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Islamism and education in modern Iran, with special reference to gendered social interactions and relationships

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explain the changes that have occurred in the hidden curriculum and running through post-revolutionary schools in Iran, especially the changes in social relations between teachers and students. Sex-segregation, in the sense on inferior facilities and opportunities for one gender, could take different forms in school life. These differences in social relationships and contexts in schools were investigated in a small town in northwestern Iran in 1995-1996. In this research, I looked at a wide range of student-teacher interactions in male and female classrooms and schools as well as their respective facilities. Findings illustrated the sharp increase of sensitivity about the propriety of student relation with members of the opposite sex since 1979 under the influence of Islamic ideology.

Keywords: education, Islam, gender studies, social interactions.

Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es analizar los cambios que han tenido lugar posterior a la revolución, en el curriculum oculto de las escuelas de Irán; particularmente aquellos cambios que se refieren a las relaciones sociales entre maestros y alumnos. La segregación sexual, entendida como la existencia de menores oportunidades y facilidades para uno de los géneros, ha adoptado diferentes formas en la vida escolar. Estas diferencias en contextos y relaciones sociales fueron investigadas en un pequeño pueblo del noroeste de Irán durante 1995 y 1996. En esta investigación se observó un amplio espectro de interacciones en aulas y escuelas de varones y de mujeres, así como las respectivas facilidades que les eran otorgadas. Los hallazgos ilustran el agudo incremento de la sensibilidad respecto a la pertinencia de las relaciones de los alumnos con el sexo opuesto a partir de 1979, bajo la influencia de la ideología islámica.

Palabras clave: educación, Islam, estudios de género, interacción social.

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1. Introduction

This paper is designed to explain the changes that have occurred in the hidden curriculum running through post-revolutionary schools, especially the changes in social relations between teachers and students. The main theme is that not only textbooks and curricula, but also school life in general, had to conform with the new philosophy of education. Therefore, special attention will be given in this paper to the process of trying to ensure that social interactions between males and females were governed by Islamic ideology in all circumstances.

State-provided textbooks and curricula for students all over Iran are almost the same for both females and males. Yet the effects of sex-segregation in education are greater than can be shown through the investigation of textbooks alone, for the delivery of education is not just confined to textbooks. Sex-segregation can take the form of inferior facilities or opportunities for one gender; different methods of teaching for each sex; fewer possibilities for boys or girls to express themselves in school, classroom or even in high positions in the Local Education Authorities (LEA); fewer opportunities to pursue interests in a single-sex-dominated atmosphere and so on. I investigated these differences in social relationships and contexts in schools in a small town in north-west Iran. In this research, I looked at a wide range of student-teacher interactions in male and female classrooms and schools as well as their respective facilities.

2. Teachers' relations with students

It was particularly important, in studying gendered social relations in schools, to learn about the experiences of teachers who worked with students of the opposite sex. To begin with, I conducted interviews with twenty male teachers who had taught in girls' schools. Islamic ideology influenced highly teacher-student relationship even in addressing students by teachers, using the religious terms of "sister" and "brother", while they had been addressed by using words like "madam" and "miss (*khanom*)" before the revolution. Of course, this happened in the early years of the revolution, and has assumably been decreasing all the time later so that it rarely happens these days.

In terms of teaching methods, although it was often believed that there was no difference between boys' and girls' classro-

oms, the existence or lack of any difference in this regard depended to a great extent on the nature of courses. For example, teaching biology, Persian literature and Islamic education required different methods in terms of social relationships from that of say English literature, physics and geology. In biology, there were restrictions in teaching genetic issues in terms of speaking, presenting examinations and pictures and even clothing, while there had been no control over the method of teaching before the revolution, and even genetic issues had been presented openly in pre-revolutionary classrooms.

In Persian literature, the lessons relating to real love, as portrayed in the mystical literature of Iran, were affected when taught in girls' classes. One of teachers told me that he gave less explanation of those texts in girls' classes than in boys'. Also some parts of the Islamic Education textbooks, concerning marriage or which contained words like 'sperm', and parts of the Qur'an which were related to 'Mary' and 'Joseph', affected the way of teaching in girls' schools by male teachers.

In terms of teachers' behaviour, it was also believed that teachers' way of behaving in girls' classrooms were different from in boys' classrooms. Male teachers had to exert more self-control in girls' classes and make less friendly relationship with female students than with boys. Even the way of looking at girls' faces could be different so that the male teacher may try to look at girls' faces less than boys' and he should avoid looking at girls individually. Furthermore, there was no contact between them out of class hours, and, inside classrooms, a male teacher was allowed to speak briefly to ill-disciplined students simply in order to direct their mind towards lessons. He had to appear more serious in his behaviour in girls' classes than in boys'; he should laugh less and pay more attention towards lessons. However, the longer a male teacher teaches the same female students, the fewer restrictions he will have with them. However, this openness will never be the same as in boys' classes.

I have to remind that sensitivity about male teachers' behaviour in addressing their female students was lower in 1995-1996 (the time when this fieldwork was conducted) than in the 1980s when the prevailing atmosphere in girls' classes was much less open, and when the teaching of 'physical education' by male teachers in girls' schools became prohibited.

Although some female teachers worked in a girls' high school, there was no female teacher at a boys' high school. Howe-

ver, in primary schools, the majority of teachers were women even in boys' schools. This was the same as in pre-revolutionary schools. Although there were no male teachers in girls' primary schools, a girls' high school in this rural area was male-dominated. However, according to my informants, these schools were more male-dominated before 1979 than after the revolution. Regarding the working situation of female teachers before the revolution, female teachers and even female students did not wear the *hejab* inside school at all, but some of them might wear *chadors* or scarves outside of school. The school staff-room had also been common to both male and female teachers at that time, but after the revolution staff-rooms were sex-segregated.

Comparing these findings with male teachers' ways of addressing both their male and female students, we could see that the formal and traditional terms of address were used more by female teachers with girls, than by male teachers with either female or male students. It seemed that both female and male students enjoyed more openness in their classes after the revolution, and that they had left behind their very formal pre-revolutionary relationships with teachers. After the revolution, however, there were restrictions for girls which never existed for boys: their outward appearance were changed dramatically, and they should wear school dresses which were the subject of strict regulations. Moreover, the girls' relationships with the opposite sex came to be controlled by school authorities and in-school organisations established after the revolution.

3. Students' relations with teachers

Responding the question about change in male students' behaviour in addressing teachers, nearly all my informants admitted that there had been some changes in comparison with either the pre-revolutionary student-teacher relationship, or the early years of the revolution. The findings reveal a transformation in the post-revolutionary relationship between students and teachers: students felt more comfortable in classes and schools after the revolution than before. The teachers had various interpretations of these transformations, based on their own experiences and cultural backgrounds.

Some teachers commented on pupils making more noise and having less respect. These teachers believed that politeness and education are connected, and that since students had lost

their motivation for studying, their respectful and polite behaviour had changed; while some other teachers welcomed the openness of their relationship with male students. According to one of them, since physical punishment was prohibited after the revolution, friendliness between teachers and students had increased.

As a matter of fact, there had not been girls' high schools in most rural areas before the revolution, so the girls who reached high school age or even guidance school age had to stay at home and wait for the relatives of a boy to come and ask her parents to marry him, or go to the city to continue their studies. This was the fate of all girls in rural areas before the revolution, at least until 1985 in that part of north-west Iran in which I conducted my fieldwork.

Although there were some restrictions about make-up in pre-revolutionary girls' schools, they were not universally observed; whereas there was much more strictness in girls' schools after the revolution. Furthermore, neither girls nor boys had clothing restrictions under the Shah's system of education, but could not wear whatever they liked at post-revolutionary schools; jeans, for example, were banned. Unlike before the revolution, girls were now obliged to wear uniforms, in forms determined by the Islamic revolutionary authorities, called *manto* and *maghnaeh* with specified types and colours of socks and shoes as well.

In general, sensitivity towards opposite sex relationships has increased in all Iranian institutions, including schools, after the Islamic revolution. Nowadays, if corruption occurs in an institution, particularly schools, this sensitivity will be increased greatly through the authorities making strict guidelines for all institutions, possibly even a legislation.

The matter of relationships with the opposite sex was not a new issue caused by the Islamic revolution. Most Iranian families, particularly in rural areas and small towns, were aware of the problem; it was not easy for a young girl to ask her male teacher an academic question in public in small towns. There is no doubt, however, that the opposite-sex relationship issue had been handled by families alone before the revolution, but was controlled by both, families and the Islamic authorities, after the revolution. Clearly families' control over their children, especially their daughters, increased after the revolution, owing to fears about their social status and future. Thus, in my opinion, the social status of young girls became more fragile as a result of the

revolution of 1979, although the Islamic identity of the revolution made traditional families give their daughters more chances to appear in public places and institutions.

Regarding female students' relations with their female teachers, there were, predictably, no limitations on female teachers' making friends with girls either outside of classes or in school. However, the traditional and formal teacher-student relationship, and perhaps the special roles girls had within families, restricted them to have more contact inside school than outside.

From my interviews with female teachers, I gathered that there had been a shift in the rules concerning *married* female students after the Islamic revolution. According to the pre-revolutionary educational rules, married female students were not allowed to enrol at a school; this was probably one of the means to stop families letting their daughters get married while very young. The Islamic-revolutionary authorities apparently did not see any contradiction between girls' performing both educational and family duties, and so decreed that married girls could continue with their studies.

4. Free time

The school curriculum accounts for the formal interaction between teachers and students, but informal interaction during 'free time' is also revealing about the character of social relations in Iranian schools. However, applying the phrase 'free time' to schools and classes is a little misleading for teachers; in fact, they did not really know what I meant by it. The teachers thought that classes were the place for education and nothing else. What I had in mind were the few minutes of free time which were inevitably left at the end of each educational period or during refreshment breaks, or in the exam season when some teachers used teaching time for marking students' exam papers. In both pre- and post-revolutionary educational systems of Iran, only teachers spoke during classes; both systems of education were boring for students and teachers, and breaks were needed in each 80- or 90-minute educational period. As the teachers were the only speakers and active members of classes, they expected their students to be active in these short breaks and to ask questions about their lessons. Seventeen male and female teachers, of the twenty-seven teachers who were interviewed on this topic, criticised students'

lack of desire to ask questions, unaware of the fact that the students had become tired with long lectures.

However, we must also consider the changes which happened in the prevailing social, cultural and political atmosphere; students might have been interested in talking to each other about fashion, football matches or their family's material wealth before the revolution, whereas, after the revolution, they would be more interested in talking about politics, including opposition groups, or about the religiosity or secularity of their relatives and so on. The Islamic revolution of 1979 strongly affected male teacher-female student relationships during these free times in classes as well. It had been possible to talk to girls individually in free times in pre-revolutionary girls' schools where they had worked, but there were no such possibilities in that rural area, and even in some urban areas, after the revolution. Male teachers' interpretations and expectations of girls' classes, regarding free time, differed from boys'.

One of the main effects of the Islamic revolution on women in public institutions, including schools, was that they attempted to present themselves as more shy and modest than they had been before the revolution. Thus, although the girls could not hide their excitement about their male teacher's jokes, on the other hand, they also wanted to show that they were not shameless girls, but were self-controlled and modest. These conflicting personalities in people, particularly women, became so strong after the revolution that families were recommended to cultivate them, at least in public. Moreover, since modesty in the religious texts was considered as a sign of religiosity (*al-haya-o men-a al-ddin*), it was also considered a religious value.

Since the Islamic revolution of 1979, differentiation between social and religious values has not been easy, and irrespective of whether the modesty was real, it even affected female teacher-female student social relationships in those girls' schools in which male teachers also worked. For example, a girls' high school assistant, talking about a female PE teacher's work, made clear to me that she did not like to teach sport in the school's playground because there were male teachers in the staff-room; she had even told him that male teachers should sit with their backs to the windows in the staff-room so as not to see the yard, and that she would not run in the yard. According to the assistant, this situation had meant that students were too shy to play in the school's yard because of the men in the staff-room. This

was different from pre-revolutionary PE in which male teachers played with their female students together in the yard. A female advisor of the New System of education also claimed that the presence of male teachers, and the special insistence on wearing the '*chador*' in a girls' school, prevented her from having a close and friendly relationship with her students in the school yard.

Before 1979 there was a department in each pre-revolutionary LEA, called *omur-e tarbiati*, which was responsible for extra-curricular activities in schools. Extra-curricular activities included painting, calligraphy, creative writing, journalism, singing and theatre; and they usually happened as part of the celebrations on important days such as the Shah's birthday. After the revolution, however, this LEA department retained its Persian title (*omur-e tarbiati*), but its work was changed to 'moral education', and it became one of the most important devices used by Local Education Authorities for diffusing the political ideology of the Islamic revolution through schools, to the extent that Rajaei, the Education Minister at that time, called moral education teachers the 'soldiers of the revolution'.

After the revolution, more subjects were added to the content of 'moral education' such as reciting the Qur'an, *Nahjo'l-balagheh* (the collection of Imam Ali's letters and speeches) and book-reading. Since there was little interest among students in staying at school after lessons ended, and the break times were too short (about ten or fifteen minutes) to do much, most of the above activities were done at home.

By contrast, physical education lost its importance in the curriculum after the Islamic revolution of 1979. In my opinion, at least two issues, brought about by the ideology of the revolution, affected the status of physical education. First, physical education was considered to be connected somehow with pre-revolutionary activities, which were downgraded in many aspects of everyday life after 1979, including outward appearance, marriage festivals and parties. Second, a sort of Islamic rationalism was developed in the early years after the revolution, which questioned some aspects of life in vogue during the Shah's reign, like studying courses on religions, or playing and watching certain sports. Ayatollah Montazeri, once the deputy of Ayatollah Khomeini, in questioning the philosophy of football, suggested that there was no rational logic in a ball being chased by a number of players and, worse still, it was watched enthusiastically by thousands of people.

Special PE teachers who taught in pre-revolutionary primary schools were transferred to different sections of LEA, and the main teachers of primary schools were expected to teach PE as well. Moreover, these PE teachers lost the social standing they had before the revolution, and were not paid much attention in schools or society. The administration of girls' sports changed after the revolution, and female PE teachers or instructors were put in charge of girls in schools and other institutions. This lower status of PE undoubtedly affected athletics events among students which had been popular, as in European societies, for both boys and girls at all educational levels in cities, provinces and the country before the revolution, with no restrictions in terms of gender.

These athletics events were re-established for both boys and girls in the mid-1980s, but with more emphasis on boys than on girls and with changes in some areas. For example, the running races for girls were eliminated, and male fans could not attend female matches and vice versa. According to LEA officials in 1995-96, although PE had still not recovered from the shock of the revolution, especially regarding females, the situation had improved in comparison with the early years of the revolution. This was because of PE's special role in filling the leisure time of youth thereby resisting 'cultural invasion' (*tahajom-e farhangi*) from the West and raising the national flag of Iran among other flags of the world. In my view, the Islamic authorities were also trying to change the ideology of PE from the pre-revolutionary bodily concept to a spiritual one; the slogan of 'O God, strengthen my body in the service of You' (*ghavve ala khedmateka javarehi*), which was a prayer of the first Imam, Ali, in the 'Komeil Prayer' (*do'a-ye Komeil*), was used in all PE activities at that time.

5. Teachers' Councils

Discussion of problems with teaching, assessing and disciplining students occasionally took place in the local meetings of Teachers' Councils (*shura-ye m'olleman*). These normally convened once a month and were attended by the authorities and teachers who worked in a particular school, both before and after the revolution. In both regimes, such meetings were usually announced by a school's authorities in order to discuss problems with teachers, and to improve the school's situation. Some teachers claimed that there had always been a top-down relationship in these councils, pre- and post-revolution, and a large num-

ber of teachers who had no experience of teaching in pre-revolutionary schools also confirmed explicitly or implicitly that this was the case in post-revolutionary schools. According to those with teaching experience before 1979, a school had little authority to solve its teaching problems and, therefore, the authorities had to report major problems to the LEA. In both pre- and post-revolutionary Teacher's Councils, disciplinary problems were discussed more than all others. In both regimes, the primary aim of such councils had always been the issuing of orders, by the LEA, for teachers to implement.

According to some of my informants who had taught in pre-revolutionary secondary schools, although both pre- and post-revolutionary Teachers' Councils had a similar structure owing to the nation-wide centralisation of education, the following two differences existed between them. Pre-revolutionary councils were taken more seriously than the post-revolutionary ones; and teachers had felt more obligation to attend such councils during the Shah's regime than they did after 1979.

The expression 'Bring us our sweets; we are ready to sign your proceedings; but then let us go' was popular when I personally attended several councils during my fieldwork. This meant that there was no need for teachers to sit and discuss the issues which a head teacher wanted to set forth for discussion on behalf of the LEA and then sign the resolutions, for the teachers were ready to sign it in advance without wasting any time. Although political arguments sometimes arose in such councils after the revolution, there had previously been no possibility of criticising the Pahlavi's policies of education in such meetings. Finally, according to my informants, while female and male teachers sat next to each other in girls' school councils before the revolution, their meetings were later separated; alternatively, men and women sat in different rows. School authorities in both regimes, allegedly reacted the same way to the difficulties facing teachers at school. School authorities dealt with teachers' problems whenever they could; otherwise, they reported the issues to the LEA.

Regarding the importance of Teachers' Councils, the post-revolutionary meetings can be divided into two periods, firstly the very early years of the revolution, between 1979 and about 1982; and secondly the period from 1982 until 1995-96 when fieldwork was conducted. Using one of the most popular slogans of the revolution, 'Independence, *Freedom*, and the Islamic Republic', and Ayatollah Taliqani's emphasis on the necessity of

consultation in managing the country's affairs after the victory of the revolution, many types of councils were either established or re-established in different institutions, including schools, in the very early years of the revolution. Ayatollah Taliqani was a member of the Freedom Movement Party and an intellectual clergy whose ideas were always seen as symbols of support for freedom. I conducted interviews with fourteen teachers who had been in employment in that period during the early years of the revolution, and it seemed that a much more open atmosphere ruled over these councils than before the revolution. This was because the teachers felt that they had to determine their own educational fate through councils and consultations in both girls' and boys' schools. 'Ideas were presented explicitly in such meetings, and nobody was afraid of anything', a teacher told me. In this period, although female teachers now had to sit in a different row from male teachers, they still shared the same office when they discussed issues. However, they were more reluctant to discuss certain topics than they had been before the revolution.

Teachers' Councils gradually lost their 'legitimacy' in boys' and girls' schools for the following reasons, according to some teachers, heralding the beginning of the second period of such councils' status. Firstly, the loss of legitimacy had been caused by the impact of teachers' economic situation on education. There was no spare time for post-revolutionary teachers to spend in such meetings; instead, they had to deal with the necessities of life after school. Difficulties in the provision of foodstuffs and the existence of inflation, which caused some teachers to take additional jobs, kept teachers busier than they had been before the revolution. Therefore, teachers just wanted to sign the proceedings as soon as possible and get on with their daily business. According to a teacher of science, the councils' legitimacy was affected by teachers' social status; since teachers have lost status, there should be no expectation of legitimacy and high status for the Teachers' Councils either.

Secondly, and more importantly, the councils lacked any executive backing. Certainly in a centralised system, in which a top-down bureaucratic policy operated, there was no room for the presentation of ideas. Teachers described the council as a 'formality' which had no capacity to solve problems or even make decisions; and even if decisions could be made, according to a few teachers, solutions could not be implemented. There was no difference between boys' and girls' schools on this count, as all

fifteen male informants emphasised. The fact that there were no practical results from the councils played an important role in the lack of teachers' interest in such councils. But whenever they felt that a practical decision was going to be made during a meeting, they made sure they attended it: 'If the planned subject of a meeting is related to pupils' assessment, they [teachers] will attend it; otherwise, either they will not attend or will just discuss different unrelated issues like welfare and economic problems', an educational official told me.

It was interesting that, unlike male teachers, female teachers were optimistic about Teachers' Councils. Five female teachers, out of six interviewed, described it as a 'useful and necessary' meeting, and another female teacher criticised the school's authorities because they paid no attention to it. She also criticised the teachers themselves who did not show serious interest in the council, leading to its irrelevance in her school. They were in favour of Teachers' Councils in which they could express their ideas and problems, but, in my opinion, they lacked sufficient experience to see the results of these meetings –they were too young to make an informed judgment about it. These teachers were more critical of themselves and the head teacher, who was female, than the structure of such councils. A female teacher also mentioned the limited number of female teachers in her school as an obstacle preventing them from attending such meetings seriously, because the council's meetings took place separately for male and female teachers.

Although both male and female teachers' meetings shared the same structure, there were differences in terms of the content of discussions between the councils in boys' and girls' schools. In the Teachers' Councils in girls' schools, some of the points which were often discussed were rarely mentioned in boys' schools. Female teachers, for example, were asked to arrive at school on time; this was a special problem for married female teachers who could not always arrive at school on time, or had to leave earlier due to their family commitments, as a female school official made clear to me. Moreover, all teachers were asked not to dismiss a female student from a classroom or a school, because there would be the possibility of her making a relationship with someone of the opposite sex outside the school. On the other hand, teachers were not allowed to teach female students after school hours for the same reason. In these meetings, school authorities emphasised that any change in a girls' school leaving time should be re-

ported to parents in advance. But in general, wearing the 'hejab' was the most important issue, according to all teachers who taught at female schools, and it was increasingly emphasised by the authorities in the meetings of girls' schools' Teachers' Councils.

The issue of assessment was probably the one which was most likely to make teachers take Teachers' Council meetings more seriously. Teachers were asked to provide exam questions, to be in school during assessment time, to mark exam papers and then present them to the school on time in co-operation with the school authorities. Some teachers, most of whom were experienced, showed no interest in teaching, and they either left school early or arrived at school late, giving various excuses, as I observed. This was a common problem for boys' and girls' schools and was frequently discussed in council meetings. The registration of students and oral assessments by teachers were other issues with which the authorities were concerned. Furthermore, schools' financial problems, such as the cost of fuel or paper, and the jobs which teachers had to do for future special religious or national celebrations, were other points about which teachers were questioned by the authorities. The teachers themselves complained about students' discipline, advised each other not to make very close relationships with students, discussed the lack of motivation for education among them, and chatted with each other about problems in their personal lives and the effects of inflation on their economic position. However, we should not forget that the main purpose behind holding these councils was for the LEA to issue orders to teachers via school authorities. Yet, attendance at Teachers' Councils, like many other things, had become more relaxed after the revolution.

6. Prayers in schools

Unlike in pre-revolutionary schools, after the Islamic revolution of 1979 Collective Prayers (*namaz-e jama'at*) were established in both male and female schools. Such prayers were usually performed by Imams who were appointed by the LEA, and these were established under the supervision and responsibility of moral education teachers. It was unusual that the clergy associated with the Imamate of a girls' school also taught some classes when the teacher had not come to school, in order to teach the female students religious duties (*ahkam*). This never happened in boys' schools; when I asked a boys' high school official about this, he

replied: 'the role of the clergy in school is just Imamate of praying, nothing else.'

Whilst conducting my fieldwork, I attended these prayers in different boys' schools of a rural area. The boys of each class attended the collective prayers in turn, each day. According to the girls' schools' authorities, the situation was the same for girls as for boys. This illustrated the increased formalisation of prayer, in terms of periodicity, since the early years of its establishment. As an observer, I noticed a few students who made a noise and interrupted prayers. However, this could have been expected during the early years of this practice, when some were not going to prayers of their own volition.

While there was no contact between the school's clergyman and boys, according to one teacher, female pupils at guidance level were more interested in asking the clergy their religious questions than were high school students. In this teacher's view, the pupils of guidance level were also more interested in praying at school than were high school students. She added: 'we do not force them [high school students] to pray due to limitations of space'. Moreover, according to a native male teacher, rural girls normally had less access to clergy, for cultural reasons, than boys. He claimed that girls did have access to mosques, although they actually went there less often than boys.

Although there was no special connection between the boys' high school and the mosque at all, the female students had been taken to the mosque four times during one educational year: twice to pray, another time to attend the death anniversary of *hazrat-e Fatemeh* (the daughter of the Prophet), and another time for taking part in her birthday celebration, named by the Islamic government the 'Day of Women' (*rouz-e zan*).

Some students from each school, who were selected by senior staff, had had to attend Friday prayers in turn, accompanied by their teacher of moral education or school authorities, twice a month since 1995. According to my informant, it was not obligatory, but the principle was 'Don't ask; just do it'. This was another sign of the increased formalisation of prayers in recent years in comparison with the early years of their establishment.

7. Conclusion

The analysis of changes in social relations between teachers and students suggests that interactions between them in the post-re-

volutionary era are both, more relaxed *and* more constrained by a prevalent concern with segregating the sexes as much as possible. This was apparent in the gendered differences in the ways that teachers and students commonly used for addressing each other. Sensitivity about the propriety of students relations with members of the opposite sex had increased sharply since 1979, thereby amplifying some patterns of pre-revolutionary culture. Even the conduct of 'free time' in schools had been influenced by gender sensitivities; and physical education had been severely curtailed. It is not surprising, then, that the business transacted at meetings of Teachers' Councils were heavily influenced by Islamic ideology. And the increased degree of formalisation in the relations between schools and the Imams appointed to conduct weekly prayers in further evidence of the seriousness with which socialisation in Islamic values was conducted in Iranian schools.

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