

DEAN'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
STUDENT VENTURE GRANT APPLICATION

Please read all instructions and regulations on the reverse side of this sheet prior to the completion of this form. The original plus 6 copies of your proposal are due in the Dean's Office on the 2nd Friday of the Block by 1:00 p.m.

DATE SUBMITTED November 11, 2005

NAME [REDACTED] CLASS Senior WORNER BOX [REDACTED] EXT.       

ID # [REDACTED] HOMETOWN (Not Address) Wellesley, Mass.

NAME        CLASS        WORNER BOX        EXT.       

ID #        HOMETOWN (Not Address)       

NAME OF ORGANIZATION Women's Studies Program

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF INTENDED USE OF FUNDS

I intend to use the funds given to me by the Venture Grant committee to support my research on working mothers in Ankara, Turkey

PROPOSED DATE/BLOCK OF USE Block 4, 2005 Nov. 28th - December 21st

NAME OF FACULTY SPONSOR Eileen Bresnahan

HAVE YOU BEEN THE RECIPIENT OF A PREVIOUS VENTURE GRANT Yes  No

IF SO, WHAT AMOUNT?        WHEN?        REPORT SUBMITTED?       

TOTAL AMOUNT OF VENTURE FUNDS NOW REQUESTED \$ 850.00

ARE YOU SEEKING OTHER FUNDING FOR THIS PROPOSAL?  Yes  No

IF YES, WHAT IS THE SOURCE? Women's Studies Program

If this proposal is approved, I understand that it is my responsibility to notify the Dean's Office immediately if I do not pursue my project as proposed to the Dean's Advisory Committee. I further understand that all funds are to be used according to the proposal as submitted and approved by the Dean's Advisory Committee. Any changes to an approved project must be submitted to the Chair of the Committee for approval. Please note: the IRS requires that we report Venture Funds as taxable income.

SIGNATURE [REDACTED] DATE November 11, 2005  
\*\*\*\*\*DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE\*\*\*\*\*

DATE        ACTION TAKEN        DATE       

PAGES TO BE USED        REPORT SUBMITTED       

COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS:

Doing Both: How Perceived Levels of Support Affect the Experiences of Islamist and  
Secular Professional Women with Children in Modern Day Turkey

I am submitting this Venture Grant proposal in order to support my senior thesis study in Ankara, Turkey. I intend to go to Turkey for the duration of fourth block in the year 2005. The project that I am proposing is an examination into the way in which professional women with children in Turkey perceive their support networks. For the purposes of my research I define a professional working mother's support network as the group of people who encourage her to pursue a career and help her to bear the responsibilities of caring for a family.

During this research, I aim to identify the different factors that contribute to the structure of each woman's support network, focusing on how these networks influence each woman's experience as a working mother. I will be conducting my research by using semi-structured interviews designed for sixteen professional working mothers. Half of these women will self-identify as secular, and half of them will self-identify as Islamist. Once all of the interviews have been conducted, I will compare and contrast the perceived support networks of Islamist professional working mothers to those of secular working mothers in order to draw conclusions about the role of religion in such networks. I will then draw conclusions from an analysis of all the described support networks on how these networks shape my subject's collective experience as working mothers in modern day Turkey.

## **Research Problem**

Though initial inclusion was minimal Turkish women have been included in the realm of professional employment for over 75 years. They now have the power and the resources to pursue any career of their choice, and the country boasts an exceedingly high number of women in government and high-standing positions. Despite the many advancements made by Turkish women in the professional realm, they are still expected to be the primary bearers of familial responsibilities. The ability to thrive in a career as well as care for a family necessitates Turkish working mothers having some sort of support network (Ozbilgin 2004: 366).

In Turkey today there are two groups of women in the professional world. One group consists of women who self-identify as Islamist and the other of women who self-identify as secular. Islamist women, “underscore the act of using Islam as a source of political activism rather than practicing it as a non-political daily ritual” (Marshall 2005: 104). Secular women may consider themselves Muslim, but do not believe that religion should be involved in politics. There exists a vast spectrum of beliefs in both groups regarding the roles of men and women. The Islamist group, however, subscribes more to the traditional religious ideology about the roles of men and women in Turkish society. According to traditional Islamic beliefs a woman is expected to adhere to the role of wife and mother and remain uninvolved in the public sphere if her husband is capable of supporting the family financially. I aim to determine in my research whether this fact means that there are different levels of support for secular and Islamist women who are trying to pursue a professional career and raise a family.

My research is worth while for two main reasons. First, an inquiry into the various levels of support that exist for Islamist and secular professional mothers will allow for a further understanding of the types of support available for working mothers in Turkey and how these networks differ based on a women's religious identification. Knowledge on this subject may be applied in creating future policies regarding working mothers in their place of employment as well as in their homes. Second, a further examination of the role that religion plays in how a professional working mother is supported by her family and friends is very relevant in a secular country where faith and religion continue to penetrate the public sphere of society.

## **BACKGROUND RESEARCH**

An array of literature already exists that explores the "double load" that the majority of women who want to work and have a family must bear. Feminist authors in the US and Europe began focusing on this subject in the late 1970's when, in the wake of the feminist movement, encouragement for women to enter the workforce greatly increased. The feminist movement represented a variety of concepts, one of which was to increase women's opportunities to pursue a life beyond the management of their households. It quickly became apparent to the feminist community that although times were changing for women's opportunity in the workforce, women were still expected to be the primary bearers of familial responsibilities (May 1991: 203). Men on the other hand only remained responsible for acting as the primary breadwinner for the family, and thus did not take on the "double load" required of women that chose to pursue a career in addition to having a family (Brian 1993: 25).

In Turkey, literature on the subject of working mothers became available in the early 1980's at the height of the country's own feminist movement. Literature pertaining to the experiences of professional women with children in Turkey includes the gendered nature of careers, the challenges that professional working mothers face, and also the role that religion plays in the lives of professional working mothers. One relevant example of the role of religion is in Gul Marshall's work, "Ideology, Progress and Dialogue: A Comparison of Feminist and Islamist Women's Approaches to the Issues of Head Covering and Work in Turkey." In the article Professor Marshall discusses how Turkish feminists, "see religion as an institution that oppresses women, insofar as it restricts women to giving birth and child raising"( Marshall 2004: 109). In contrast, Reformist Islamist women argue that Islam is not opposed to women's work outside the home but believe that pursuing a career should not undermine a woman's duties as a mother.

A great deal of work has been done to explore the differing opinions that exist on the subject of women, work, and religion in Turkey. Work has also been done on various aspects pertaining to the experiences of working mothers. However nowhere in my research did I come across any relevant studies involving a comparison of the support networks of Islamist and secular working mothers. I believe this information has the potential to lend a greater understanding to academia about how the role of religion affects the experiences of working mothers in Turkey. On a larger scale, I believe that this information also has the potential to clarify how perceived levels of support affect the experiences of working mothers.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to obtain information for my research I intend to conduct sixteen semi-structured interviews with professional working mothers in Ankara, Turkey. Through contacts given to me by Professors Gul Marshall and Libby Rittenberg I will be able to identify and choose appropriate informants for my research. I intend to use these contacts in a “snowball sampling technique” in order to contact other potential informants. Half of the women I will interview will self-identify as Islamist and half of them will self-identify as secular. All of these women will be professional working mothers. Once I get in contact with these women and set up meeting times with them I will ask them a series of about twelve questions that I have designed to explore the various aspects of my research. These questions are:

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW AGENDA

1. As you know, I am investigating the experiences of professional working mothers' and their support networks. I define such a network as the group of people close to a working mother who encourage her pursuit of a career and help her to perform the double duty of having a career and children. This network can include family, friends or associates. Could you describe to me the people you believe make up your support network and tell me what role each person plays in your life as a professional working mother?
2. Did this support network exist before you began your professional career? Did it change at all when you decided to pursue a professional career? Did the encouragement or objections of anyone in this network cause you to reaffirm or question your decision?
3. Similarly, did the support network exist before you had children? Did it change when you had children? Did the encouragement or objections of anyone in this network cause you to reaffirm or question your decision to have children and continue to pursue a career?
4. How important do you think it is for women to be able to have a career and also to have children?

5. Could you talk about why you decided to mix motherhood with a professional career? Was your decision to do this primarily based on financial considerations or other considerations? Can you talk about how you came to make this decision?
6. Do you believe that having some sort of support network is necessary to accomplish the feat of mixing motherhood with a professional career? Could you talk a bit about the challenges and reward of this combination and how your support network helps you get through the day/ week/ year?
7. Does your religion in any way affect your ability to combine the roles of motherhood and professional woman? Could you talk about in what practical ways religion makes things easier or harder for you as a professional working mother?
8. Is religion a factor in who makes up your support network?
9. Please describe the policies and practices of your place of employment regarding women with children. Do you believe that these policies are satisfactory? In what ways do you believe that these policies affect how much or how little you rely on your support network? Please describe how you would change your workplace if you could to make it a better place for women with children.
10. How about government or social policies? Are there any of those you can think of that either help you or harm you in your dual roles as a working mother?
11. When you were planning on starting a family or after your children were born was your spouse supportive of your choice to continue pursuing your career? At that time, what sort of dialogue went on between you and your spouse regarding the idea of you both continuing to work in your career and having children? Did you consciously think about or discuss issues of your support network?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Ultimately, I aim to conduct these interviews to gain an understanding of the perceived levels of support that professional working mothers feel they receive from their families, friends, and colleagues. This information will work into my greater research on what the challenges and benefits are of being a professional working mother in Turkey and what role religion plays in the construction of this experience.

I have chosen Turkey as the site of my study for two main reasons. Turkey is a country that boasts a very high number of successful professional women, and it is also a country where Islam is the majority religion. Although Turkey is considered a secular country it is growing more religiously conservative and this fact makes Turkey particularly appealing because it means the situation for women in the workforce is changing. I have chosen the city of Ankara as my research base primarily because it is the city in which I have gained the most contacts and also because it is the country's capitol and thus a hub of political action. I have submitted my research proposal to CC's IRB for approval.

#### **Feasibility (My personal background and contacts)**

I am a senior at Colorado College. I declared myself a Women's Studies major at the end of my sophomore year and have since then taken a number of classes that are relevant to my proposed research. I have always been interested in the way religion affects the role that women play in society, and have subsequently taken a number of relevant classes both in the Women's Studies Program and the Religion Department here at Colorado College. The religion classes I have taken that I believe are relevant include Introduction to Religion, The Question of Faith, and Feminist Religious Thought. While I have never taken a class involving the situation of Islamic women specifically, I have read a number of books on the subject. Women's Studies courses that I have taken that I believe are relevant to my research are Introduction to Feminist Thought; Race, Class, and Gender; and Feminist Research Methods. I believe that this last class was crucial to my understanding of how to conduct research professionally and without bias.

I studied abroad in New Zealand for the Fall Semester of 2004 and while I was there I completed a class entitled Gender, Work and Consumer Culture, for which I conducted a research project focused on working mothers. For this research I read a lot of the literature on the topic and also interviewed my own mother who is a working mother. Throughout this process I became deeply interested in the dual role of working mothers, and also learned a great deal about conducting interviews and writing research papers.

I currently have five contacts in Ankara. Gul Marshall has connected me to her friend, Dilek Oge, who is a banker in Ankara with many friends who are professional working mothers that will serve as potential contacts. Professor Marshall has also given me the name and number of an Islamist women's group in Ankara, called the Capitol Women's Forum, which has members who are professional working mothers. Libby Rittenberg has connected me to the head of the ACM program in Ankara, Tom McCollough. I have been in touch with Mr. McCollough and he has invited me to meet some of his students and participate in the seminar meetings they hold once a week. Through Tom I have contacted Aysegol Basol who is the Director of International Studies at Bilkent University. Mrs. Basol is herself a working mother whose help will be beneficial in both my research and in learning about resources for international students in the city. Professor Rittenberg has also put me in touch with her cousin who lives in Ankara and who is willing to help me translate in case there is a language barrier with any of my subjects. Through a family friend I have also gained the contact information of a woman named Nilfur Gole who is considered the leading expert in the study of working mothers in Turkey and is currently a professor at MIT. I am planning on meeting with her

while I am at home in Boston over Thanksgiving break and then again over Christmas break.

I plan on staying at a hostel that is run by the American Research Institute in Ankara. I have been in touch with the hostel director there and she has already reserved a room for me from the 29<sup>th</sup> of November until the 21<sup>st</sup> of December. This hostel has been recommended to me by Tom McCollough and is considered an ideal place to stay for international students studying in Turkey.

### **BENEFITS TO CC**

Upon completion of my research in Turkey and at Colorado College I will have finished my senior thesis. I plan on presenting my findings and my experience in Ankara in a 15 minute power point presentation delivered to the CC community sometime in the spring. I will also be presenting to the Women's Studies faculty at the program's presentation of senior theses. I also plan on writing about my studies in Turkey for one of the school publications, such as the Cipher or the Leviathan. Also, I will be a resource for anyone thinking about conducting similar research or considering going to Turkey. Finally, my research will benefit the Women's Studies program because it will help to set an example for other students who are thinking about conducting research abroad.

## BUDGET

Airfare between Boston and Ankara (round trip):	\$ 925.00
Ground Transportation from Airport (total for both there and back):	\$ 45.00
Lodging (23 days X \$17.00):	\$ 391.00
Food (23 days X \$ 12.00):	\$ 276.00
Exit and Entry fees (\$ 20.00 exit and entry):	\$ 40.00
Writing Pads, pens, research tools:	\$ 20.00
Tapes, Digital Film processing:	\$ 80.00

TOTAL: \$1777.00

I recognize that the Venture Grant Committee has limited funds, and I am asking for any assistance you could provide. I am also looking to the Women's Studies Department for assistance. I would greatly appreciate any support your committee can offer, and thank you for taking the time to read my proposal.

Current Works Cited:

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- Arat, Yesim. Toward a Democratic Society: The Women's Movement in Turkey in the 1980's. Women's Studies International Forum, 17 (1994): 241-248.
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- Kagıtcıbası, C. "Status of women in Turkey: Cross Cultural Perspectives." International Journal of Middle East Studies 18.4 (1986) 485-499.
- McRae, Susan. "Constraints and Choices in Mother's Employment Careers: A Consideration of Hakim's Preference Theory." British Journal of Sociology 54.3 (2003): 317-338.
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- Ozbiğın, Mustafa, and Geraldine Healy. "The Gendered Nature of Career Development of University Professors." Journal of Vocational Behavior 64 (2004): 358-371.
- Marshall, Gul A. "Ideology, Progress and Dialogue: A Comparison of Feminist and Islamist Women's Approaches to the Issues of Head Covering and Work in Turkey" Gender and Society 19 (2005): 104-120.