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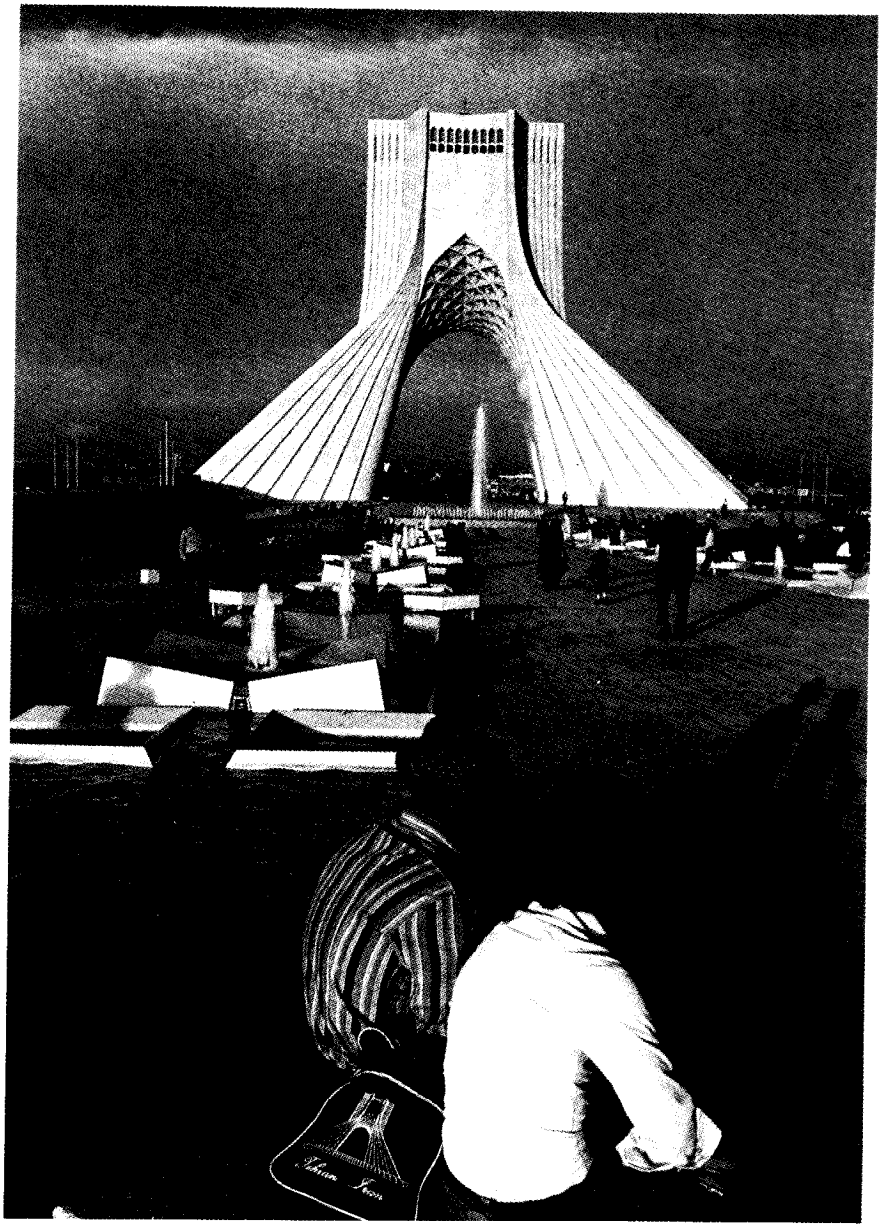

THE SHAHYAD MONUMENT
Tehran, c. 1976.

LIGION AND FAMILY PLANNING CONTEMPORARY IRAN

Mehri Samandari Jensen, Ed. D.

cause of the ever-increasing interdependence of the nations
e world in economic and political matters, contemporary
th of population in the Third World has become a major
of concern.] In many developing countries, the introduc-
of modern medicine and standards of public health have
) a marked decline in mortality rates. For the most part,
decline has not been accompanied by a lowering of tradi-
ly high birth rates. The increase in population which has
ed has often made goals for economic and social develop-
difficult to obtain, and in some instances has led to politi-
stability.

e response to this problem has been the promotion of fam-
nning programs by government agencies. The success of
programs in various countries has varied considerably,
ver. While some have experienced a marked decline in
ates, others have found no such success. A major factor
considered by experts in attempting to account for this
nce is the wider pattern of socio-economic development.
, it is argued by some that, as was experienced in devel-
countries generations ago, the growth of prosperity will

lead to a lower birth rate. Therefore, it is expected that as the modern urban and industrial sector expands, so the birth rate will fall and Third World countries will experience a demographic transition to a Western-style population structure.

Unfortunately, experience indicates that this goal is not so easily attained. Many developing countries remain severely impoverished; and even where significant urban and industrial expansion has occurred, much of the population remains rural, maintains traditional attitudes toward desired family size, or resists the adoption of family planning practices.

One key factor in the preservation or change of traditional attitudes is religion. The impact of religion on differential fertility in the Middle East has been a controversial subject among population experts for many decades.2 Dudley Kirk, the Director of the Demographic Division of the Population Council, in a lengthy discussion and a statistical documentation of all Muslim nations in the world, stated that "empirically Islam has been a more effective barrier to the difussion of family planning than Catholicism." He furthermore concluded that, within the important limitation of the data, it may be said that the Muslim birth rate was almost universally high, that it showed no evidence of change over time, and that it was generally higher than that of neighboring people of other major religions.3 Richard A. Fagley, however, has refuted this generalization and concluded that underdevelopment and not Islamic teaching was responsible for the high birth rate among Muslims.4

A survey of the literature on the Middle East indicates that a majority of the research has been done to compare only Christians and Muslims, and **that** invariably this research concluded **that** in general Muslims had a much higher birth rate than Christians. The literature indicates that, not only was Muslim fertility high in the Middle East, it was also high in countries where Muslims live as religious minorities.[5]

But, the research findings regarding the impact of Islam on

amily planning seem contradictorary and confusing. On the
ne hand they imply that the internalized values, religious be-
iefs, and the inner being of the human guides his or her behav-
or-as in the case of Muslims, who have the highest birth rates
vhere they were found. On the other hand, the studies also im-
ly that the cultural milieu and the outer environment, not reli-
ious ideology, determine fertility behavior.

Religion by itself cannot be the only factor affecting Muslim
ertility, of course. It would seem that there are two interdepen-
ent factors responsible for high birth rates among Muslims:
pecific Islamic ideology and other social and cultural elements.
ome of these latter elements include: agricultural modes of
roduction, the underdevelopment of many Muslim countries,
ne low status of women in family and public life, male domi-
ance, the emphasis on virility symbolized by having many
hildren through male progeny, and even the need for old age
rcurity achieved through offspring who are obliged to care for
neir aged parents.[6] Religious factors that are unique to Islam
nd that may contribute to the high birth rate include: the lack
f a taboo on sex and the enjoyment of the flesh, the practice of
olygamy and temporary marriage (*sighih*), a high level of
italism reinforced by scriptures that makes planning unfavor-
ble since it is God that creates sexuality and determines procre-
:ion or barreness, the universality of marriage among women,
nd the fact that asceticism is not highly valued in Islam as it is
I Christianity.[7]

From a survey of the literature pertaining to fertility rates in
ne Middle East, then, it would seem that the birth rate among
Muslims is always high, and generally higher than that of
eighboring people of other religions. Generally speaking, this
nclusion results from comparing Muslim and Christian birth
tes, and assuming that all other variables are held constant
:cept the religious difference.

It is likely, however, that cultural values related to family

planning are derived not from the religion of the peoples but from their culture of national origin, since most of the Christians in the Middle East make up separate nationalities *in* the region. In Iran, for example, Armenians, who comprise the majority of Christians, consider themselves culturally and ethnically non-Persians.8 Although they have been settled in Iran for many centuries, they identify with the West and with the country of their origin, Armenia. To a large extent they are an unassimilated population, and their views are European. Generally they are regarded as non-Persians. For many centuries, the Armenians have been known as and called "foreigners" by the Iranian public. Universally they speak Armenian as their first language and Persian (*fársí*), the official language of Iran, or other local dialects as their second language. They even speak Persian with a noticeable and distinct accent. Their names and often their lighter complexion and mannerisms set them immediately apart from Persians. Thus, because of these differences between Christians and Muslims in Iran, it is not clear whether religion on the one hand or general cultural outlook and Western ethnic identity on the other contributes most to the lower birthrate among Christians.

An objective of this study was to reexamine the relationship between the religion and the birthrate of the population in Iran by correcting for this contaminating factor found in the background culture of the Christians. Another objective was to propose that religious affiliation alone does not weigh as heavily in determining individual behavior as does the degree of religiosity: the feelings, beliefs, practices, and knowledge of their respective religions.

The Iranian Bahá'í community provides an ideal comparative group in this context. Iranian Bahá'ís are an indigenous population of the same nationality and culture as Iranian Muslims. (We here exclude a minority of Baha'is of Iranian Jewish and Zoroastrian backgrounds.) Therefore, the only important difference from their fellow countrymen is their religion. The

value of the Bahá'í community as a comparative group also terns from the clear ideological differences that exist between Muslims and Baha'is, particularly with regard to social teachngs. Iranian Muslims tend to subscribe to a religious ideology hat stresses fatalism and male dominance, that is resistant to Western influence and to the adoption of birth control measures n particular. Iranian Baha'is claim a belief in sexual equality hat, when implemented, would lead to more egalitarian reationships between husband and wife, and emphasize the desirability of female education-both factors that are likely to acilitate readier acceptance of family planning. Further, Bahá'ís tress positive social action rather than fatalism.

Procedures and Methodology. A two-step procedure was used o select samples of Baha'is and Muslims. First, a Bahá'í sampling area was selected from a population, and then within each nit the samples of subjects were drawn. The reason for this approach was that taking a random sample of a religious minority n Iran is difficult, if not impossible. There are no reliable maps vailable which indicated the location of farms or housing within the villages. A list of Baha'is and Baha'i villages was virually nonexistent in the government records. Although many uch villages are known and functioning, in the census records hey might be completely dropped or listed as "religious affiliaion not mentioned."

Amani's survey of religious minorities in Iran, published in 970, makes no mention of the Baha'i Faith, although it is nown to be the largest minority group in Iran.[9] Instead of listng the Bahá'ís, there is a column comprising the largest perentage under the title "religion, others" or "religious affiliation ot mentioned." It seems improbable that, in a country where eligion is the most distinct criteria for social differentiation, far nore important than race or ethnicity, so many nonreligious opulations could exist. In 1972, when this investigator visited he government census bureau in Tehran and interviewed the

general director, she was told that often a census worker may leave a predominantly or exclusively Bahá'í village and report the population as zero. When confronted, the answer would be "they are not human beings," or "they are only Bahá'ís." There were no such problems with identifying Muslim villages and towns.

Given these difficulties, it was decided to select Bahá'í subjects and villages with the assistance of the Bahá'í offices of membership and records, and local Spiritual Assemblies (*máfil-i rawháni*) of the Bahá'ís in the localities under investigation. The Bahá'í institutions were well known for their efficient registration system of birth, death, and declaration of faith. (Any individual over the age of fifteen declares his/her belief in the Faith in order to become a full member of the BahP'i community.) Even this approach had difficulties, however, as periodically the Baha'i centers and administrative offices have been confiscated by Muslims and their records seized or destroyed. These outbreaks of persecution have happened all too often, with the most recent raids occurring during 1980-1981. BahP'i membership lists have also been used by the Muslims for harassment, assaults, and lynchings. Such religious discrimination and persecution against the Bahá'ís of Iran has led to the segregation of BahP'i villages and communities. Due to this persecution, a nonrandom sampling procedure was used in selecting the Baha'is to be interviewed for this study.

The locales chosen for the study were in the province of Mazandaran, in northern Iran: Mahfroozak, a Baha'i village; Lormahalleh, a semiurban area; Babol (Bárfurúsh), *a* city with many Baha'is; and Daryakenar, a prestigious resort city where only recently nine Bahá'í households had settled.

These places were then matched with similar Muslim settlements by controlling for distance from major cities, degree of mechanization, transportation facilities, types of crops, irrigation, and land tenure. In some cases the Bahá'í areas mentioned

above had sufficiently large Muslim groupings to be used also as the source of Muslim sampling. This was true for the areas of Lormahalleh and Daryakenar. Gelmahalleh, a Muslim district in the town of Babol, had a few Bahá'ís in it, and so they were also contacted. The other Muslim sites chosen were Areteh, a Muslim farming village; and Shohada, another district of the Muslim city of Babol.

There were 245 households contacted, but not all of them met the criteria of sampling characteristics. In the end, 218 couples were interviewed (436 individuals). These were all married, living with their spouses, professed their religion to be either Bahá'í or Muslim, and were acknowledged by others to be members of that group.

The following variables were then documented by interviews in order to compare Muslim and Bahá'í family planning: the dependent variables of knowledge, attitude, and practice of family planning; and the independent variables of socio-economic status, income, occupation, education, religion, and degree of religiosity. The independent variable of religion and degree of religiosity was measured by a scale devised by the investigator since there was no satisfactory scale available to measure degree of religiosity across the religions of Islam and Bahá'í. Although these religions are both monotheistic and basically teach the same moral and spiritual principles, their religious terminology and concepts (Day of Judgment, sin, etc.) are very different. Social teachings also differ markedly, as do practices in marriage, divorce, inheritance, and other matters of personal status.

These problems manifested themselves during the preliminary interview session or pretest. It was found that questions that were based on the social teachings of the Bahá'í Faith were misunderstood or even regarded as offensive to the Muslims. For example, when Muslims were asked questions based on the Bahá'í principle of worldmindedness (such as whether or not he

TABLE 1

Sampling Distribution: The Number of Subjects Selected by Residence and Religion

Site	Type of Site	Total Households	Bahá'í Couples	Muslim Couples	Total Couples Contacted	Data Used
Mahfroozak (Bahá'í)	Rural	62	60	2	62	50
Areteh (Muslim)	Rural	58	0	58	58	50
Lormahalleh (Bahá'í)	Semi-urban	89	74	15	26	25
Gelmahalleh (Muslim)	Semi-urban	90	2	88	27	24
Shohada (only Muslim)	Urban	78	0	78	28	26
Babol (only Bahá'í)	Urban	--	25	--	25	25
Daryakenar (Bahá'í/Muslim)	Sub-urban	48	9	39	19	18
Total Couples					24.5	218

loved mankind) some were offended because the question was misconstrued to mean that they might be accused of loving foreigners, Westerners, or Bahá'ís. Thus, in the actual interviews for each religious group, a different set of questions was used to measure the functionally equivalent items for all five dimensions of religiosity developed by Faulkner, King, and Glock: the experiential (religious feeling), the ideological (religious belief), the ritualistic (religious practice), the intellectual (religious knowledge), and the consequential (the impact of religion on the individual in everyday life).[10]

The first step in data collection for the author was to meet a gatekeeper, a person who was influential and well-known in the village. Then, in his company, the investigator visited people and asked some preliminary questions without pencils, paper, or tape recorders. This procedure not only relaxed those to be interviewed and loosened the tight boundaries between the researcher and the subjects, but at the same time gave the researcher an idea of what kind of questions to put in the interview format and how questions should be asked to insure the validity and reliability of the data. In addition, the pretest of the instrument for data collection was accomplished.

The interviews were conducted by trained male and female Interviewers. These were selected from the reputable and prominent members of the community or from people who were working for them or were related to them. This enhanced trust n the investigator and in the motives of the research. A pair of nale and female interviewers visited the household members simultaneously whenever possible. Each interviewed the subject of his/her own sex in a variety of circumstances, comfortable, conducive, and convenient for the subjects (e.g., working on he farm, sorting out crops at home, pulling cotton from the ood, or walking to the spring to fetch fresh water). The interview was always conducted in the local dialect.

Results and Discussions. When the data was all in and the information organized, the results provided support for the hypothesis that the difference of religion, whether Muslim or Bahá'í, did affect family size in Iran. There were also other interesting observations that could be made. Differences between he rural, semiurban, and urban populations help to refine the original hypothesis. With this in mind, each village will be discussed in turn and compared to the others. It must be emphasized, however, that this was a pilot survey. Further work is needed to substantiate the author's findings.

TABLE 2

Mean Number of Pregnancies, Children Desired, Ever Born and Lived, by Socio-Economic Status in Areteh (Muslim)

Socio-Economic Status	Women Contacted %	Women Contacted #	Mean Number of Children: Pregnancies	Desired	Born	Lived
I. Landholding						
Large owner/farmer	10	10	6.1	6.4	5.7	5.3
Medium & small	36	18	6.2	6.3	5.5	4.9
Landless	46	23	6.0	6.3	5.3	4.8
II. Ownership of durable goods						
High	30	15	6.0	6.1	5.6	5.3
Medium	34	17	5.9	6.1	5.8	5.2
Low	36	18	5.5	5.9	5.3	4.9
III. Husbands occupation						
Farmer	60	30	6.0	6.2	5.7	5.5
Farm and non-farm laborer	30	15	5.7	6.0	5.7	5.1
Store keeper, etc.	10	5	5.9	5.7	5.3	4.9
IV. Husband's education						
6th grade/read & write	20	10	6.0	6.0	5.9	5.3
Only read	30	15	5.9	6.2	5.8	5.2
Illiterate	50	25	5.7	5.9	5.5	4.9
V. Wife's education						
6th grade/read & write	10	5	5.3	5.5	5.2	5.0
Only read	20	10	5.7	6.0	4.8	4.9
Illiterate	70	35	5.8	6.2	5.3	4.8

Table 2 presents the data gathered for the village of Areteh, the Muslim farming village. It presents the mean number of pregnancies, children desired, children born, and children who lived, by socio-economic status. It shows that fertility was high among Areteh residents, especially farmers. It is also interesting

to note that the mean number of pregnancies, children desired, children born, and children who lived, is lowest among the more educated wives.

Table 3 presents the data gathered for the Bahá'í farming village of Mahfroozak. In terms of its socio-economic status and composition, the sample is similar to that for Areteh, although there are significantly more large land owners and farmers (24 % as compared with 10% of the samples). The major difference is in terms of education, however. Among the Bahá'ís of Mahfroozak, 50% of the husbands and 46% of the wives are fully literate (that is, can read ***and*** write) or have received an education up to at least sixth grade. By contrast, among the Muslims of Areteh, the figures are 20% and 10% respectively. It is of note that not only is the Bahá'í sample better educated, but the level of education of wives is similar to that of husbands, in marked contrast to the situation in Areteh.

The data suggests that the Bahá'ís were practicing their religious principle of the equality of men and women in universal education. Long before the literacy corps was established in Iran to combat the high illiteracy rate, local Spiritual Assemblies of Bahá'ís in many villages where there were no schools were offering adult education classes independent of the government. Women were especially encouraged to attend these classes. It is a belief among Bahá'ís that enlightened mothers enlighten their children. Therefore, in Mahfroozak, women received a better education, and this is most likely reflected in their attitude toward birth control.

Turning to the number of children desired, pregnancies, and live births, we can note consistently lower rates for the Bahá'í sample, even when the level of education and socio-economic status is held constant. This difference is particularly marked in the case of the more educated wives and husbands. Thus, for the fully literate groups, the mean number of pregnancices is 1.5 higher in the Muslim village for the educated husbands (6.0 as compared with 4.5) and 0.9 higher for the educated wives

TABLE 3

Mean Number of Pregnancies, Children Desired, Ever Born and Lived, by Socio-Economic Status in Mahfroozak (Bahá'í)

Socio-Economic Status	Women Contacted %	Women Contacted #	Mean Number of Children: Pregnancies	Desired	Born	Lived
I. Landholding						
Large owner/farmer	24	12	6.0	5.7	5.6	5.5
Medium & small	46	23	5.8	5.7	5.6	5.3
Landless	30	15	5.9	6.1	5.5	5.0
II. Ownership of durable goods						
High	30	15	5.7	6.9	5.6	5.5
Medium	40	20	5.6	5.2	5.5	5.3
Low	30	15	5.5	5.4	5.2	5.0
III. Husbands occupation						
Farmer	70	35	5.4	5.6	5.2	5.3
Farm and non-farm laborer	20	10	5.9	5.8	5.6	5.3
Store keeper, etc.	10	5	5.8	5.5	5.3	4.9
IV. Husband's education						
6th grade/read & write	50	25	4.5	4.4	4.3	4.2
Only read	30	15	5.1	5.3	4.9	5.0
Illiterate	20	10	5.2	5.8	5.0	4.9
V. Wife's education						
6th grade/read & write	46	23	4.4	4.3	4.3	4.2
Only read	36	18	5.1	5.0	5.0	4.8
Illiterate	18	9	5.2	5.8	5.3	4.7

(5.3 as compared with 4.4). For those who are illiterate, or can only read, the differences are 0.7 for both husbands and wives (each 5.8 as compared with 5.1). We can also note that in the Bahá'í village, the number of children desired by husbands and

TABLE 4

Mean Number of Children Ever Born by Socio-Economic Status in Semi-Urban Areas of Lormahalleh and Gelmahalleh

Socio-Economic Status	Mean Number of Children			
	% Women	Bahá'ís (N = 25)	% Women	Muslims (N = 24)
I. Landholding				
Large owner/fanning	11	5.8	9	6.0
Medium & small owner	50	5.7	26	6.0
Sharecropping	9	5.6	15	5.9
Landless	30	5.3	50	5.6
II. Ownership of durable goods				
High	26	5.3	20	5.7
Medium	30	5.5	20	5.9
Low	44	5.7	55	6.0
II. Husbands occupation				
Professional/ technical	15	2.9	2	3.5
Large business/management	5	3.1	0	4.3
Small business/management	20	3.2	3	4.7
Sales/clerical	30	3.2	5	4.9
Farmer	25	5.2	90	5.9
V. Husband's education				
College/secondary	4	2.5	2	3.2
6th grade/read & write	87	3.0	35	3.5
Only read	8	3.9	3	4.2
Illiterate	2	4.0	60	5.3
V. Wife's education				
College/secondary	3	2.2	0	2.3
6th grade/read & write	85	2.9	16	3.5
Only read/no schooling	10	3.5	9	4.9
Illiterate	2	3.9	75	5.5

rives is similar, while in the Muslim village, literate wives desire fewer children than literate husbands.

Table 4 presents the total number of children ever born, by socio-economic status, in the semiurban area of Lormahalleh

and Gelmahallea. The detail of this table shows that there is still a high percentage of people who are landowners or farm owners in these semiurban areas. They may live on the outskirts of the town and not on the the farm, but they are farming. Consequently, they may maintain some rural values and rural mentality, together with urban values. Results indicate that their birth rate was lower than rural people.

In this type of sampling area there were more professional and technical people, and more people engaged in business, management, and sales when compared to the rural areas. This is especially true among Bahá'ís. There were more wives in professional and technical positions, owners of small businesses, and members of the clerical occupational class, again, especially among the Bahá'ís. But, overall, the two samples were not of comparable populations, 90% of the Muslims being farmers while only 25% of the Baha'is were.

Compared with the villages, there were far more educated women in these semiurban samples. This was particularly true of the Bahá'í sample, in which some 87% had some schooling or were at least able to read and write. The women in the Muslim sample were very different-only 16% had received schooling or were able to read or write. Of the schooled group, the mean number of children born to the Baha'is was 2.9, while for the Muslims it was 3.5. For the unschooled group, the figures were 3.6 and 5.4 respectively.

Table 5 shows the mean number of children ever born, by socio-economic status, in the Muslim urban area of Shohada and the Bahá'í households in the urban area of Babol. In these areas, there were property owners who own land and villages but they did not do the farming themselves. However, the number of children among Muslims was still slightly higher than the Baha'is in these types of residences. But, when education of the husband was higher, the number of children was lower, especially if the wife's education was also higher.

In this category there was not much difference between the

TABLE 5

Mean Number of Children Ever Born by Socio-Economic Status, Religion, and Degree of Religiosity in Urban Area of Shohada (Muslim) and Babol (Bahá'í)

	Bahá'ís (N = 26)		Muslims (N = 28)	
	Mean # of Children Born	Degree of Religiosity	Mean # of Children Born	Degree of Religiosity
I. Property holding				
Large	3.2	29	4.1	12
Medium and small	3.5	26	4.3	15
None	4.2	12	4.9	29
II. Ownership of durable goods				
High	3.1	28	3.2	12
Medium	3.5	25	3.7	19
Low	3.9	14	4.8	27
II. Husbands occupation				
Professional/technical	2.5	30	3.1	6
Large business/management	2.6	30	3.1	5
Small business/management	2.8	27	3.3	11
Sales/clerical	3.0	19	3.8	20
Laborer/peddler	3.1	17	3.9	26
V. Wife's occupation				
Professional/technical	2.3	29	2.9	5
Business management	2.3	29	3.4	6
Sales/clerical	2.4	20	3.5	11
Servant/laborer	--	--	3.9	25
V. Husbands education				
College/secondary	2.5	28	2.9	5
6th grade/read & write	2.9	21	3.1	6
Only read	3.2	19	4.1	11
Illiterate	3.5	10	4.3	28
I. Wife's education				
College/secondary	2.1	29	2.3	5
6th grade/read & write	2.4	23	3.3	6
Only read	2.9	18	3.5	16
Illiterate	4.6	9	4.6	29

mean number of children among the two religious groups. Again we note that Table 5 shows the fertility rates for women of all ages. Still the desired number of children among the women who have higher education was much lower than that among those in the uneducated and illiterate population.

Figure 1 shows the degree of religiosity of Muslims and Bahá'ís by number of children ever born. It should be viewed together with the information presented in Table 5, which showed the number of children ever born by socio-economic status and degree of religiosity in the urban areas. The study of Figure 1 and Table 5 indicates that the higher the level of education of the Bahá'ís, the higher the degree of religiosity and the lower the number of children. On the contrary, among Muslims the higher the degree of religiosity, the lower was their level of education and the higher the number of children ever born. This might be due to the principles of the Bahá'í Faith that encourage education among all members, and that in turn keep the members in touch with progressive principles.

Table 6 shows the mean number of children ever born by

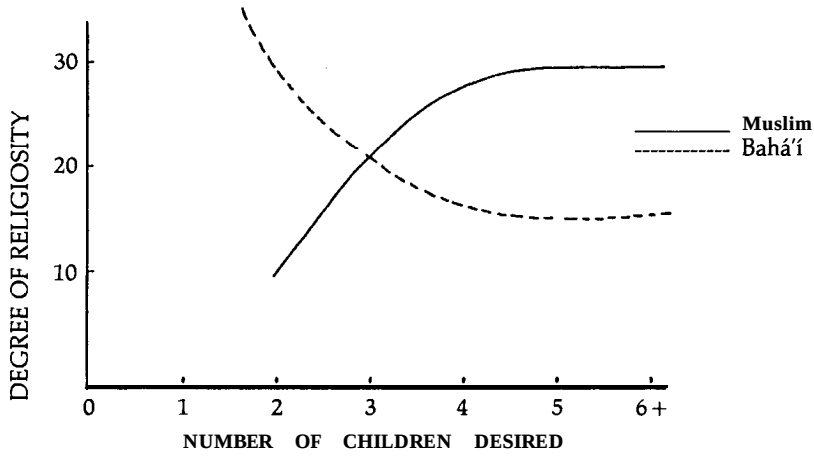

FIGURE 1. **Degree of religiosity by number of children desired among Muslims in the urban area of Shohada District and Bahá'ís in the city of Babol.**

TABLE 6

lean Number of Children Ever Born by Socio-Economic Status, in Suburban Area of Daryakenar (Bahá'ís and Muslims)

	Bahá'ís (N = 9)		Muslims (N = 9)	
ɔcio-Economic Status	% of Women	Mean # of Children Born	% of Women	Mean # of Children Born
l. Property holding				
Large	95	2.5	97	2.6
Medium and small	5	2.7	3	2.9
None	--	--	--	--
. Ownership of durable goods				
High	93	2.3	97	2.5
Medium	7	2.4	3	2.7
Low	--	--	--	--
. Husbands occupation				
Professional/technical	59	2.5	83	2.6
Large business/management	37	2.5	17	2.7
Medium & Small manaagement	4	2.6	--	--
Wife's occupation				
Professionaltechnical	37	2.3	15	2.4
Large business/management	13	2.4	2	2.6
None	50	2.6	83	3.1
Husbands education				
College/secondary	98	2.3	75	2.7
6th grade/read & write	2	2.5	25	2.9
Only read	--	--	--	--
Illiterate	--	--	--	--
Wife's education				
College/secondary	95	2.1	10	2.2
6th grade/read & write	5	2.5	80	2.8
Only read	--	--	10	2.9
Illiterate	--	--	--	--

socio-economic status in the prestigious resort area of Darya-kernar, an urban area with both Muslims and Baha'is. In this necessarily small sample, the number of children was very low among both groups. There was a high percentage of younger professionals using the residence in this area as a second home. The subjects were generally large property owners whose wealth was obtained through inheritance and family fortune. It is important to bear in mind that, among Muslims at least, the pattern of arranged marriages is still usually practiced. Marriage within the same socio-economic status group was common. Only recently, during the 1970s did professionally educated men who might not be wealthy marry women from wealthy families who might not necessarily be educated. Whether the same pattern held true among the Bahá'ís is uncertain. Certainly, arranged marriages were far less common and are officially discouraged.

The inverse relationship between fertility and socio-economic status noted above held true for this group. The number of children born was slightly lower among the Baha'is as compared to Muslims, but the difference was not significant. As the education of the wife increased, the number of children declined for Muslims and Baha'is-a pattern noted in the other localities as well. However, there were more Bahá'í women who were educated and engaged in professional fields and in small business in all areas.

Looking at other combinations of this data, Table 7 presents the mean number of children ever born by socio-economic status, residence, religion, and use of birth control devices for only those women between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four in Areteh and Mahfroozak. It can be seen that the percentage of women who use birth control is much higher among Bahá'ís than among Muslims and the mean number of desired children is much lower among the Bahá'ís. But when the level of education is high, there is much less difference between Bahá'ís and

TABLE 7

dean Number of Children Lived and Desired by Socio-Economic Status, Religion, and Use of Birth Control Devices Among Women 15-24 **in Mahfroozak and Areteh**

ocio-Economic Status	Bahá'ís using Birth Control (N = 100) Mean # of Children Lived	Desired	Muslims using Birth Control (N = 100) Mean # of Children Lived	Desired
I. Land and durable goods				
High	2.9	2.0	3.3	3.2
Medium	3.1	2.5	3.5	4.0
Low	3.2	3.1	4.1	4.1
I. Husbands occupation				
Professional/technical	--	2.0	--	3.0
Large business/management	--	2.1	--	3.1
Small business/management	2.9	2.2	3.1	3.2
Sales/clerical	2.9	2.2	3.2	3.3
Farmer	3.0	3.2	4.4	4.1
Laborer	3.0	3.1	4.3	4.0
I. Wife's occupation				
Professional/technical	--	2.0	--	3.2
Large business/management	--	2.0	--	3.2
Small business/management	2.9	2.2	3.1	3.5
Sales/clerical	2.9	2.3	3.3	3.7
Farmer	3.2	3.0	4.9	4.8
Laborer	3.3	3.0	4.5	4.9
'. Husbands education				
College/secondary	--	2.0	--	2.3
6th grade/read & write	2.3	2.0	--	2.2
Only read	2.4	3.0	3.5	3.3
Illiterate	3.3	3.5	4.2	4.0
'. Wife's education				
College/secondary	--	1.9	--	2.0
6th grade/read & write	2.9	2.1	--	3.2
Only read	3.1	2.3	4.2	4.1
Illiterate	3.2	3.9	4.8	5.2

Muslims in regard to the use of birth control, desired number of children, or the actual number of children.

One finding of the study which should provoke further research is the effect of differences in the degree of religiosity. The data for the urban areas of Shohada (Muslim) and Babol (Bahá'í) suggests very divergent relationships between the number of children desired and the degree of religiosity among the two groups. Thus, for the Baha'is, the higher the degree of religiosity, the lower was the number of children desired. For the Muslims, the number of children desired increased with the level of religiosity. These patterns are shown graphically in Figure 1, and are revealed in more detail in Table 5. This table also demonstrates a second pair of relationships between religiosity and socio-economic status and education. Briefly, among the Bahá'ís the higher levels of religiosity were found among those of higher social status and level of education: while among the Muslims the relationship was reversed, with higher levels of religiosity associated with lower social status and levels of education.

These patterns are further supported by the data presented in Table 8, which shows the relationship between the level of the wife's education and the degree of religiosity for the urban, semiurban and rural samples. In both the urban and semiurban samples, the two divergent relationships are strongly expressed. They can be discerned, however, even in the rural samples. The overall patterns are shown graphically in Figure 2, which relates the degree of religiosity to the level of education.

Finally, the age variable must be considered. There is only a small difference between the birth rate among Baha'is and Muslims in the rural areas, especially among the older generation. This could easily have been the result of the lack of knowledge and availability of birth control devices. However, among the younger age group of women aged fifteen to twenty-four, the younger Bahá'ís did use birth control more often than Muslims

TABLE 8

Degree of Religiosity of Bahá'ís and Muslims Residing
n Urban, Semi-Urban and Rural Areas by Education of the Wives

	Degree of Religiosity[a]					
	Urban		Semi-Urban		Rural	
life's Education	Bahá'ís (N = 34)	Muslims (N = 37)	Bahá'ís (N = 26)	Muslims (N = 27)	Bahá'ís (N = 50)	Muslims (N = 50)
ollege or secondary	29	9	28	12	25	--
h grade/read and write	26	13	25	12	23	25
nly read	20	24	19	23	19	26
iterate	--	27	--	28	18	29

Degree of Religiosity scores are composites of the scale of religiosity:

30 - 21 = high
20 11 = medium
10 - 1 = low

nd their desired number of children was closer to the number living children they had. In semiurban and urban areas here the level of education among Muslim and Bahá'í women as close to being the same, the difference between the number living children was minimal.

onclusions. The research indicates that one factor which appears to clearly differentiate the Bahá'ís from their non-Bahá'í ompatriots in Iran is the higher levels of education found in ie community as a whole. There may be little difference among iose of higher socio-economic status, but among those of wer status-and particularly among women-the Bahá'ís are etter educated. This has resulted, not just from the Bahá'í belief in the importance of education, but from the practical steps iat the Iranian Bahá'ís have taken over the years to implement iat principle.

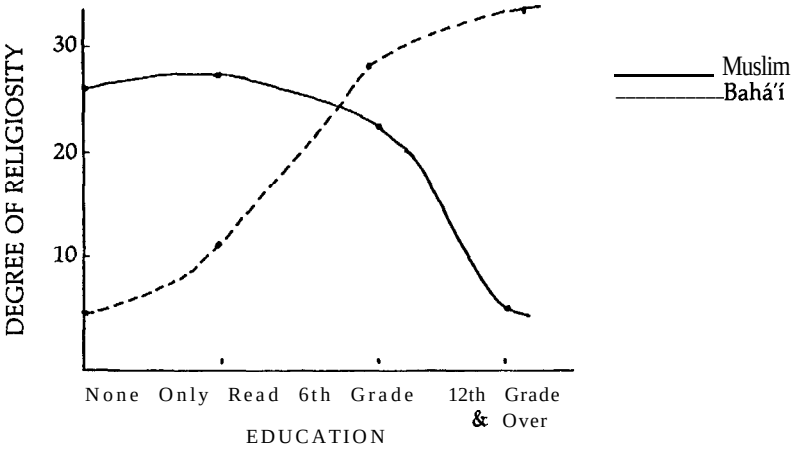

FIGURE 2. Degree of religiosity **of the Bahá'ís and Muslims by level of education.**

Education, and particularly the education of women, appears to be a crucial factor in determining differences in birth rate. We may reasonably suppose that the Bahá'ís' strong support for female education is a major reason for the lower birth rate among the Bahá'í community, especially in the lower socio-economic groups.

A second factor, and more difficult to determine, is the effect of Bahá'í beliefs in the equality of the sexes and in the need for consultation between husband and wife as equals. It is not reasonable to suppose that all Bahá'í couples automatically implement such principles, but we may suppose that these beliefs have some impact on the community as a whole. Indirect evidence for this impact may be provided by the fact that Bahá'í husbands and wives generally desired similar numbers of children, while among Muslims the husbands generally desired more than the wives.

Most interestingly, the findings of this study indicated that the higher the level of education among the Bahá'ís, the higher

heir degree of religiosity and the lower their mean number of hildren. This was not true in the Muslim sample where higher vels of education were associated with low levels of religiosi-y, and high levels of religiosity were associated with high levels f fertility. We may reasonalbly assume that among the Baha'is, odern education and progressive social principles mutually einforce one another. One consequence of this is a lower level f fertility, especially among the more religious and educated. y contrast, among the Muslims, modern education and high vels of religiosity are in tension with each other.

In conclusion, the findings of this investigation were consis-nt with the hypothesis of the study. They indicate that the onceptual framework upon which this study was based is at ast a partial explanation of why Muslims have a higher birth te than neighboring people and countrymen who have similar ational, racial, and ethnic characteristics. It was concluded .at the religious principles of Islam and the Bahá'í Faith are in ct very different and that these differnces help to explain the fferences in fertility patterns.

The results of this study are not definitive. Further and more tensive research is called for to determine whether the results otained in this study are typical of demographic patterns in an as a whole. Again, the ideological impact of the Islamic evolution and the new Islamic government on family planning havior needs to be investigated. More generally, the whole estion of the relationship between religion and ideology and mographic behavior requires closer and more careful ex-mination.

OTES

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A Pilot Survey Research," submitted for the degree of Ed.D., University of Northern Colorado, 1981. The author wishes to offer her thanks to Mr. Joseph Weixelman for his help in preparing this article for publication from the text of her dissertation.

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