pressure due to the widespread perceived legitimacy of Wahhabi doctrine and the importance of the Haramayn to the larger Muslim community.

Outside of the Saudi sphere of regional hegemony, official or unofficial support of domestic governments and/or Islamic social movements by the Saudi *'ulama* or the Al-Sa'ud dynasty also play a role in the persistence of Wahhabi and Wahhabi-like norms within a given country. Saudi support for the Taliban in Afghanistan likely played a role in the continued oppression of women in that country until the US-led invasion (Algar 2002, 56). Post-Soviet Uzbekistan provides an illuminating counter-example. Although it is a poor country with an Islamic heritage, the Uzbek government – which is extremely concerned with the influence of possible Islamist movements within its borders – considers Saudi and Wahhabi influence dangerous and, therefore, actively works against the spread of Wahhabi norms and methodology. Within Uzbekistan, the government is deeply involved in religious instruction:

> The [Uzbek] Muslim Directorate has a monopoly over religious instruction and the organization of contacts with the rest of the Muslim world. New madrasas have appeared under its auspices, and it organizes the hajj for several thousand citizens every year. It also controls all mosques and their personnel in the country. Mosques not controlled by the directorate, by contrast, are deemed illegal and have in many instances been closed (Khalid 2003, 587).

The rhetoric of the Uzbek government effectively situates Wahhabi doctrine and Saudi influence in opposition with Uzbek nationalism. This sort of institutionalized opposition to Wahhabism, in contrast with Taliban-style codified Wahhabi norms, necessarily impedes Saudi-Wahhabi influence at the governmental level and indicates that there are, at the very least, a handful of majority Muslim countries with governments that are aware and fearful of the ideological power of Saudi-funded Wahhabi thought and institutions.

<u>Methodology</u>

The goal of this work will be to construct a predictive model to explain gender inequality across states in terms of Islam in general and Wahhabi ideology in particular. While economic development is widely believed to be the primary factor driving decreases in gender inequality, this project proposes that Wahhabi political influence will have a greater effect than economic prosperity on gender inequality across Muslim states. Table 3 lists the variables of interest as well as their type and ranges.

<u>United Nations Human Development Report: HDI, GDI, GDD, GEM</u>

The United Nations Human Development Report, from which I will construct a model for analyzing gender-related development and empowerment, assigns a Human Development Index[35] (HDI) score for each country based on overall level of development, which is defined as the ability for people to choose "to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge, and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living" (Kumar 1996, 887). The HDI thus constitutes a composite index incorporating all of the variables relating to level of development, including an educational component comprised of weighted adult illiteracy rates and the combined gross enrollment ratio for primary, secondary, and tertiary schooling as well as life expectancy and income measures. Constructing explanatory models based on the HDI variable, therefore, does not require the incorporation of individual explanatory variables already captured by the index.

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[35] HDI is measured as a continuous variable between 0 and 1.

The Gender Development Index[36] (GDI) concentrates on the same indicators as the HDI with adjustments for "the inequality between men and women as well as on the average achievement of all people taken together" (*ibid.*). Again, since the GDI is based on the HDI, individual development-predicting explanatory variables are captured by the index and need not be included in subsequent models. Given the nature of the HDI and GDI, developmental gender inequality in a state is best ascertained by "comparing the HDI value against the GDI value" using the formula (HDI-GDI)/HDI*100 to find the percentage reduction of the GDI value from the HDI value for a given state (*ibid.* 894). This new variable, the Gender Development Discrepancy[37] (GDD), will highlight the difference in the ability to choose to lead a long a healthy life, to acquire knowledge, and to have access to necessary resources for a decent standard of living between men and women across states. As the GDD for a given country increases, there will be more developmental inequality between men and women in that country.

The Gender Empowerment Measure[38] (GEM) is a measure of "whether women actively participate in the economic and political life and in… decision-making [at the same level] as men" (Hirway and Mahadevia 1996, 97). Since this variable is an indexed measurement not derived from HDI, it can simply be appraised at face value – a high GEM score for a given country indicates that there is more empowerment equality (or less inequality) in that country. While the use of two different indicators of gender inequality may seem counter-intuitive, they are both included because they measure different effects. While GDI and GEM measure related concepts, GDI focuses on the discrepancy of development between men and women in terms of

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[36] GDI is measured as a continuous variable between 0 and 1.

[37] GDD is measured a continuous variable between 0 and 100, and represents the percentage difference between HDI and GDI scores for a given country.

[38] GEM is measured as a continuous variable between 0 and 1.

life expectancy, education, and income whereas GEM is concerned with inequalities between men and women's opportunities in a particular country in terms of political and economic participation and decision making as well as power over economic resources.

Given the specifics of UNHDP data, previous literature, and the suggestions of this project's theoretical framework, several hypotheses will be tested. These hypotheses are as follows:

H_1: (a) Countries with higher levels of GDP will have lower GDD scores than those with lower levels of GDP and (b) countries with higher levels of GDP will have higher GEM scores than those with lower levels of GDP.

H_2: (a) Countries with majority-Muslim populations will have higher GDD scores than those without majority-Muslim populations and (b) Countries with majority-Muslim populations will have lower GEM scores than those without majority-Muslim populations.

H_3: (a) Countries with high Wahhabi influence will have higher GDD scores than non-Wahhabi, majority-Muslim countries as well as non-Muslim countries and (b) countries with high Wahhabi influence will have lower GEM scores than non-Wahhabi, majority-Muslim countries as well as non-Muslim countries.

These hypotheses will be tested using OLS to build a model to predict both GDD and GEM scores in terms of GDP, presence of a majority-Muslim citizen population, and presence or absence of Wahhabi influence.

Table 1: The Wahhabi-Oil Connection

Country	GDP	Islam	Wahhabi
Kuwait	26321	Yes	Yes
Qatar	27664	Yes	Yes
Saudi Arabia	17511	Yes	Yes
UAE	25514	Yes	Yes
Algeria	7062	Yes	No
Angola	2335	No	No
Ecuador	4341	No	No
Iran	7968	Yes	No
Libya	10335	Yes	No
Venezuela	6632	No	No
Nigeria	1128	Yes	No

Note: Wahhabi countries missing from this table are Yemen, Oman, Pakistan, and Sudan. These countries are not members of OPEC, but do produce and export petroleum.

Table 2: Indicators of High Wahhabi Influence

Country	Present Indicators
Saudi Arabia†	Birthplace of Wahhabism
Yemen	SA presence/interest (Algar 2002), official Islam (Yemeni Const. art. 2), similar norms (Weir 1997), SA regional hegemon
Oman	SA presence/interest (Layish 1987), official Islam (Omani Const. art. 2), similar norms (Peterson 1989, 35), SA regional hegemon
Qatar	SA presence/interest (Layish 1987), official Islam (Qatari Const. art. 1), similar norms (Peterson 1989, 35), SA regional hegemon
United Arab Emirates	SA presence/interest (Nasr 2000, 142), official Islam (UAE Const. preamble), similar norms (Peterson 1989, 35), SA regional hegemon
Kuwait	SA presence/interest (Peterson 1989, 43), official Islam (Kuwaiti Const. art. 2), similar norms (Peterson 1989, 35), SA regional hegemon
Pakistan	SA presence/interest (Prokop 2003, 84; Nasr 2000, 157), official Islam (Pakistani Const. art. 2), similar norms (Nasr 2000, 149)
Sudan*	SA presence/interest (Prokop 2003, 85), similar norms (Sidahmed 2001, 198; Hiskett 1962), SA support government (Bernal 1999, 26)
Afghanistan**	SA presence/interest (Prokop 2003, 84), official Islam (Afghani Const. art. 2), similar norms (Algar 2002, 58), SA support government (Algar 2002, 56)

†See chapter 3: *Political and Intellectual Foundations of Wahhabism*
* While Islam is not the official religion of Sudan, the Sudanese Constitution does indicate that Islam is the religion of the majority (art. 1) and Islamic *Shari'a* is a primary source of legislation (art. 65).
**Prior to the US-led invasion in 2001

Table 3: Variable Listing

Name	Function	Type	Values	Description
GDP	Explanatory	Continuous	667 - 41890	GDP Per Capita in US$ PPP
ISLAM	Explanatory	Dummy	0 or 1	Majority Muslim Population?
WAHHABI	Explanatory	Dummy	0 or 1	High Wahhabi Influence?
GDD	Response	Continuous	-.80 – 7.09	Gender Development Discrepancy (Percentage)
GEM	Response	Continuous	0 - 1	Female Empowerment in Relation to Men

CHAPTER 6

RESULTS

Analyses and Findings: Gender Development Discrepancy (GDD)

A brief analysis of the UNHDP data shows several trends which indicate the likely

impact of both Islam and Wahhabism on GDD. Table 4 shows the fifteen countries with the

highest GDD scores along with their income levels. Of these countries, five have majority-

Muslim populations and all five of these Muslim countries – Yemen, Pakistan, Sudan, Saudi

Arabia, and Oman – also have high Wahhabi influence. The presence of Saudi Arabia and Oman

on this list is also telling since they are the only two of the top fifteen GDD countries in the

highest income category (Level 1), with most falling into the lowest category (Level 4) and a few

in the second lowest category (Level 3). Saudi Arabia and Oman also roughly triple the GDP of

the next highest country on the list, Swaziland.

Table 5 shows the three countries with the highest GDD scores by income level, and an

examination of these data lead to similar tentative inferences to those indicated in Table 4.

Within the lowest income level, Yemen stands out with a much higher GDD than either of the

other countries. Likewise, Pakistan seems to substantially outpace its income peers in terms of

GDD. While there is less variation between countries in Level 2, two of the three countries with

the highest GDD – Libya and Tunisia – are countries with majority-Muslim populations. In the

highest income category, Saudi Arabia and Oman again stand out in terms of GDD. Based on

this table, these two countries would seem to fit more comfortably in income Level 3 than in their actual income level[39].

While Tables 4 and 5 give tentative support for the hypotheses of this project, a robust statistical analysis is necessary to ensure statistical significance and apply sufficient academic rigor. In order to statistically analyze the effects of Islam and Wahhabism on gender development, this study will utilize OLS in order to build a model that can predict GDD levels based on per-capita GDP (PPP), the absence or presence of a majority Muslim population, and the absence or presence of Wahhabi ideological influence within a particular country. The resulting equation that represents each country's GDD is as follows:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + e_i$$

where X_1 represents per-capita GDP (PPP), X_2 represents per-capita GDP (PPP) squared[40], X_3 represents a majority-Muslim population[41], and X_4 represents high levels of Wahhabi influence[42]. The results of this model are shown in Table 6.

This model shows statistical significance at the .001 level for the variables gdp, gdp^2, and *Wahhabi* and statistical significance at the .05 level for *Islam* with an R^2 score of .3983, indicating good model fit. The significant relationship between gdp^2 and GDD confirm H_{1a}, although the curvilinear nature of the relationship is somewhat problematic[43]. While the

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[39] Interestingly, if Saudi Arabia had a low enough GDP to place it in the third income category, it would still rank among the top three countries in terms of GDD, just below Morocco and above Swaziland.

[40] The squared term is included to improve model fit: GDP has a curvilinear relationship with GDD, meaning that a squared GDP variable should depict the relationship more accurately than a non-squared GDP variable.

[41] Dummy variable with countries having Muslim populations of 50% or higher coded "1"

[42] Dummy variable with countries identified as having high levels of Wahhabi influence coded "1"

[43] At least part of this problem can be seen as a result of non-Islamic conservative religious influence in first world countries such as the United States and Ireland. According to their income, these countries should have GDD scores closer to their Scandinavian income peers.

coefficient for the *gdp* and *gdp^2* variables may seem small, this is a result of these variables being measured in US dollars. A one dollar increase in GDP, therefore, results in a miniscule decrease in GDD. Due to the nature of dollar-based GDP measurements, it is far more illuminating to conceptualize the model in terms of 100 or 1000 dollar increases in GDP.

Both *Islam* and *Wahhabi* have significant effects on GDD as well, and the results of the models indicate a confirmation of hypotheses H_{2a} and H_{3a}. According to the model, countries with a majority-Muslim population generally have GDD scores .458 points higher than countries without majority-Muslim populations. Similarly, countries which are deeply impacted by Wahhabism generally have GDD scores approximately 2.059 points higher than countries without, holding all other variables constant at their means. Given that GDD in this sample is a continuous variable ranging between -0.40 to 7.09, a 2.66 point increase represents a substantial change. The discrepancy between the impact of majority-Muslim populations in relation to Wahhabi ideology further confirms H_{3a} by indicating a greater GDD in Wahhabi countries even when compared to fellow Muslim countries.

Analyses and Findings: Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM)

Similar to the findings in relation to GDD, the data for GEM are illuminating upon first examination. Table 7 shows the fifteen countries with the lowest GEM score. Ten of these fifteen countries have majority-Muslim populations, and four of these ten are considered to have high Wahhabi influence. It is no surprise that those countries with the lowest GEM score also tend to have high GDD scores – Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Oman all appear on Table 4 as well.

In order to statistically analyze the effects of Islam and Wahhabism on gender empowerment, this study will utilize OLS in order to build a model that can predict GEM levels based on per-capita GDP (PPP) and the absence or presence of a majority Muslim population within a particular country. The resulting equation that represents each country's GEM is as follows:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + e_i$$

where X_1 represents per-capita GDP (PPP)[44] and X_2 represents a majority-Muslim population[45]. The results of this model are shown in Table 8.

This model shows statistical significance at the .001 level for the variables *gdp* and *Islam* with an R^2 score of .734, indicating good model fit. The significant relationship between *gdp* and GEM confirms H_{1b}, indicating that an increase in GDP leads to an increase in GEM, with the miniscule coefficient explained by the measurement of GDP in US dollars[46]. The significant effect of *Islam* on GEM confirms H_{2b} by illustrating a negative relationship between majority-Muslim populations and GEM scores. According to the model, the presence of a majority-Muslim population reduces a country's subsequent GEM score by -0.175, holding all other variables constant at their means. Interestingly, the results of this model are in conflict with H_{3b} since Wahhabism has no significant impact on GEM scores. Islam seems to have a negative effect on gender empowerment regardless of Wahhabi influence.

Given the relationship between Wahhabism and socialization in Wahhabi-influenced countries – with a strong emphasis on loyalty to heads of households and political leaders – it is

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[44] Given the near-linear relationship between GDP and GEM, there is no need for a squared term to help model fit.

[45] Although the hypotheses predict that Wahhabism should have a substantive impact on GEM, diagnostic analysis shows that the *Wahhabi* variable is not statistically significant.

[46] See explanation on p. 10

also likely that Wahhabism is simply correlated with a lack of empowerment in general. In Saudi Arabia for example, aside from the Al-Sa'ud dynasty and their immediate elite allies, all individuals find themselves with limited access to decision-making institutions regardless of gender. This overall restriction of access necessarily lowers mean levels of empowerment among non-elite men, thus rendering empowerment discrepancies between non-elite men and women relatively insignificant. The lack of empirical support for H_{3b}, therefore, does not necessarily falsify the assumptions of this study, especially given the results of the GDD model. Rentier state literature suggests that this lack of empowerment is likely aggravated by the political effects of oil rents (Ross 2004). An exploration of the effect of Wahhabi influence on overall mass-level political empowerment may be of interest in future studies.

Table 4: Top 15 Countries with Highest Gender Development
Discrepancy Values

Country	GDP	Income Lvl	GDD
Yemen†	930	4	7.09
Niger*	781	4	5.08
Guinea-Bissau	827	4	5.08
Sierra Leone	806	4	4.76
Pakistan†	2370	3	4.72
Chad*	1427	4	4.64
Sudan†	2083	4	4.56
Ivory Coast	1648	4	4.40
Cent. African Rep.	1224	4	4.17
Morocco*	4555	3	3.87
Saudi Arabia†	**15711**	1	3.57
Togo	1506	4	3.52
Benin	1141	4	3.43
Swaziland	4824	3	3.29
Ethiopia	1055	4	3.20
Oman†	**15602**	1	3.19
D.R. Congo	714	4	3.16
India	3452	3	3.07
Nigeria*	1128	4	2.98
Eritrea*	1109	4	2.90

† Indicates high Wahhabi influence.
* Indicates majority-Muslim country.

Table 5: Highest Gender Development Discrepancy Values
by Income Level

Income Level 1	
Country	GDD
Saudi Arabia†	3.57
Oman†	3.19
Ireland	1.98

Income Level 2	
Country	GDD
Libya*	2.57
Botswana	2.29
Tunisia*	2.09

Income Level 3	
Country	GDD
Pakistan†	4.72
Morocco*	3.87
Swaziland	3.29

Income Level 4	
Country	GDD
Yemen†	7.09
Niger*	5.08
Guinea-Bisseau	5.08

† Indicates high Wahhabi influence.

* Indicates majority-Muslim country.

Table 6: Gender Development Discrepancy Model

Variable	β	p-value
gdp	$1.792e^{-4}$	0.000
	$(2.69e^{-5})$	
gdp^2	$4.09e^{-9}$	0.000
	$(7.43e^{-10})$	
Islam	0.458	0.032
	(0.211)	
Wahhabi	2.102	0.000
	(0.402)	

Adj. R^2: 0.398
N:154

Table 7: Top 15 Countries with Lowest Gender Empowerment Measure Scores

Country	GDP	Income Level	GEM
Yemen†	930	4	0.129
Saudi Arabia†	**15711**	1	0.254
Egypt*	4337	3	0.263
Turkey*	8407	2	0.298
Kyrgyzstan	1927	4	0.302
Morocco*	4555	3	0.325
Iran*	7968	2	0.347
Nepal	1550	4	0.351
Sri Lanka	4595	3	0.369
Qatar†	**27664**	1	0.374
Cambodia	2727	3	0.377
Pakistan†	2370	3	0.377
Bangladesh*	2053	4	0.379
Oman†	**15602**	1	0.391
Georgia	3365	3	0.414

† Indicates high Wahhabi influence.
* Indicates majority-Muslim country.

Table 8: Gender Empowerment Measure Model

Variable	β	p-value
gdp	$9.48e^{-6}$ $(7.87e^{-7})$	0.000
Islam	-0.175 (0.034)	0.000
Wahhabi	-0.057 (0.047)	0.161

Adj. R^2: 0.734
n: 92

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

The results of this study echo those of Marshall's by showing that the presence of a

Muslim majority in a country tends to reduce the effects of economic development on reducing

gender inequality in terms of development. In addition, the regression models used in this study

highlight the fact that Wahhabi doctrine tends to have a much greater impact on unequal gender

development even within the Muslim world. Keeping with Ross' assessment, Saudi petrodollars

help fuel the expansion of Wahhabism while, at the same time, legitimizing its doctrinarian

gender segregation by inducing economic development without the "Westernizing" effects

typically associated with modernization. While the values associated with human development

increase for men as a result of economic development – whether oil-fueled or not – the same

values increase at a much lower rate (or not at all) for women.

While the results show that the effect of Wahhabism gender empowerment is not

statistically significant in comparison to the effect of Islam in general, the rejection of H_{3b} is not

entirely surprising. As previously stated, many Qur'anic passages regarding familial relations

were intended to mitigate the patrimonial effects of pre-Islamic Arabian culture by allowing

women a greater say in domestic issues (Lapidus 2002). Thus, while Wahhabism necessarily

limits the roles of women in the greater society, within the family unit women still hold

influence[47], at least at minimal levels[48]. Women who live in such societies may be as involved in decision-making as their non-Wahhabi counterparts on a familial level, especially given the fact that "traditionally, Arab women have been a strong, decision making force within the family" (Peterson 1989, 34). Their adherence to Wahhabi doctrine, however, creates a situation in which they give support (be it implicit or explicit) to policies which are not in their best interest. This phenomenon also characterizes working-class support for the Republican Party in the United States (Abramowitz and Saunders 2006). Working-class individuals may support policies which are detrimental to those within their socioeconomic status based not on material outcomes, but rather on the abstract concept of American identity based on the Republican credo of lower taxes, free markets, "traditional" family values, and rugged individualism (Roy 1997, 695). Similarly, Wahhabi-influenced women tend to see their institutionalized stunted development as an affirmation of their Muslim identities as defined by Wahhabi doctrine.

These results offer insight into the political influence of fundamentalist Islamic doctrine, but there are several ways in which this study might be altered to better explain the interaction between economic development, religious ideology, and gender inequality. First of all, the characterization of countries as Wahhabi-influenced based on the work of previous scholars leaves something to be desired. Given the appropriate resources, a better way to rank Wahhabi influence might be to trace the flow of Saudi religious and education aid, which is the theoretical driving force behind the spread of Wahhabi thought. Likewise, linking Wahhabi influence to

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[47] This fits with the concept of women as dangerous *fitna*; women are only required to cover themselves in front of male non-relatives as male relatives are not in danger of succumbing to a woman's *fitna*.

[48] Even within the family, where *fitna* is not an issue, women still tend to be subjugated to men. Various *hadith* indicating that women are less mentally/spiritually fit than men, are unable to control their emotions, are bad omens etc. continue to influence the male-female relationship even within the family setting, although the absence of the threat of *fitna* necessarily eases some of these restrictions.

Saudi petrodollars poses a significant challenge to Ross' analysis in that it undermines the concept that oil rents fuel *domestic* gender inequality. The results of this study indicate that Saudi-garnered oil rents are likely to spread gender inequality on an *international* stage in places like Pakistan and Sudan, as well as other countries which have been identified as vulnerable to Wahhabi influence.

Finally, there is a convincing argument to be made as to the actual effectiveness of the indoctrination potential of Wahhabi or Saudi-funded *madrasas* even in countries where Wahhabism is widely considered a respectable religious doctrine. On a physical level, a very minute portion of the host population is educated in such *madrasas* in a country like Pakistan, thus casting a shadow of doubt on the continued perpetuation of Wahhabi-style thought patterns across the Muslim world via petrodollar funded educational and religious institutions. While it is indeed true that only a relatively small number of individuals are educated in Wahhabi-influenced settings, the legitimacy attached to the "pure" Islam of the Haramayn often times carries a great deal of prestige. A single Pakistani student from a relatively poor area, for example, may be offered a scholarship to study in Saudi Arabia by the Saudi government. When this student returns to his village as a Saudi-instructed imam, many people are likely to view him as an authoritative voice on religious matters due to the perceived authenticity of his religious education. Thus, by educating one individual, the Wahhabi *madrasa* actually affects the spiritual lives of scores of believers. It is, therefore, not wholly necessary that a great number of individuals be educated in Saudi-Wahhabi *madrasas* in order for vast portions of a host country's population to be exposed to (and influenced by) its teachings.

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APPENDIX A

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CRLO	Permanent Council for Scientific Research and Legal Opinions
GDD	Gender Development Discrepancy (%)
GDI	Gender Development Index
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
HDI	Human Development Index
IIFSO	International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations
ISNA	Islamic Society of North America
MSA	Muslim Student Association
MWL	Muslim World League
UNHDP	United Nations Human Development Report
WAMY	World Assembly of Muslim Youth