Norms of Identity

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One recent phenomenon incomprehensible to many observers of the Egyptian scene today is the visible presence of a new Egyptian woman: the young urban college student on her way to or from the university campus – carrying her books, wearing eye glasses, alone or in the chatting company of other college women, and completely "veiled"– face and body.   El Guindi (1981)

Religious Identity

Restrictive and stigmatizing forms of dress, speech, dietary and other practices which serve as a marker of group membership.

Iannaccone (1992):

- ▶ Seemingly bizarre and inefficient membership requirements can be welfare-enhancing.

- ▶ Designed (or emerge) to solve incentive problems associated with collective production by:

    1. **Screening** out non-cooperators and non-believers,
    2. **Substitution** from outside activity to group activity.
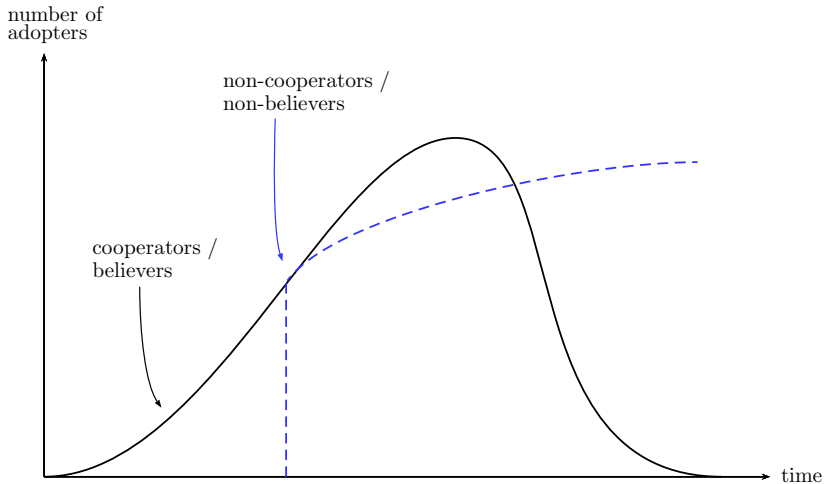
Strict Religious Sects

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

The Summer of Love 1967

Invasion of Free-Riders

number of adopters

non-cooperators / non-believers

cooperators / believers

time

Veiling

Is this the function of veiling?

Traditional Veiling

The New Veiling Movement

Features

1. Began in the 1970s and 1980s.

2. In many countries, led by *urban*, *educated*, *working*, *middle-class* women.

3. Coincident with a broader Islamic revival.

References:

El Guindi (1981), Mernissi (1987), Sherif (1987), Hoodfar (1991), MacLeod (1991), Mule & Barthel (1992), Brenner (1996), Read & Bartkowski (2000), Ali (2005), Omkar (2007), Droogsma (2007), Smith-Hefner (2007), Blaydes and Linzer (2008).

Why Veil?

Theories

▶ **Decision-theoretic**: Fulfilling religious obligation.

▶ **Price-theoretic**: Greater returns to economic/social integration $\implies$ less veiling.

▶ **Norm-theoretic**: Veiling *commits* the wearer to community norms even while outside the monitoring range of the community. It is also a *signal* of this commitment.

   Carvalho (2013, QJE) proposes the norms approach to veiling.

Norm Commitment

▶ Veiling limits *temptation* to violate religious norms through:

(i) **Interaction structure:**

The veil keeps us [Muslim women] from getting mixed up in American culture [Read and Bartkowksi (2000), p. 407]

(ii) **Choice set:**

So [veiling is] a protection. I don't have to have the strength to say 'No,' it's just for the most part, the opportunities are not presented to me. [Droogsma 2007, p. 304]

(iii) **Self control:**

Veiling is a constant physical reminder, one that helps keep them from overstepping the bounds of moral propriety. [Smith-Hefner 2007, p. 401-402]

Social Norms

Population N, large but finite.

Community $M \subset N$.

2×2 symmetric pure coordination game:

	S		R	
S	$1 + \alpha$			0
	$1 + \alpha$		0	
R		0		1
	0		1	

▶ R is religiously permissible action, S is religiously prohibited action, $\alpha > -1$.

Revision Protocol

Discrete time $t = 0, 1, 2 \ldots$

Population state $(x^t, y^t,)$ where x and y are the share of S among M and N respectively.

Every period, one agent i is selected at random from N to revise her action.

Focus on $i \in M$:

- ▶ With probability ρ , she is matched at random with d players from N.

- ▶ With probability $1 - \rho$, she is matched at random with d players from M.

Same noisy (myopic) best response against all partners.

Revision Protocol

Observing b out of d partners choosing S, i plays S with prob.

$$\phi(b; \beta) = \frac{e^{\beta \, (b/d)(1+\alpha)}}{e^{\beta \, (b/d)(1+\alpha)} + e^{\beta \, (1-b/d)}}.$$

Uniform matching. The probability that i chooses S is

$$f(y; \beta) = \sum_{b=0}^{d} \binom{d}{b} y^b (1-y)^{d-b} \, \phi\left(\frac{b}{d}; \beta\right).$$

Community matching. The probability that i chooses S is

$$f(x; \beta) = \sum_{b=0}^{d} \binom{d}{b} x^b (1-x)^{d-b} \, \phi\left(\frac{b}{d}; \beta\right).$$

The *ex ante* probability that i chooses S is:

$$p(x, y) = \rho f(y; \beta) + (1-\rho) f(x; \beta).$$

Self and Social Judgements

Types of community *M* member: religious *r* or non-religious *s*.

▶ *q* is the proportion of religious types.

Self Judgment. Intrinsic payoff to religiously prohibited behavior *S* is $\lambda_s > 0$ for a non-religious type and $\lambda_r < 0$ for a religious type. Zero payoff to *R*.

Social Judgment. Each $j \in M$ judges *i*'s action based on *j*'s values, yielding λ_j if *i* chooses *S* and zero if she chooses *R*.

Expected payoff:

$$U_i = \underbrace{p(x,y)\lambda_i}_{\text{intrinsic payoff}} + \underbrace{qp(x,y)\lambda_r + (1-q)p(x,y)\lambda_s}_{\text{social payoff}}.$$

Integration

Suppose $y > x$.

By increasing violation of religious prohibitions, integration is costly for r types when

$$q > \underline{q} \equiv \frac{\lambda_s + \lambda_r}{\lambda_s - \lambda_r}$$

and costly for s types when

$$q > \bar{q} \equiv \frac{2\lambda_s}{\lambda_s - \lambda_r}.$$

Suppose community matching in social interactions can be guaranteed at some cost w.

▶ Even non-religious types may forego the economic gains from integration to avoid the social cost.

Integration

There exist thresholds $\underline{w}(q)$ and $\overline{w}(q)$, such that:

(i) If $w \leq \underline{w}(q)$, then both types segregate.

(ii) If $\underline{w}(q) < w \leq \overline{w}(q)$, then religious types segregate and non-religious types integrate.

(iii) If $w > \overline{w}(q)$, then both types integrate.

If $q > \underline{q}$, $\underline{w}(q) > 0$.　If $q > \overline{q}$, $\overline{w}(q) > 0$.

Veiling

Consider veiling $v \in [0, 1]$ at (convex) cost $c(v)$.
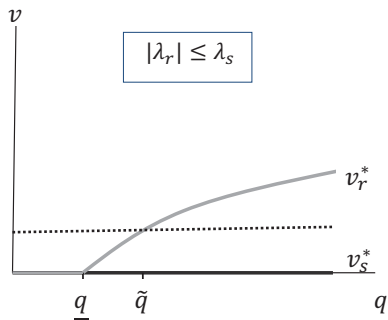
Veiling is a (public) commitment to community norms:

▶ Let the likelihood of uniform matching now be $\rho(1 - v)$.

▶ The *ex ante* probability i chooses S is then:

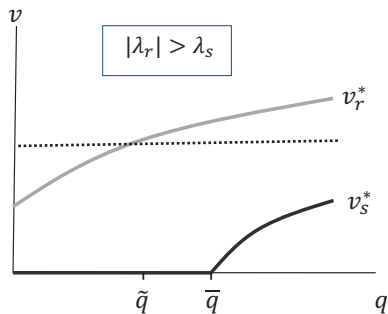$$p(x, y, v) = \rho(1 - v)f(y; \beta) + [1 - \rho(1 - v)]f(x; \beta).$$

Expected payoff:

$$U_i = \underbrace{p(x, y, v)\lambda_i}_{\text{intrinsic payoff}} + \underbrace{qp(x, y, v)\lambda_r + (1 - q)p(x, y, v)\lambda_s}_{\text{social payoff}} - c(v).$$

Optimal Veiling

(a) Low veiling

(b) High veiling

Comparative Statics

SHORT RUN.

Veiling is:

- ► *Polarization.* Increasing in y and decreasing in x.

- ► *Religiosity.* Increasing in $(q, |\lambda_r|)$.

- ► *Mixing.* Increasing in ρ.

- ► *Secular attractiveness:* Increasing in α.

Partial Integration Strategy

Veiling balances desires for economic integration and community esteem.

- ▶ **Prediction:** Veiling increases with economic/social integration, especially for religious women.

- ▶ **Evidence:** For religious women (in Turkey and Belgium), veiling is increasing in education, work outside the home, number of non-Muslim friends, and non-Muslim share in neighborhood (Aksoy and Gambetta 2016, *European Sociological Review*).

Bans on Veiling & Integration

Bans on veiling reduce economic and social integration.

New thresholds for integration $\underline{W}(q)$ and $\overline{W}(q)$:

(i) If $q > \underline{q}$, then $\underline{W}(q) > \underline{w}(q)$. Otherwise, $\underline{W}(q) = \underline{w}(q)$.

(ii) If $q > \overline{q}$, then $\overline{W}(q) > \overline{w}(q)$. Otherwise, $\overline{W}(q) = \overline{w}(q)$.

Bans on Veiling & Integration

- ▶ **Prediction:** Banning veiling reduces economic and social integration.

- ▶ **Evidence:** The 2004 headscarf ban in France reduced secondary enrollment, labor force participation, and other measures of social and economic integration by Muslim women (Abdelgadir and Fouka 2018, w.p. Stanford University).

Long-Term Consequences

Social norms.

- ▶ For $\alpha > 0$ and β large, play is close to $(x, y) = (1, 1)$ virtually all the time as $t \to \infty$.

- ▶ Veiling is a temporary phenomenon, disappearing as $x \to y$.

- ▶ Veiling slows down transition to nhd of $x = 1$ relative to full integration.

- ▶ Still convergence can be 'fast' (Kreindler & Young 2013 GEB).

- ▶ Banning veiling can cause slow convergence (for α close to zero).

Cultural transmission.

- ▶ With intergenerational transmission of traits (r and s), a ban on veiling can increase religiosity q.

Jewish Emancipation & Integration Strategies

Carvalho & Koyama (2016 JCE), Carvalho, Koyama & Sacks (2017 PC)

- ▶ **Reform Judaism** is a *full integration strategy*: community norms made consonant with social norms.

- ▶ **Modern Orthodoxy** is a *partial integration strategy*: commitment to community norms in social interactions.

- ▶ **Ultra-Orthodoxy** is an *anti-integration strategy*: economic, social and cultural segregation.

Second-Best Institutions

Many **norms of identity** are examples of the *theory of the second best* (Lipsey and Lancaster 1956).

- ▶ Inefficiencies due to imperfect commitment, monitoring, etc. produce (compensating) institutions.

- ▶ These institutions can often seem bizarre and unproductive...

    ... in the absence of proper ecological knowledge.