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Behind the camera: Iranian women filmmakers
and gender inequality in the Iranian film industry

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Abstract

An investigation was conducted to explore the Iranian film industry, first to find the reason behind the progress made by renowned women filmmakers in Iran, and second, the challenges and barriers faced by a new generation of Iranian women filmmakers in advancing their career in the Iranian film industry. This research uses a qualitative approach for exploring the situation of Iranian filmmakers in Iran. A feminist methodology was chosen in order to give voices to women and provide the opportunity to experience research through a creative method. The research method includes semi-structured interviews and the production of a 5-minute movie. First, semi-structured interviews give an opportunity for emerging women filmmakers to talk about their work and share their enthusiasm or their complaints with interested outsiders. Second, a five-minute video was made to capture the lived experiences of women film directing students to capture their motivations in becoming filmmakers. This study has shown the importance of networking in the film Industry and how women can benefit or suffer from this networking. Another major finding was that although the young Iranian generation of filmmakers believes in making changes in society and use filmmaking as an act of activism, they do not call themselves feminist.

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Statement of Originality

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

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*“I have not become a filmmaker for the sake of cinema. I found cinema the best way for presenting social issues.” **Rakhshan Bani Etemad***

Chapter One: Introduction

Although contemporary Iranian cinema has received international awards, the situation of women in it is complex. Whilst women filmmakers face censorship and government restrictions in their attempt to produce and direct films, they have made significant career progress in the last two decades, having established themselves as respected and popular filmmakers and achieved international recognition. Moreover, many women filmmakers have used filmmaking as a tool in the process of social transformation and political growth (Whatley, 2003). Western media often portrays Middle Eastern women as “powerless, voiceless and invisible” (Çetin, 2010, p.55) yet, by supporting more women filmmakers in Iran who create films about women’s lives, the stereotypes surrounding Iranian women’s identity can change.

Research significance

The movie industry influences public opinion, and social beliefs, ideas, and culture are shaped by the stories told by movies and documentaries (Smith et al., 2013). Over the last decade, the issue of the limited representation of women in the film industry has been discussed (Follows et al., 2016; Smith, 2013). Whilst research on the culture industries, including the film industry, has gained some ground in organisation studies, and studies of

women in movies have been presented in studies of gender, work, and organisation, there is no current research on Iranian filmmakers.

As the world's economy is changing, more creative works in general are being made (Thomson, 2013) and the creative industries need more attention. According to Jones et al. (2015), research in the creative industries has developed in a range of disciplines, including management and organisational studies, and it is important to critically explore creative works with empirical, theoretical or methodological approaches, especially the ways in which they have diversified. Jones et al. specifically suggest that an interdisciplinary approach to "explorations of specific work settings or contexts" in creative work like films and television is needed (p. 218). This thesis explores the ways in which Iranian filmmakers create high-quality movies, and investigates challenges and barriers faced by the new generation of Iranian women filmmakers in advancing their careers in the Iranian film industry.

There are a small number of studies which explore the ways directors represent women in Iranian movies. For example, Derayeh (2010) explores the identities of Iranian women in the melodrama genre of the pre-revolutionary period and compares it to the portrayal of women in the post-revolutionary era. The study expresses how, in war genre films, women were "invisible and desexualized and submissive" (p.151) and how a woman filmmaker, Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, presented in 2005 a visible, outspoken and independent woman character in the film *Gilaneh*. A feminist study by Khakbaz Joybargholi (2015) explores identities in the work of contemporary Iranian women artists, and the impact that these artists' use of digital mediums has on the social and political lives of Iranian women. While most studies focus on the portrayal of women in contemporary Iranian cinema (Rad, 2016) no research to date has been conducted on the progress, challenges and barriers facing Iranian women filmmakers.

Research aims

The Iranian film industry is male-dominated and as such, women remain significantly under-represented. Before 1990 the number of women filmmakers was very small, but since then the representation of women in the film industry has increased. Whilst some renowned

women filmmakers have smashed cultural and institutional barriers, there are still significant barriers and challenges for emerging filmmakers. In the field of work and organisation studies, some scholars such as Jones (2015) and Bielby (2009) have explored women in film, yet no study to date has investigated women filmmakers in Iran. As such, this research aims to investigate:

1. The progress made by renowned women filmmakers in Iran.
2. The challenges and barriers faced by a new generation of Iranian women filmmakers in advancing their career in the Iranian film industry.

Women in Iran

To further understand the situation of women in Iran and the role of women's cinema, the social and political background in Iran needs to be briefly examined. In Iran, politics is intrinsically linked to industry, education and even cinema. Without exploring the country's complex politics, it is not possible to discuss Iranian cinema. Iran has an ancient civilization, but at a political level, the most major turning point was the revolution of 1979, when the Islamic Republic was established, and the Shah was overthrown (Bosma, 2015). Once the Islamic regime took power, the movie industry was attacked by Ayatollah Khomeini, who believed cinema corrupts the minds of Iranian people in general and especially women and youngsters. He accused the cinema of supporting the old regime and, soon after, the film industry went through a process of Islamisation and not surprisingly women were found as a source of corruption and decadence. The Iran-Iraq war was another element that added to the disappearance of women from the cinema (Derayeh, 2010). However, against all odds, the relaxation of control and relative liberalisation since 1997 under Mohammad Khatami's presidency (he was also minister of culture until 1992), has led to a unique style of minimalist storytelling in cinema (Kering, 2015).

Contemporary Iranian cinema in the post-revolutionary era has received international awards and prizes from critics, and has been screened in many festivals around the world. However, it is important to know how politics affects the ways movies are made in Iran (Golparian, 2007). Iranian movies are sometimes nurtured and financially encouraged by the government, yet at other times are censored or banned by it. Censorship in Iranian cinema has made filmmakers learn how to structure movies to avoid scrutiny by the government and

avoid presenting direct criticism of the political and religious establishment or any controversial subjects which the government is sensitive about (Poudeh, 2010).

In order to explore the situation regarding Iranian women filmmakers, this section provides general information regarding the position of women in Iran, including Iranian women's activism, education, and the perception of the general public and scholars toward the term 'feminism'.

History of Iranian women's activism and transformations

In the following pages, I will discuss how the social and political life of Iranian women has been influenced by the revolution of 1979 and its consequences. The beginning of the women's movement and fundamental transformations began in the second half of the nineteenth century in Iran (Price, 2000). During the constitutional revolution of 1906-11 women began political activism for the first time, and continued after World War 1 (Keddie, 2000). In the period 1936-41 Reza Shah made some fundamental changes in the social life of Iranian people, namely, compulsorily unveiled women and took steps in endorsing women's education at all levels. The civil code regarding women remained in men's favour. From 1962, Mohammad Reza Shah, as part of his 'White Revolution' gave women some important rights, including votes for women and the Family Protection Law of 1967. While the civil code of Reza Shah codified Shi'a Islamic law, the family protection law of Mohammad Reza Shah moved in a more gender-egalitarian direction in matters of marriage, divorce and child custody (Keddie, 2000). However, most of the clergy, like Ayatollah Khomeini, never accepted the Family Protection Law and a clerical opposition movement opposed the Shah's reforms, with one of their first targets being voting rights for women.

From the revolution of 1979 till the 1990s, a large body of literature on the situation of women in Iran concentrated on compulsory veiling and how the Iranian political system oppressed women (Higgins, 1985). However, there was less attention on the unexpected consequences and contradictions that the Iranian revolution caused (Rezai-Rashti, 2011). Some notable examples of these unexpected improvements in the situation of women were an increasing number of female students admitted to universities and, related to this study, an increasing number of women working as directors in Iranian cinema. Reasons for these outcomes will be explained in the next sections.

According to Kar (2000), the social and cultural image of the Iranian woman in the past 100 years hardly resembles the typical stereotype of Muslim women as the world usually perceives them. But the fact is, women in the Muslim world "are neither homogeneous nor passive victim of patriarchal domination. They are full-fledged social actors, bearing the full set of contradictions implied by their class, racial and ethnic locations as well as gender" (Kandiyoti, 1989, p.17).

However, as Shaheed (1999) argues, diversities in the Muslim world are noticeable. Each Muslim community is controlled by a complicated web of influences. Therefore, women's responses to different situations and their strategies for survival are different from each other. These strategies are varied, from the rejection of religion to theological interpretations. For example, in Iran, two main activist groups fight for women's rights agendas, the Modern-Secular and the Modern-Islamic (discussed later). With so many differences in political systems, class, racial and ethnic identities, class and social norms and structures, it is debatable to some scholars like Shaheed whether it is suitable to use terms like 'the Muslim world' or not.

According to Shaheed (1999), although the manners and practices of the followers of Islam are different in Muslim countries (which is related to their class identity and ethnic group), "it is true that patriarchal structures and attendant discriminatory practices are similar inside and outside the Muslim world" (p. 63). Shaheed also argues the importance of the creation of a network of 'Women Living Under Muslim Laws' (WLUML). She uses the term 'Muslim laws' instead of 'Islamic law' to emphasise the fact that these laws are made by men, and sometimes vary from one Muslim country to another. Interestingly, she noted that not all women affected by these laws are Muslim. An example is that non-Muslim women who live in Iran have to obey Islamic rules; for example, Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian people who live in Iran have to wear hijab (compulsory veiling).

Shaheed (1999) argues that women's issues in Muslim countries can be summarised as follows: Firstly, even though women's lives are different in each Muslim community, their lives are all influenced by laws or customs perceived to be Islamic. These laws and customs control women's lives (no matter whether they are Muslim or not). Secondly, under various political regimes, culture, laws and religion have been used by states and men to keep patriarchal control over women. An example of this in Iran is that in recent years, there has

been an increasing tendency of political forces to use Islam and Islamic laws to undercut women's rights and autonomy; for example, the recent 'Family Protection Law' restricted women's social roles.

Iranian women have been present in the labour market for almost 100 years, have been active at various levels of employment, and have participated in political, economic, social and cultural challenges (Kar, 2000). For example, Iranian women were involved in the revolution of 1979 and the presidential election of Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Khatami in 1997. In 1978-9 in Aliabad, a small village in the Shizar district, Hegland (1982) explored why traditional women in Iran responded to the call for revolution and what the changes in that country had meant to them. Hegland found that those traditional women who took part in the revolution through participating in demonstrations wanted justice and freedom, socio-economic equality and an end to corruption and immorality. Hegland argues that although during the revolution women participated in the public arena of political struggle, after the revolution, expectations concerning the role of women again changed and they were no longer expected to take part in public life.

There are different arguments comparing the situation of women before and after the revolution of 1979. Hegland (1982) argues that contrary to popular assumptions in Iran, the modernisation and reforms of Pahlavi's era did not affect the status and condition of the majority of Iranian women. In Pahlavi's era, Many Iranian women were not educated or working in the labour force. They were expected to follow traditional behavior and their primary responsibilities were to care for children, home, and husband. However, Hegland fails to consider the impact of all reforms for women that started in the Pahlavi era. Revolution has given birth to a paradox in the life of Iranian women, and it has brought inconsistency in their private and social lives. Although the economic, cultural and social characteristics of society are undergoing a process of transformation, the legal system belongs to the period of traditionalism and is no longer capable of responding to the needs of these transitions (Kar, 2000). As a result, since the mid-1990s, Iranian elites such as journalists, lawyers, doctors, college students, writers and actors and film directors have become activists in the reform movements and many are associated with the women's press in Iran (Afary, 1996; Moghadam, 2002).

Despite the fact that women's position in society is still limited, a combination of factors has led to a gradual comeback for women's rights. Keddie (2000) argues the pre-revolutionary reforms were popular among Iranian people and many women felt it when they were withdrawn. Job access and employment were reduced, especially in the public sphere, and in response, many women became independent entrepreneurs and professionals, or went to work in the private sphere. Moreover, dissatisfied secular and Islamic women began campaigns in parliament, the press, and anywhere they could have discussions about reforms concerning the position of women.

Kurzman (2008) argues that despite the fact that the Iranian government has an anti-feminist discourse, a generation of educated young women appears to be emerging in Iran who are embracing feminist attitudes notably more than other Iranians. Compared to other women, these young women are more likely to work outside the home, marry and give birth later and have fewer children. Kurzman argues that, surprisingly, a proportion of urban older Iranians also support those who identify themselves as advocates of women's rights.

In talking about Iranian society and Iranian women, it is important to note that one important conflict in Iran is the cultural dualism or division of society (Keddie, 2000). Keddie classified women into two categories in the pre-revolutionary era. On the one hand were westernised elites and the new middle-class women, who were mostly secular and often followed ideologies like liberalism or communism. On the other hand were the traditional middle classes who followed Islamic norms and had traditional family practices.

Kian (1995) states that in post-revolutionary Iran three types of women with different social and cultural identities shaped by their socio-cultural and educational background can be distinguished: Traditionalist-Islamists, Modernist-Islamists, and Modernist-Seculars. The first type is traditional middle class who are similar to traditional middle classes in the pre-revolutionary era and consider the Sharia (Islamic law) as the only law source. The second type is highly educated and active in the job market and are mostly from traditional middle-class families. Although they have respect for Quranic and Islamic laws, they have a modern interpretation of sharia. The third type belongs to the new middle class, most of whom were educated under the Pahlavi regime. Both Modernist-Islamic and Modernist-Seculars try to form women's social identity through work to overcome gender stratification (Kian, 1995), but with a huge difference in their approaches. While Modernist-Islamic scholars believe in Islamic feminism and the new interpretation of Quranic laws, the Modernist-Seculars are

opposed to Islamic feminist theory. For example, Moghissi, an Iranian feminist scholar, states that Islamic feminism unintentionally provides support to the oppressive movement in the region: Islamic fundamentalism (Moghissi, 1999). To fully understand these standpoints, the next section discusses the meanings of the term of ‘feminism’ in Iran.

Feminism in Iran

Since the revolution of Iran, many activists and feminists face the question of whether they should adopt a secular or an Islamic approach toward women’s problems in Islamic countries. Thus, there are many debates on Islamic feminism both inside and outside Iran (Moghadam, 2002; Gashtili, 2015). The contradictions and conflicts in the life of Iranian women determine many of their political and personal choices. As noted above, there are two major approaches to supporting greater rights for women in Iran: those who investigate the possibilities that exist within Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran, and those are strongly against any reforms under the Islamic framework. The latter argue that there cannot be improvements and progress in women’s status and rights as long as the Islamic Republic exists. They also believe that Islamic feminists provide limited and inadequate reform and democracy can happen only outside the religious context. Afsaneh Najmabad, Ziba Mir-Hosseini and Nayereh Tohidi belong to the first group. Recently, Ziba MirHosseini, who studied anthropology in Cambridge, besides her other reformist activities produced a documentary film, *Divorce Iranian Style*, and another documentary on runaway girls in Iran. In the second group, Haideh Moghissi, Shahrzad Mojab, and Hammed Shahidian identify themselves as secular left of the Iranian political spectrum and strongly against Islamic feminism.

Najmabadi (1998) and Mir-Hosseini (1999) claim that most studies of women in post-revolutionary Iran, especially those written by secular feminists, focus on the negative aspects of the changes, and the development and progress of women has had little attention. After the 1990s some feminists and activists have looked at reasons behind the surprising presence that women do have in society. They were trying to understand how the complicated situation of women in the postrevolutionary era led to an opportunity for them to participate in social activities. There have been significant arguments as to the reasons for the increasing public presence of Iranian women after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Mir-Hosseini (1999) argues that in the eyes of traditionalist families, the enforcement of hijab (modest dress) has made public space morally correct, and therefore legitimates the presence

of women in public. Nayereh Tohidi is another scholar who supports the possibilities for reform within the system. Although in the 1980s she was very critical of the gender policies of the Islamic Republic, in the 1990s her focus shifted to the possibilities for reform within the Islamic system in Iran and to the empowerment of Muslim women (Tohidi 1991, 2003).

Some scholars support a secular feminism, and believe that in a Muslim society like Iran, there cannot be any significant improvements in the situation of women. Therefore, they focus on the downsides of a feminist Islamic system framework. Secular scholars question the risk that interpretation of Islamic sources has for the social life of women. Shahidian (2002) argues that since no secular scholar is allowed to interpret religious text and law, interpretation of Islamic sources like Quran or any other religious ideas makes women vulnerable because it is carried out by pragmatic leaders. This is probably true in the case of Iran. For example, Qurrat al-'Ayn (born Fatimih Bigum Baraghani), an Iranian poet and theologian, was the first woman to undertake Quranic exegesis. She criticised women's status in the nineteenth century and denounced polygyny. She discarded her veil in a meeting with men. But clerics and male elite did not tolerate her actions, and she was sentenced to death. They threw her into a well and filled it with stones. Moreover, all the changes suggested by Islamic feminists will not create gender equality, and will just modify the form of domination (Moghissi, 2011).

Moghissi (2011) is another pro-Islamic feminism scholar who argues that supporting the reforms of Muslim women in an Islamic framework has some negative consequences. Her argument is based on the progress and improvements Islamic feminists claim about the increasing number of women in employment after the revolution. She argues that since the mid-1990s "the cultural relativist academics had been beating the drums of secularism's end in Iran and had tried to push Islamic feminism as the only homegrown, locally produced, and hence culturally suitable project for changing the lot of women in Iran and indeed in Muslim-majority countries" (p. 76). "In their hands, the term Muslim women turns into precisely the sort of 'one size fits all' concept that flattens the diverse material conditions and ideological configurations experienced by the Iranian female population" (p. 78). On the contrary, according to Najmabadi (1998), Islamic feminism can create an opportunity for dialogue between secular and religious feminists.

Moghadam (2002) stays on middle ground in her analysis and asks whether Islamic feminism is indeed feminism, or whether it is instead "...an indigenous alternative to secular

or Western-inspired feminism?” (p.1164) To answer these questions, she analyses the different definitions of feminism in the Western literature and asserts that it serves no purpose to insist on a narrow definition of feminism. Moreover, she argues, those criticisms of some feminists by other feminists is not the way forward. Rather, scholars should open up possibilities for dialogue, coalition building and collective action.

Education

In the last few decades, one considerable global transformation in education has been women’s improved access to higher education, with women outnumbering men at universities in some countries. Iran is a young nation with a population of nearly 70 million, and education is valued highly. Since the 1990s there has been a significant increase in Iranian women’s participation in higher education. Between 2006 and 2011 there was a big jump in the number of people pursuing higher studies at university (up from 6.9 million in 2006 to 10.5 million in 2011) (UNSAT, 2011), and women’s enrolment exceeded that of men. Despite the fact that more than 50% of higher university admissions in Iran are women, it is men who still hold most of the high-status and high-paid jobs in Iran, as elsewhere, and the glass ceiling remains in place.

Despite improvements in the gender balance of educational opportunity and the increase in the number of educated women in Iran, women’s participation in political and economic life is still characterised by inequality. According to Zahedifar (2012), because of the traditional attitude in Iran that views men as the family breadwinner, most women are discouraged from working outside the home in formal economic activities. Besides, because gender inequality persists in the types of jobs that women and men can obtain, there are not adequate jobs for women in Iran.

Although in most countries equal opportunities policies (EOPs) were introduced in the 1980s, there are still no such policies in Iran. According to Friedman (1980), an equal opportunities approach removes barriers at the point of selection for employment or education: “Not birth, nationality, color, religion, sex, nor any other irrelevant characteristic should determine the opportunities that are open to a person—only his abilities” (p. 132). However, the situation of women in Iran tells a different story.

Since 1989, the enrolment rate of women in colleges and universities in Iran has been steadily increasing (Kazemipour, 1999). This has provoked wide political and social debates, and the current imbalance in favour of women has raised some questions toward admitting women to higher education institutes. Recently, the Iranian Parliament debated whether they should place quotas on the number of female students going to colleges and universities. The religious conservatives insist that the traditional role of Iranian women is the basis of Islamic society and argue that the growing number of women accessing higher education is threatening the sacred family structure of society. As a result, policymakers decided to place a limitation on female college enrolments in 2011. Female students were banned from education in 14 fields of study, and in 241 fields priority is given to men (BBC Persian, 2016). The new policies encourage women to stay at home and take care of their children as increases in women's educational attainments leads to declines in fertility and family size (Kurzman, 2008).

However, even with the limitations that the government places on women's active life in society, Iranian women still fight for equal rights. For example, more females than males took the 2016 university entrance exams, despite all the restrictions on acceptance in some fields of study. Shavarin (2005) discusses the reasons why women are interested in higher education, which include: escape from restrictive home environments, increasing their value in the marriage market, financial independency, and a vehicle that can earn them respect. In general, these desires clarify the challenges facing women in Iran and how they use higher education to change their social status.

Iranian cinema

In the following pages, I will discuss about the Iranian Film Industry, from its early years to post-revolutionary cinema. Moreover, because most women start their career producing documentary and short films, this section describes a brief history of documentary cinema in Iran. A more detailed account of women's cinema in Iran is also given at the end of the chapter.

Early days

The first Iranian feature fiction film, *Abi and Rabi*, was made by Armenian-Iranian director Avanes Ohanian in 1930. Before this, Iranian cinema was dominated by the production of non-fiction films, the first of which was made by Mirza Ebrahim Khan Akasbashi during the visit of King of Iran from Europe in Ostend Belgium on 18 August 1900, with the camera Shah had bought a few weeks earlier in Paris. After the advent of cinema in Iran, the distribution of many foreign films was blocked, and many of them were censored in the 1940s. Most of the imposed censorship was on films showing strikes, revolutions, riots or anti-Islamic attitudes (Naficy, 1999).

At the end of the 1960s a new trend in filmmaking, later called the New Wave cinema, formed. Before this, most movies were low-quality melodrama and comedies. The New Wave cinema evolved between the 1960s and the revolution of 1979. In the 1970s, after the international success of one of the first movies of the New Wave cinema, *Gav* (The Cow, 1969) the government supported this type of cinema in the interest of achieving a positive international profile (Naficy, 1999). From then until the revolution of 1979, many festivals were held, local talent received awards, and foreign embassies in Iran regularly exhibited important films from their countries. Through the government's support of filmmaking through investment in film production, some of the best films of the period were produced. At the same time, film schools in Iran were established and trained many new filmmakers.

Postrevolutionary cinema

In early days of the revolution, cinema became a favourite target of revolutionary rage due to what was widely perceived to be its support of Pahlavi's regime. Nearly 180 cinemas were destroyed in first months of the revolution. After the revolution, some filmmakers fled the country and, according to Naficy (1999), created a new 'exile genre' which was "concerned with the trauma and tragedy of displacement and the problematic of identity formation" (p. 20).

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iranian cinema has gone through a fundamental transformation. According to Rezai-Rashti (2007), on the one hand, as government restricted foreign movies, indigenous filmmaking has unintentionally strengthened. This has led to

unexpected possibilities for the presence of women in most aspects of the Iranian cinema (Rezai-Rashti, 2007). This will be discussed in the next section.

On the other hand, different forms of restrictions and cultural/political censorship of filmmaking caused problems for those involved in it (Rezai-Rashti, 2011). In post-revolutionary cinema, all gendered representations and interactions are viewed with suspicion. Under the new regulations of 1982 (Islamisation of the cinema) women in films must be visibly chaste and must not be treated as sexual objects or commodities. They have to wear hijab (modest dress) at all times, which means they have to cover all parts of their body except their face and hands. Moreover, any physical contact between men and women was forbidden. However, interestingly, close monitoring of images in cinema and restrictions on imported films, forbidding sexual references, song, and dance in movies (like the ones in Pahlavi's cinema) triggered the flourishing of artistic and art-house cinema (Moore, 2005). "The emergence of a vibrant, creative, and highly original film industry following the Islamic Revolution of 1979 is arguably the most remarkable and unexpected development in international film of the past twenty-five years" (Weinberger, 2007, p 5).

Documentary cinema

In the decades since the revolution of 1979, Iranian cinema experienced many fundamental transformations, and several new genres have been created. Although the New Wave directors reinstated postrevolutionary fiction cinema, some of the famous documentarians left the country after the revolution (Naficy, 2012). Therefore, the restoration of the new documentary cinema needed new filmmakers, including women.

In the first years of the creation of the Islamic Republic, Iraq invaded Iran. According to Naficy (2012), during the eight-year war with Iraq, most documentaries were more ideological and amateurish. However, by time of the election of Hojjatoleslam Mohammad Khatami as a president in 1997 (the beginning of the reform era) documentary films began to become more critical and innovative. In the 2000s, most documentaries dealt with gender inequality, violation of individual rights, freedom of speech, unemployment, addiction and even sexual issues, such as violence against women and prostitution (Naficy, 2012).

During the Pahlavi era (before the revolution) male directors dominated in both fiction and documentary cinema. However, the active participation of women in the revolution and the acceptance of imposed hijab by women qualified them to assert themselves in some public spheres, like the movie industry. Accordingly, women began to perform in front of and behind cameras in different genres (Naficy, 2012).

In the postrevolutionary era, one of the important factors in social-protest documentaries was gender. According to Kar (2000), one of the characteristics of the Islamic Republic was treatment of women as 'second-class citizens'. Therefore, documentarians as social-protesters started to make documentaries about women to oppose the regime and its values (Naficy, 1999). Some women directors, such as Rakhshan Banietamad, made both fiction and nonfiction movies. Some began to produce documentary and end up with fiction movies. But many women, including filmmakers, left the country because they could not live as second-class citizens. The next section will discuss the situation of women in the Iranian film industry.

Women's cinema in Iran

Cinema in Iran is a tool for social and cultural transformation, especially regarding women. Cinema and society have a mutual relationship. Sometimes, society energises the cinema and sometimes cinema motivates movements and opens doors to reforms. In postrevolutionary cinema, women progressively began to play notable roles, behind and in front of cameras. However, the revolution created a paradox in women's life (Kar, 2000).

The situation of women in Iranian cinema is a complex paradox. With all government's restrictions, women filmmakers managed to show progress in their career, regarding producing and directing. In the last two decades, Iranian women have established themselves as respected and popular filmmakers. They have achieved international awards for their brave representations of the realities of women living in the oppressive system. Some of the most popular Iranian women filmmakers, including Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, Puran Rakhshandeh, Tahmineh Milani, Marzieh Meshkini, Manizhe Hekmat, Samira and Hanna Makhmalbaf, have used filmmaking as a tool in the process of social transformation and political growth (Whatley, 2003). For instance, in 2013, Pouran Derakhshandeh's film *Hush! Girls Don't Scream* was a box-office hit in Iran. Moreover, *Tales*, the latest movie of

Rakshan Banietemad won the Best Screenplay at the Venice Biennale in September 2014. The movie shows different social problems, all linked together by poverty (Kering, 2015). While women in Iran are perceived as obedient, powerless victims, Samira Makhmalbaf at the age of 17 made the movie *Apple* and later became one of the Cannes Festival Juries members at the age of 20 (Issa, 2004).

Despite the freedom of women in pre-revolutionary cinema, the number of female directors of feature films in the post-revolutionary era increased more in a decade than in all decades of filmmaking in Iran (Naficy, 2012). Naficy classified the presence of women in postrevolutionary cinema into four phases: Phase 1: Women's structured absence (the early 1980s), Phase 2: Women's background presence (the mid-1980s), Phase 3: Women's foreground presence (since late 1980), Phase 4: Veiling and modesty as political criticism (since the mid-1990s). In the first phase, images of unveiled women from imported or Iranian films were cut. In the second phase, women were rarely in the centre of the story or plot, and the presence of women was either in the background or in the home environment. This is the era where an aesthetic based on gender segregation developed. The third and forth phases appeared gradually, and the presence of women both on the screen in leading roles and behind the camera as directors began from this period.

Rajab Mohammadin, the male director of *Beh Khater-e Hame Chiz (For Everything, 1991)*, made a movie in which all the actors were women. In his movie, women were not miserable and ignorant or being used by men as objects like the movies in Pahlavi's period. Instead, he showed women as virtuous and socially constructive. In the 9th Fajr Film Festival in 1990, women's presence as directors was strong, and a part of the festival was devoted to women's cinema and eight films were presented (Naficy, 1993).

In post-revolutionary cinema, especially in the 1980s, in the absence of famous actors and a star system, children played a key role in films. Due to restrictions placed on subjects such as the portrayal of a romantic relationship between men and women in films, many films used children as central characters and many of them received great attention in international festivals (Sadr, 1999). However, the most successful movies of the 1980s in Iran were those both made for children and about children. These movies were entertaining, fast paced and loaded with music and songs (something that was prohibited in Iranian films) (Sadr, 1999). A good example of this is *Shahre Moooshha (City of Mice, 1985)* the first Iranian musical puppet movie, made by Marzieh Broumand, one of the famous Iranian female directors. The

movie broke the box office record that year and following that success many more movies were made for children.

In the past thirty years, even the most intimate decisions and choices of Iranian women have been influenced by socio-cultural factors and politics, but not in a way that the west assumes concerning veiling or Islamic patriarchy (Moruzzi, 2001). By looking at the first movies of the most active and accomplished Iranian female director, Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, the transformation and development can be seen. While her first film, *Off the Limits*, displays a woman so confined that even the shopping must be done by her husband, in her third film, *Nargess*, “she transgresses the limit on the depiction of love in cinema by examining a love triangle involving two women and a man” (Naficy, 1999, p. 47). For directing *Nargess*, she became the first woman in Iranian cinema to win the first award in the Fajr Festival in 1992. Another example is female director Puran Derakhshandeh, whose style of filmmaking may be called psychological realism (Naficy, 1999). Her movies often focus on people with disabilities (usually women) as a symbol of all those women who are internally disabled in society.

Moruzzi (2001) argues that everything related to women’s lives is coded in public discussion and that these codes are clearly readable for insiders and not for outsiders. In her interesting example, she explains how, as an outsider (even with an understanding of the present realities of Iranian daily life), she had difficulty in reading the codes in films. She gives an example of how she misunderstood the codes and the real meaning of the movie *Two Women* made by Iranian female director Tahmineh Milani. The script for *Two Women* was not permitted for years because the portrayal of men was unsympathetic (Moore, 2005). The movie portrays a woman being abused and controlled by her husband, a few years after the revolution of 1979, who is only released from misery many years later after the death of her husband. Moruzzi (2001) described, for American audiences, that *Two Women* was a stereotype of Middle Eastern people, and movie audiences were happy to show sympathy for the passive woman star. But Moruzzi could not understand why the movie was acknowledged abroad as a feminist achievement and what kind of feminist message it conveyed. A few months later she travelled to Iran and asked women she knew about the movie. Surprisingly, all of them liked it. Firstly, she concluded the movie provided an orientalist version of Iranian women’s feminine oppression. But after many discussions with her friends in Iran and Iranians in the USA, it became clear that the women who had been in

Iran during the revolution had a different interpretation of the film. The key difference in their interpretation was that the movie tells the story of two friends with two different lives and paths, one become an architect and has a supportive husband while the other could not finish university and become an oppressed housewife. Her friends explained to her how the movie signalled political context for the audiences who were familiar with them. *Two Women* was not only a story of a woman who had problems with the men around her; it was also a story of a woman trapped in a whole society and her national situation in that period of history. She could not have been released from her misery and passive situation individually until the national context changed, and the director illustrated the range of choices that was potentially available to women.

There is an interaction between the personal life of Iranian women and politics, and every social critique has political implications (Moruzzi, 2001). Tahmineh Milani, in her second film, *Legend of the sight*, deals with a rare subject in Iranian cinema (Naficy, 1999): women intellectuals. The story is about a female writer and her complex situation that allows her to have multiple identities. However, the High Council of the Ministry of Islamic Guidance refused to give the film an exhibition permit for more than six months because they thought the character of the movie did not offer a proper role model for youth and women.

Movies have always played a major role in forming a reality. Varzi (2008) explores the idea of womanhood versus motherhood by reviewing the most recent works of a secular female filmmaker, Rakhshan Bani-Etemad. Varzi (2008, p.94) argues that "womanhood becomes indistinguishable from motherhood in so many totalitarian regimes". Bani-Etemad looked at the quest of a single mother to negotiate womanhood and motherhood in *The May Lady* in 1998. For the totalitarian state or even the Islamic state women are only mothers, sisters and wives. However, Bani-Etemad allowed Fofough (the character of *The May Lady*) to be a woman and still be an excellent mother. Another example of this is the ways in which Bani-Etemad shows the heroism that rarely shows in the films of other filmmakers. In her film *Gilaneh*, she showed the role women had to play as caregivers after the Iran-Iraq war. She portrays them as living martyrs and shows the tragedy of war in the post-war era.

The recent trend of activism by making movies caused many problems for a new generation of filmmakers; some directors left their native homes for other countries because of censorship and the difficulties of making movies (Seymour, 2013). Mania Akbari, a 39-year-old writer who is one of the Iranian actresses and directors in exile, claims that "I left the

country of my birth with grief, fear and frustration" "But I was alienated and isolated. I could not get permission to make my films, or to get my films seen. I still love Iran. I am still fascinated by it. It gave me my creativity. But I had to leave." (Seymour, 2013). But for those who stayed in Iran and made movies there were other problems, namely, arrest and jail. Tahmineh Milani, a famous movie director, was arrested at the première of *The Hidden Half* (2001) and disappeared for two weeks behind bars. However, she refused to be intimidated and made other feminist films, such as *Fifth Reaction* (2001) and *The Unwanted Woman* (2005) (Bosma, 2015).

Through this research, I hope to give a voice to Iranian female directors and also picture how they see themselves and how they observe their peers by sharing their concerns and also their strength. An additional aim is to challenge the existing stereotype of Iranian women as victims and powerless.

Thesis structure

As discussed above, this first chapter has provided some insight into the position of Iranian women in society, the influence of political and religious factors in women's lives, the importance of education in the life of the new generation and how scholars debate on women's issues in Iran. An overview of the literature related to this study is offered in Chapter two. In order to achieve my research goals, I have adopted a feminist methodology (Chapter three) to hear women's experiences in the Iranian film industry through semi-structured in-depth interviews. As the research is about the creative industry, I used a creative method to make a five-minute video of Iranian film directing students in Tehran to show their motivation for being filmmakers. Chapter four has provided the analysis of data (the interviews) using the thematic method. In chapter five, I conclude with a reflection on the process of this study and its contributions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter is organised into five sections. First, I review international literature to show the impact of inequality on women's careers in the creative industry. The second section discusses first how some traditional organisations turn to the new form of creative organisations. What are the characteristics of these new project-based jobs? This section also discusses the status of women in project-based jobs, and how networking has an impact on women's careers.

This is followed by the theory of gendered organisation and how women suffer from unequal power, rewards, and opportunities. This explains why there is a need to explore the film industry as a gendered organisation. The fourth section reviews the idea of some academics regarding post-feminism theory, and the ways in which the young generation see themselves. The last section reviews women's agency and how some filmmakers use filmmaking to pursue their goals.

Gender and film

The participation of women in the film industry around the world has declined over the past decade (Smith 2010, Lauzen 2014). Sweden is the only country that has had an increase in the number of female directors, writers, and producers due to the funding programs of their government (Jansson, 2016). The Sweden gender equality program shows when women participate, they do succeed, but statistically, they have not made progress in most countries. When Kathryn Bigelow won the Oscar for best director for *The Hurt Locker* in 2010, researchers' attentions turned to the relation of gender and filmmaking. Most research has been conducted in western industrial countries. Studies show that the film industries around the world are male-dominated and most of the distinguishable employees such as producers, directors, and writers, are men (Lauzen, 2014). Between 1998 to 2007, women participation declined in all the categories. However, it seems to be increasing again in recent years.

As discussed above, some research shows that women are not beneficial in the film industry and studios seek their employees based on their gender. For example, in the case of screenwriters, there is an assumption that women have the ability to write just some kinds of scripts (Bielby 1996). Sinclair (2006), found that although the box office hits on films scripts by women writers are somewhat higher than their male counterparts, women writers are still represented significantly less than male writers. The fact that the industry reinforces gender norms and there are gendered assumptions, women and men are qualified for particular genres of film. As such, women are hired in a smaller variety of films. Interestingly, the number of Iranian female screenwriters is high compared to other roles in the industry. But they are under the shadow of male directors. Another interesting fact about filmmaking is that generally women are presented in documentary films more than narrative films (Smith 2013, Lauzen 2014). One reason could be that making documentary films costs less.

Smith (2013) noted that as the roles in the industry get more prestige, the number of women decline. In the report by Follows (2016), 2,591 UK films released between 2005 and 2014 were examined and it was found that women represented only 26.2% of the crew members in UK films and only 13.6% of the directors were female. Another report in 2016 by Follows shows the same result. Follows also found that women filmmakers are disadvantaged in their career progression and the opportunities they receive even after directing their first film are less than their male counterparts. Moreover, generally women directors have fewer opportunities for making films in their career, and as budgets rise, fewer women filmmakers are hired.

Moreover, some research investigates gender roles in the media, and the way in which gender roles are still stereotyped in films. Smith (2012) explored 11,927 female characters in nearly 450 films made for children and families and found out some interesting facts. First, the representation of the occupations is significantly gendered, and women are working less than men in these films. Second, female characters are shown with particular patterns across the media. For example, women are presented as thin, young and sexualised compared to their male characters. And, third, women characters appear less than men in these films. In the relevant study, England (2011), investigates the gender role portrayals of the prince and princess characters in Disney films. England compares some of the earliest Disney's princess characters to the recent ones and came to the conclusion that although over the years, these princess characters have become more complex due to changing gender roles and

expectations in American society, still the gender behavior and stereotypes are dominant. In another study, Smith (2010) examines the status of females in 100 top-grossing 2007 films. First, out of the 4,379 speaking characters across the 100 films, only 29.9% of them are female and less than a fifth of the films presented a solo female as the main character.

Many questions arise here. Watching biased media messages has some effect on the viewer, especially children and youth, and evoke some problems among them. The fact is, that these stereotypes in women's occupations and even their bodies evoke some problems among youth. For example, research shows that some level of anxiety, self-objectification, and body shame (Aubrey, 2006, Harper, 2008) was found among some female viewers. By exposing the young generation to these stereotypes in films, it may normalise the inequality in society, and in their future maybe they might not even ask whether there is an inequality in their social and work lives. According to Jones and Pringle (2015), in the post-feminist context inequality is typically unspoken and invisible, and there is a need to have industry or organizational interventions to manage inequalities. According to Smith (2010), female directors and producers tend to represent more women on screen than male directors. Not only does the number of women on screen rise when women are directing, but studies also show that the gender of the storyteller is important. Not just in the cinema (Smith, 2013) but also in the news (Schwartz, 2011) women usually tell the story from a different angle. French (2012) states in her report, "Over the last decade gender equality has largely vanished from the policy agenda, but it is hoped that other researchers will take this work forward and put gender back as an issue needing urgent attention. If the skills and aesthetic approaches of all people, including women, are not fully utilized, the effect is that audiovisual industries will lose talent, experience, and potential styles that model varied approaches to work and creative endeavor" (French, p. 43).

As the film industry is an organisation, it is important to explore its characteristic as a creative organisation. The next section intends to cover ideas about careers, organisations, and the network.

Women in project-based jobs

William (2012) investigates the gendered organisation in the new economy and argues that as the economy has changed, new forms of organisations have been created. As such, the old features of traditional organisation do not fit into the new economy. In the new structures, instead of managers, teams control the labour process and the future enhancements and opportunities are identified through networking. In recent years, especially in project-based jobs, some new forms of gender inequality are emerging. For example, some people especially youths attracted to the creative jobs for the sake of its flexibility and informality, at the same time, these features reproduce inequality (Gill, 2002).

One of the good examples of the project-based jobs is the film industry. The film industry network is continuously recreated for a particular project. People gather together to a project and when the project is finished, then combine with different people for a new project. According to Jones (1996) compare to traditional firm careers, project based networks provides more opportunities and varied work for individuals. However, the boundary-less quality of these careers often makes a significant amount of energy, time and especial lifestyle.

Some interesting research shows the relevance of social capital and network in the film industry. Also, many of these research seeks the relations between network quality and outcomes. Dougherty (2004) explores the connection between career outcome and networking behavior and whether networking behavior and outcomes differ for men and women. They found that some types of networking behavior such as increasing internal visibility and engraining in professional activities are related to career outcome. Also, with regard to career accomplishment and networking behavior, men were more beneficial for the career attainment than women.

Bielby (1999) argues that It not be easy to measure the quality of work of an artist in culture industry before finishing the project. Thus, in the project-based system reputation is a significant factor for an individual in the labour market. In their research on female screenwriters for television and films, Bieby found the relation between the writer's earning and employment and the type of their agency. If they have a core agency (the one who

actively communicate between supplier and purchaser), they can earn considerably more money. The same finding has been found by Jones (2002) that screenwriters who work with the successful agencies earn more money than their colleagues. Another study by Sorenson (2006), finds that producers who had the previous relationship with the distributors, benefit when they were allocating scarce resources (opening dates and promotion effort). According to Grugulis, (2012), social capital and networking had many advantages, but also inevitably related to discriminations and exclusion.

Based on some research, women are not as beneficial as men in networking in the project-based jobs such as film industry. By not including in social groups they have limited chances to find the suitable jobs in the industry. Moreover, by the lesser job they can obtain their chances to obtain enough experiences would be diminishing. In the data analysis chapter, I will discuss whether new emerging women filmmakers are suffering or benefiting from the networking in the film industry. How the law and cultural and social barriers effects on female directors' job enhancement. As discussed above the structure of the film industry and creative jobs, it is important to look at the affect of gender in the social structure and in the organisations and become familiar with the meaning of gendered organisations.

Gendered organisations

The theory of gendered organisation will help this study to look at the power construction of the Iranian film industry. To find the cultural symbols in Iranian society and explore how women cope with their responsibilities at work and home. Whether the film industry's organisational culture, structured in a way they can develop their career or not. Moreover, according to Gill (2002) rejection of the media workers to the visibility of the gender lead to a condition in which forms of gender bias and inequality are naturalized (Gill, 2002). I am going to explore the existence of gender inequality in the film industry, and whether it is visible for them or not?

Acker (1990), argues everything within an organisation such as the structure of the labour market, the control of the work process and relations in the workplace, are affected by gender. She emphasizes the importance of the gender because it is involved in the fundamental processes of creating social structures. The center of gendered organisation

model is based on gendered separation of labour. The body of the literature on gendered organisation theory of Acker (1990) has been improved over the last decades and crossed in many fields. Such as economy and organisation, families and work organisations and economy and gender. Feminists looked at the practices and gender of the organisations to understand how they can erase gender inequality. In recent years, although women entered many jobs that were not possible for them to pursue, still many occupations remain as gender-isolated as before.

Women still face the sex segregation of the labour force and gender wage gap remains for them. Particularly at top line jobs, women suffer from payment and authority. Williams (1990) argues organisations prefer to employ people with less distraction out of work and, this exclude many women with responsibilities for their families. In the case of the film industry, the same process happens to women because of the long hours of working shifts and their responsibilities toward their families. According to Acker (1990), there are five factors that produce gender in organisations: cultural symbols, the division of labour, individual identities, workplace interactions and organisational logic. Acker emphasized on the hierarchies in the organisations and how it was neutralized and rationalized in the traditional organisation's form. But, recently the new types of organisations been created in which the organisation logic been changed. As, in the new form such as project-based jobs, the career development became more individualized, and networking became the essential opportunity for job advancement. While some research such as Kalev (2009) finds that weaker job boundaries and restructuring work around teamwork will improve women's' visibility and reduce their career disadvantages, William (2012) finds that women may be disadvantaged on the male-dominated team. Jones (2015), emphasizes the importance of doing research on the diversified form creativity such as creative work, creative industry, and creative identities. She noted that there is no exist any forums and spaces to raise the problem of gender equality and creative work. As such, Jones suggests to conduct interdisciplinary research on the literature of work and creative industry, such as cultural studies, management and organisation studies and sociology.

As this study is a feminist study, it discussed the gender in the organisation, the structure of the project-based jobs, the networking and the status of the women in the film industry. Now the aim is to find out how women especially the young generation feels about the feminist

theory and whether they see themselves as a feminist or not? The next section will discuss the post-feminist theory.

Postfeminist theory

Post-feminism is a complex term, and its definition is with uncertainties. According to the most body of the literature, post-feminism era emerged from the 1990s. However, one the first claim about the death of second-wave feminism started from the 1970s. Many academics debate the term 'post' in the postfeminist term. Some believe it is dead and some think it means that we have passed the feminist era. The aim of this section is first; to provide a definition of post-feminism and explore how it is related to younger generations of women.

Buschman (1996) argues that one of the characteristics of feminist support is beliefs about gender roles and another one is the attitude toward the label feminists. Traditional and nontraditional beliefs determine the gender roles. The nontraditional views helped the advancement of feminist movements, and in return, the feminist arguments assisted changes in the behavior towards the gender roles. While feminist theories still trying to change these beliefs, what about the new generation, do they still want to help to the development of the feminist view? And what about the label, do the young generation see the term feminism a positive or negative term?

Post-feminism indicates to different notions and each scholar have their interpretation of the term, but a content analysis of popular articles by Hall (2003) identifies three claims of the postfeminist argument as follows: 1) Antifeminism has increased among young women 2) Feminism is irrelevant 3) A no but (I am not feminist but...) version of feminism (Buschman, 1996). Much research shows that some young women say I am not feminist but... or I am a feminist to an extent. In this approach young women support feminist goals but do not embrace a feminist identity. Some studies show that the new generation do not consider themselves feminists. Mostly those young women in the early stage of their career, who believe that the feminist done their job and achieve the gender equality and now it is irrelevant to use it anymore (Kavka, 2002). Some of the new generation of women ignore labelling themselves feminist, but they endorse the gender equality. According to Hall (2003) in the no but version "women are reluctant to define themselves with the feminist development, but they approve of and demand, equal pay, economic independence, sexual

freedom, and reproductive choice” (P. 879). Moreover, In the, I am not feminist but... version of feminism, women emphasize on the individual efforts and how it is the key to success (Buschman, 1996). Also, the impact of negative portrayals of media coverage of feminism over the decade demand consideration. The ways in which the media portrait feminist as unattractive. They represent these women as they are; man hater, unfeminine, whining victims and ugly (Hall, 2003).

As McRobbie (2004) noted, the young generation of women may have a different viewpoint to the sexism and feminism. For example, in some TV ad considered as a sexist ad based on film theories and feminist theories, the young women see the enjoyment because in their standpoint there is no exploitation and it seems to be out of choice. According to Budgeon, (2001), the reason behind young women refuse to consider themselves as feminist, could be non-identification or confusing messages about what feminism really is. She states that some of these young women refuse to critique to count as sophisticated and modern girls.

It is interesting to find out that the ways young Iranian women see themselves regarding the feminist perspective. Especially, it is important to explore the standpoint of young Iranian female director towards the gender equality and gender roles in the Iranian society. In the society that women still have not achieved the gender equality from many aspects and many women try to use their abilities to reach to emancipation. The section that follows argues that how women took active roles and make changes for themselves and their community.

Women agency

“Activism can take many forms. It doesn’t have to be political or partisan although it does have to take a stand” (Beker, 2013, p. 2). Filmmaking is another tool to make social problems real, dynamic and personal. Movies can involve audiences, intellectually and emotionally. Many filmmakers around the world used their movies as tools to affect societal change. Lesbian filmmakers such as Cheryl Dunye, Ellen Spiro and Su Friedrich made movies related to Feminism and autobiography (Lebow, 1993).

Viviani (2014) explores the documentary films made between 2004 and 2010 as case studies to show that these movies opened up the dialogue between filmmakers and local authority,

civil society, and mass media. She argues, how these activist films change the identity of Chinese citizens and encourage them to participate in social issues.

In the early 1990s, some documentaries made by women filmmakers as an activist endeavor to raise awareness about cultural and social forced on women in the film industry (Hankin, 2007). These documentaries were featuring women directors from the different race, nationality, and sexual identities.

Since the revolution of Iran in 1979, fundamentalist government has been in power. By disappointment of the system, some activist within the opposition, started a democratic discourse. Anti-democratic and controlling state policies in Iran raised women awareness of their political oppression and their sociopolitical inequalities and motivated them to come together and search for common ground (Haeri, 2009). Iranian women (filmmakers, scholars, poets, writer) adopt a new concept in their recent cultural production from the notion of 'I act, therefore, I am' (Derayeh, 2010). For, example one of the tools for making changes in the Iranian society was publishing magazines. Zanan magazine, edited by Shahla Sherkat (feminist activist), gathered women writers, academics, artists, filmmakers and other professional women to regain some of the rights they had before the revolution. Aside from topics such as diet, fashion, and health, they review the poems, films and stories produced by Iranian women and also translate some of the articles of famous feminist. They also by publishing the stories of some working women around the country, trying to show their problems and give them a platform to be heard.

"If you think that Iranian women are helpless or fooled by the patriarchal system they live in just because they were hijab, you haven't gotten an accurate representation of the resilient feminists that have been consistently demanding change within Iran" (Whatley, 2003, p. 30). The suffocating political atmosphere in Iran contributes to the attraction of the Iranian female artists to filmmaking, and it becomes a tool in the process of social transformation. One might ask, what about the new generation, do they follow the same trend of filmmaking? The data analysis chapter will provide the answer to this question. Following that, next chapter provides information on research methodology.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This research uses a qualitative approach for exploring the situation of Iranian filmmakers in Iran. A feminist methodology was chosen in order to give voices to women and provide the opportunity to experience research through a creative method. The following chapter will discuss the research methodology and the specific research methods of semi-structured interviews and production of a 5-minute movie.

Feminist studies

It should be noted that the term feminism is not a positive word in some cultures such as Japan or Arab cultures, where it has been seen as a Western import (Mills, 2011). In Iran, there is the same opinion regarding the term 'feminism' and it has often been opposed. Like in the African context (Sunderland, 2009), feminism is perceived as being anti-family and anti-male. For example, at the 2016 Cannes Festival, after images emerged suggesting a 'women power' symbol tattooed on the arm of popular Iranian actress Taraneh Alidoosti during an interview with the crew of the Iranian film *The Salesman* by Asghar Farhadi, many debates were sparked in Iran about the term feminism. In Iran's social media, many people started to criticise her and accused her of supporting abortion rights and saying the tattoo was against the family. However, many of her fans began to write on Twitter and Facebook in her defense (Erdbrink, 2016). In her brave answer on her Twitter account, she said: "Yes, I am a feminist", and she suggested that if anyone does not know what exactly feminism means, maybe they need to search it on Google. She continues: "Feminism does not mean anti-man or anti-family. Feminism means that each human aside from his or her gender has the right to an individuality and according to that, to choose the life that she or he wants" (Erdbrink, 2016).

According to Mills (2011), because the term 'feminism' is opposed in several countries around the world, such as the Middle East, Africa or some Asian countries, at the time of writing, using this term is challenging. However, while some scholars in Iran hesitate to use the term feminism, feminist demands are still voiced. They suggest that "Studies should focus on challenging gender norms and exposing how power and privilege have become naturalized in the contexts where research is taking place. And the aim is that the research

findings can go some way towards fulfilling the political goal of from to redress gender imbalances and move a step closer towards bringing about gender emancipation and equality" (Mills, 2011, p. 4). Regardless of debates on the term of feminist/feminism in Iran, this research adopts a feminist methodology and aims to explore gender equality in the Iranian film industry especially among film directors. It is important to explore how these emerging women filmmakers see themselves in such environment, and whether there is a gender gap in the industry or not, how these young women feel and see that. Moreover, as feminism is central to these research aims, I intend to call it a feminist study.

Methods

Scholars use both qualitative and quantitative research methods in their studies of women. The qualitative approach gives voice to women respondents (Young, 2006). As Marshall (2012) states, the aims of qualitative methodologists are usually to explore, explain or to describe the phenomenon of interest. Young (2006) argues that researching women provides an opportunity to show the significant contributions made by women, their perspectives, and their work. Dodia (2012) compares deductive and inductive methods, and argues that deductive methods cannot properly narrate social relations. On the other hand, "The inductive methodology can properly & qualitatively describe the social relations" (Dodia, 2012, p. 1). In qualitative research, there is a selection of methods for data collection, namely, visual analysis (from videos and books), textual analysis, observations, and interviews (individual or group) (Gill, 2008).

This research adopts a qualitative approach for studying Iranian women filmmakers, and consists of two stages: semi-structured interviews and a 5-minute movie. Female directors from the Iranian film industry and female film students were selected to participate by snowball sampling. Firstly, semi-structured interviews with emerging filmmakers were conducted to obtain their views on women's role in filmmaking. Secondly, a 5-minute short movie was made from short interviews with female filmmaking students to capture their motivation for filmmaking.

Semi-structured interviews

Gill (2008) suggests that when research needs a deeper understanding of social phenomena, qualitative methods such as interviews are a better choice compared to purely quantitative methods. The interview allows the views, beliefs, and experiences of emerging filmmakers to be explored. It also will gain insight into their aims and motivations in becoming filmmakers and their perception of opportunities that may increase women's involvement and entry into the film industry. "Interviews are, therefore, most appropriate where little is already known about the study phenomenon or where detailed insights are required from individual participants" (Gill, 2008, p. 295).

In this research, semi-structured interviews with emerging women filmmakers will be conducted. Moreover, qualitative interviews can be used to study broader issues in areas such as organisational culture, gender and the effects of unemployment (King, 2004). Qualitative research interviews vary in their methodological features, such as participant numbers, style of questioning and length (King, 2004). In recent years, alongside face-to-face interviews, some are done by telephone or via the Internet (Symon, 2004).

King (2004) split the process of constructing and using qualitative research interviews into four steps: "defining the research question; creating the interview guide; recruiting participants; carrying out the interviews" (King, 2004, p. 14). As the research questions were discussed in the first chapter, in this section the ways in which the participants were recruited, creating the interview guide and semi-structured questionnaire and the issues involved in carrying out interviews will be discussed.

Semi-structured interviews provide some guidance for participants on what to talk about. Moreover, compared to structured interviews, semi-structured interviews are more flexible and allow participants to respond in more detail and talk about what they think is important, but the researcher may not have thought of (Gill, 2008). Semi-structured interviews give an opportunity for emerging women filmmakers to talk about their work and share their enthusiasm or their complaints with interested outsiders.

King (2004) suggests including three sources for topics in an interview guide: "the interviewer's own personal knowledge and experience of the area, the research literature and discussions with people who have personal experience of the research area" (King, 2004, p. 15). In this research, twelve questions were selected for the interviews based on the literature

and personal experiences. The questions were also based on the research aims and to gain participants' perception of opportunities that may increase women's involvement and entry into the film industry, understanding of the nature of the Iranian film industry and whether they feel there is gender inequality in the sector.

After identifying the emerging female filmmaker's names, I obtained their telephone numbers from my contact persons. Then, I sent them messages by Telegram application (which is popular among Iranians). I sent them the consent form (English and Persian version) to make sure they fully understood that the research was confidential and also to ensure that the participants understood how the research would progress. Although most of them preferred not to sign any forms, they confirmed that they understood their rights as a participant. As I am familiar with the culture, I could predict that Iranians do not like signing consent or any other forms.

After a few days of chatting, I gave them different options for conducting the interviews, such as the applications they preferred to use or their preferred time (there is a 7.5 hour time zone difference between Sydney and Tehran). Most interviews were conducted by IMO app, and the interviews were recorded by the Audio recorder. The participants were interviewed and audiotaped for between 45 and 70 minutes. This was done in Persian and then translated into English. Because of the political issues in Iran, the privacy of the participants was so important to me, I did not use their names in the data analysis chapter. I also did not ask for any personal information, and give them the freedom to share their personal information if they liked to share. The aim of the research is to generalize the information, as such their personal information was not essential.

During the recruiting, there were some difficulties in persuading the participants that the interview is not political and although I did send them the consent form and explained that the interview would be entirely confidential, some interviewees preferred not to have an interview. One of them explained that, due to the restricted political atmosphere in Iran, she could not talk about all aspect of the problems in the film industry or at a political level, and she preferred not to do the interview if she could not tell the truth. Another difficulty in doing the interviews was about the participant's assumptions about me as an Iranian woman. In particular, when I asked them to talk about their cultural barriers, many told me that I am familiar with the culture and I already know what they deal with.

Another taboo topic that I was familiar with is sexual harassment. There is an assumption among some people in Iranian society (in particular among the conservatives) that the cinema is corrupt. There are many debates on the way artists appear in public with allegedly improper hijabs, their style choices, and on their open-minded relationships. For example, on July 2016, one of the official newspapers of the ultraconservatives was suspended for printing a sexual smear campaign about actors. They also have a history of defaming women, especially female activists. So in such an atmosphere, even though there is some sexual harassment in the Iranian film industry towards women, most cinematic individuals prefer not to talk about it. Although during interviews some participants agreed that there are some cases of sexual harassment in the industry, others strongly denied it.

It is important to mention that almost all participants belong to middle-class families and live in Tehran (the biggest city of Iran). As such, the atmosphere these young women live in is different than the situation of other women who live in rural areas. Iran is a big a country with a land area of 1,648,195 km² and almost 80 million people, with diverse ethnic groups and nearly 15 different languages. In such a diverse environment, women face different barriers and opportunities in their daily lives and careers.

There are different methods of analysing the participants' talk about their experiences, and one such way is thematic analysis (Aronson, 1995). Braun (2006) suggest thematic analysis as an initial method for qualitative analysis. To analyse the data, this study adopted thematic analysis because it "provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data" (Braun, 2006, p. 79).

The first step was listening to the audiotaped interviews. From paraphrased ideas or direct quotes, patterns of experience were listed. Data that related to classified patterns was identified and placed with the matching pattern. Then, from related patterns initial themes were identified, and the interpretation of the themes was referenced to relevant literature.

Participating female directors were selected based on their experience – all have some documentary and short films on their resume, some of which won awards in international festivals. Some were in the process of producing their first films. As such, they were familiar with the barriers and the opportunities in the Iranian film industry. Another factor in

choosing the data was my familiarity with the culture and the environment in the Iranian artistic community. As an Iranian woman who studied for my bachelor's degree in fashion designing in Tehran in 2004, and who has worked as an artist and custom designer in theatre projects, I was familiar with the atmosphere of Iranian artistic groups. It provided an opportunity to communicate with them as an insider and select data that was honest and based on the reality of the society. In the data analysis chapter, I will provide more information about these participants.

Film (5-minute movie)

As Dodia (2012) noted, in social science research, recordings, photos and video clips provide a more comprehensive presentation of a situation. While production and broadcast of visual forms of communication has grown, the use of visual research methods has also increased throughout the social sciences (Knoblauch, 2008). Broussine (2008) suggest that, for deeper and further understanding of human experience in social systems, researchers in the practice of qualitative organisational and management research should employ more creative methods and methodologies. Broussine (2008) state that: *"give data a life and dimension beyond that reached by the written word alone ... and convey the visual, intellectually, bodily and emotional qualities of the experiences being studied"* (p. 161).

By using visual materials such as video and film, a researcher can be more proactive (Banks, 2001) and it enables us to approach different ways of knowing (Broussine, 2008). Moreover, visual data such as films and photos can provide a gateway to the culture of the society under study (Pauwels, 2010). As such, in the second stage, a short five-minute video was made to capture the lived experiences of female film directing students to capture their motivations in becoming filmmakers. The researcher had access to these students by phone and mail, and the views of film students were recorded by a friend of the researcher, Sajjad Alavi (RA) from the University of Applied Science and Technology (UAST) University. These recordings were sent to the researcher to make the short movie. The videos were not filmed with professional cameras, and were mixed and edited in order to convey the student's messages. Moreover, as the native language in Iran is Persian, English subtitles were provided.

One contribution of this study is to have some part in the development of the use of creative methods in management and organisational research. The intention is not just to enable women filmmakers to find their agency. Creative methods such as using film and video in combination with interviews in research offer in-depth understanding of participants' perceptions and emotions that might not surface otherwise (Broussine, 2008). It provides an opportunity for the Iranian women filmmakers to have a voice and to tell their stories and moreover, to understand their emotions and perceptions more deeply.

An analysis of a documentary film was originally chosen as a third stage of data analysis. The aim was to conduct a documentary/visual analysis of famous women filmmakers in Iran and thereby explore the broad scene of the film industry in Iran. As such, "*Iranian Women Filmmakers*", directed and produced by Hamid Khairoldin and Majid Khabazan (2002), a documentary on famous women filmmakers talking about their experiences, was chosen to determine analytical themes. But, despite many efforts to buy the documentary, it was not possible.

In accordance with the Australian research framework, an application for ethical clearance for Low Risk Human Research (2007) was submitted to the Faculty of Business & Economics Human Research Ethics Sub Committee of Macquarie University and approved on September 2, 2016 (Approval Number 5201600587).

Chapter Four: Data Analysis

This chapter provides an analysis of the interview data gathered in this research project. These interviews illustrate how Iranian emerging women filmmakers see themselves in contemporary Iranian society and the film industry. A thematic analysis has been used as a method for analysing the interviews. To ensure the privacy of the participants as discussed in the methodology chapter, I have not used participants' names. Also, because the aim of the thesis involves generalising the discussion I did not use any pseudonyms.

Through the interviews, some participants spoke more openly than others. Some gave specific examples of what they had experienced and some expressed general issues. The following analysis is based on my interpretation of the interviews and my experiences as an Iranian woman. I divided the interviews into themes and some parts into subthemes.

My interpretations of the interviews are as follows: although there are many challenges in the path of filmmaking for Iranian filmmakers, it seems that the younger generations do not have many concerns over their gender. Some of them declared that there is some gender discrimination, but it is not significant because it is the same as other industries. Some (especially the younger ones) believed that in today's society, for women, (even Iranian women) feminism is no longer relevant but at the same time they claimed that they were interested in making changes to the lives of Iranian women and raising awareness in society. Interestingly, one can see that even in a country like Iran, some of the new generation have the same idea as some of the young generation in developed countries (post-feminism theory). The way they see themselves is powerful and influential and that they can make any changes.

At the end of this chapter is a section assigned to the analysis of the short film, made by myself and one of my friends in Iran, of the students of filmmaking in one of the universities in Tehran. The movie also supports some of the literature discussed in chapter 2. Again, the movie shows that these young students of filmmaking are not thinking about their gender.

In front of and behind the camera

Some of the directors in Iran start their careers in acting. One of the famous examples is Niki Karimi (a renowned actress and director). She started acting in movies, and in recent years she has directed. Some of the participants in this study have followed the same path, and some of them were both actresses and directors. When I asked them how, as a woman, they see the difference between being behind the camera and being in front of it, they had different answers.

"It is entirely different worlds" ... "but something you may find it interesting is, when the crew discover you are a director, they will respect you more."

"when I am in front of the camera, experience of directing gives me more self-confidence."

Many of these young directors start their working path as an assistant director for the famous directors, an actress, a script supervisor or any other role that can help them to prove themselves and gain experience and find communication in the film industry.

"when you are in front of the camera, more people know you, and it is easier to become famous to the public. You can earn more money. However, in the eyes of insiders, if you want respect, you cannot find it easily in front of the camera as an actress."

As can be seen in these quotes, one of the main impressions was of the term respect. In a patriarchal society like Iran, women need to work harder to earn respect than their male counterparts. As mentioned in the introduction, there is a job segregation in society and government encourages women to do specific jobs such as teaching, nursing or becoming a doctor. In such traditional communities, society does not expect women to do extraordinary jobs. Many jobs belong to men, not in a way that women cannot enter these jobs, but in a way that nobody encourages young women to choose them as a job.

Although nowadays many women work and study in different fields, in the case of the film industry, still some conservative and traditional people (out of the industry) think more

prestigious jobs like directing and producing belong to men, and women can do the acting or assist famous directors. One of the participants shared her story of one of her projects:

"We were filming in a small city. Some of the scenes were supposed to be taken in Bazaar (Marketplace). Most of the workers and shop owners were men in that area. After a few hours of filming, some people become curious that who I am. They saw that all men in the group came to me and asked my permission to do the things. One of them asked from my assistant that who is that lady? Why are you going to her before you do anything, and my assistant explained to him that I am their director and boss. The old men came to me told me he respects me and thinks that I am, like men."

Maybe for non-Persian speakers, it would be odd that someone tells a lady that she is 'like men'. But what does that mean? Is it sexism? Is it offensive? For most people, it is a way to praise and respect a woman. Surprisingly I have heard it even from women. It means that they do not look like an ordinary woman (powerless) and they want to show that they respect them for what they are doing.

This example shows how gender problems and sexism are part of the culture of society and by default it is assumed that certain behaviors and jobs belong to men.

From the perspective of the insiders, they know there is no difference between the two sexes in doing the job. But one can ask whether men really want to share the money, the fame and the prestige of the job with women, especially now when the young female generation has begun to study different majors of cinema studies.

First movie

The challenges in directing the first movie

Making their first feature film is not easy for directors. Finding the finances and a producer are challenging for most emerging filmmakers. Some participants believed that there are huge differences between male and female directors in finding a producer. They felt that as

most producers are men, and the industry is male dominated, it is much easier for men to get support for their first films.

"when it comes to the first feature film, producers prefer to work with male directors. They (the producers) trust in men more than women."

As discussed in the literature review chapter there is some support for the idea that when women are alone in a group of men their performance is worse than when they are in the same-gender group (Sekaquaptewa 2003). As such, even in western countries, "When women must present financial information to male funders, the combination of task and situation may negatively impact their level of confidence, and hence their likelihood of receiving funding." (Smith 2013, p. 26). So, one can conclude that the gender segregation of school in Iranian society from a young age may not make women ready to enter male-dominated industries and organisations. So, when they enter the labour market, as they have always previously performed in same-gender groups, it impacts their level of self-confidence.

Other research shows that men hire more men in their projects, and when women are in top level jobs, they hire more women (Smith, 2010). So, when most of the producers are men in Iran, maybe it is not unexpected that more male directors get hired for their projects. Especially in the case of projects in television, the big projects always belong to men.

On the other hand, some of the participants felt that, regardless of their gender, it is hard for both parties to find a producer for their first films.

"In art school, we (both men and women) were all looking for producers."

I heard the same story from other participants:

"There were always debates between boys and girls in filmmaking classes over producers' preferences. Boys assumed that women filmmakers could find a producer easier than men because women know how to seduce men."

When I asked them whether they think in the same way, some of them replied that it never happened to them. So, for some of them even when they talk about the equal difficulties in finding a producer, the terms of seduction and sexism can be heard. Some young men believe

that if a woman can find a producer or become successful, they used their sexual attitude to gain that success. These kinds of attitudes show that how assaulting became a norm in the society. And it was interesting for me that the way these women told me their story was showing that they did not get offended.

The first movie can be a catalyst

A few of the participants believed that it is not easy for women to prove themselves as hardworking, talented directors.

"The producers do not take you seriously. As a woman, you need to prove yourself. You need to assure them that you are worth to make investments on you".

However, interestingly, almost all of them believed that the first movie could be a catalyst. For those female directors in the industry, if their first movie was a success, it was easier to find a producer for their next films.

"One of our friends was looking for a producer for her first film. For two years she met almost all the producers in the industry. After two years of struggling, she finally finds someone to hire her, you know her...." "The movie was a hit, and now everyone wants to hire her."

As I discussed earlier, the cultural norm has a masculine look to anything. Women need to prove themselves as creative and hardworking individuals to find enough support from the industry. When their first movies become successful, they have more chance to find future support. Based on the literature, women directors make fewer films in their professional career life, and some of them never find a chance to make a second or third film. A question came up here, what if the first movie was not a hit? Is there an equal chance for both genders to find future support for their next films?

Lack of supports in the industry

Women suffer from the networking

The study of Smith (2013) shows that in the early days of cinema, women preferred to be a producer, but as producing became a prestige job, the number of women producers declined. There are not many female producers in Iran. And those who are producing films, mostly are directors and financing their own movies.

Many participants felt they did not have enough support from women producers and their counterparts. When I asked them if they ever requested any female producer to produce and supporting their films, one of them told me:

“I went to one of the famous female director and producers for supporting my first feature film; she said that she is interested in the plot, and she wants to be the producer, but she never called her back. After a while, I found that she was producing one of my male peer’s movie”.

Some of them told me that as a director they never asked any female producer to hire them because they thought, most of the female producers usually just producing their movies. Most of the participants felt that men support each other a great deal. Moreover, when there is a new project, men mostly introduce their men colleagues to the new crew. However, one of the participants told me that there is one female producer that helped a few women to make their first film and it seems that she is supporting young female directors.

In the literature review chapter, I discussed in detail why working in the film industry is a project-based job and how the old and traditional form of the organisation shifted to the new forms, the ways in which new creative industries like the film industry attract the new generation, and how the new form depends on networking and team. Many pieces of research support that women suffer from networking in the west. But in the case of Iranian film industry, there are some interesting facts that I will discuss below. One of the research questions of this thesis is to investigate the reasons behind the success of famous female directors in Iran. The answer has three parts. The first, discussed in the introduction, is the way the post-revolutionary era provided an environment in which women entered the film industry.

The second part of the answer will be discussed here. To answer this question, it is important to ask, who are the producers of famous directors? Who supports them to make their movies? Did the government support them? In a male dominated industry and society, how did they find enough support and finance to make their movies? By reviewing the names of the producers of some of the famous female directors in Iran, I found out that most of the producers of their films were either their husband or themselves. And some of them belong to the cinema family (one or some of their family members are working in the film industry). Jahangir Kosari, one of the famous male producers of the Iranian industry, is the spouse of Rakhshan Bani-Etemad, the most acclaimed female director of Iran, and nowadays, their daughter Baran Kosari (actress and director) has started to make films. Tahmineh Milani and her husband own an architectural company and all of her films are financed by their company. Manizheh Hekmat (female director and producer) is the spouse of Mohsen Makhmalbaf (one of the most renowned directors of Iran), and both of their daughters (Hana and Samira) are making films. Parisa Bakhtavar (female director and producer) is the spouse of Asghar Farhadi (director and writer of *A Separation*, which won an Academy Award and the Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film in 2012; the first Iranian movie to win this award).

There are many examples that these women had a strong and powerful network in the film industry. All those women from cinema families had a chance to meet and were introduced to the famous producers of the film industry. The Iranian film industry is not large like Hollywood, and most of the insiders know each other. Some of them have a family relationship and support each other. They are invited to the parties that most influential groups of the film industry are invited to. Therefore, not only do they not suffer from networking but also they have a chance to shine.

But what about the young generation of female directors, who have no support and network? How can these young women, in a patriarchal society, find a network? I will argue that although the film industry is not conservative and traditional, and most members of the film industry are open-minded and the elite of the society, it is not easy for women to easily find a proper network and communicate with the insiders as men can do. For example, on many occasions, Iranian women are isolated from men. The most influential body of the Iranian film industry are men, and women are isolated from certain activities, and the law mandates that women and men interact only minimally. Even though most people do not practice and

obey these rules, it does limit women's communication with the key individuals in the film industry compared to men. Therefore, they are excluded from some social activities, decreasing their chances for the invitations to participate in projects.

Not enough support from the government

In Iran, all films must obtain a production and an exhibition license from the government. This means that government has to approve the screenplay, the crew list and in the end, the edited version. Sometimes despite having both licenses, the government bans a film from exhibition. It seems that the authorities sometimes choose the scenarios and give these permits not by quality but for the sake of relations and gender.

“When I asked the respected authority why they usually choose male's plot over women's, he replied; for every woman, we have ten men who requested for the permission, so that is normal if we choose them over women”

There was a sense that some of these young women accepted that because more males are in film directing than females, it is normal if government prefers to support men. One of the topics in the area of gendered organisations is organisational culture – the ways in which organisations set the rules so that every individual despite their sex can benefit from it. As the Ministry of Islamic culture and guidance in Iran is responsible for the release of film permits, it is important to review its cultural setting.

The Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance formed in the post-revolutionary era in 1984, and it is responsible for restricting access to any media. As its name shows, it has an Islamic prefix. In the introduction, I reviewed some of the ideas of Iranian secular scholars about why feminism and Islamic rules cannot associate. One of the reason is gender biases in the Islamic text and rules as discussed before, the Islamic Republic sees women as second citizens in a masculine atmosphere, and this has been recreated in government organisations. With all the rules and regulations that limit the social life of Iranian women and encourage them to stay at home and raise their children rather than being active in the labour market, it is not strange if they prefer men's films over women's. Government also believes that because men are bread winners they should benefit more than women (there are many laws that support this, such as, women inherit half what men do).

The introduction discussed how women used filmmaking to make changes in society (more will be discussed in next section), but it is important to see the reaction of the government through this form of objection (making films as a form of objection) . I have indicated some of the names of directors that were jailed because they decided to enter in the red zone (producing social-political films) , and that some movies were banned for years because the topic was thought to be controversial. Niki Karimi (actress and director) has made five films (all centered on women's lives). All were banned by the government, some for years. Tahmineh Milani was banned from filmmaking for a while. Some of the famous public figures are forbidden to show their faces on television. Many female actresses and directors have been forbidden to work for a while, sometimes just because they said something about their social rights or, particularly in the case of Iranian artists, if they appear in society with an improper hijab, they can be banned from their activities. It is important to say that, although men can also be forbidden from work, it seems that the Iranian government, like any ideological totalitarian system, is more sensitive to things related to women (each year they arrest millions of women because of their inadequate hijab).

Cultural limitations

Education

Although almost all participants had a related college or university degree, and some had higher education in filmmaking, some had difficulties in choosing this major and going to Art School. As someone who had the same situation 18 years ago when I chose my bachelor's major in Fashion design (in Art school), I totally understood them. My father wanted me to choose Engineering over Fashion Design, and I had many challenges to persuade him that I want to go to Art School. He believed that if studied art, I would not find a decent and lucrative job easily. Since education is an important factor in the life of Iranian families (especially the middle class), if an individual has excellent marks in school, their parents mostly encourage them to study engineering or medical sciences, rather than artistic majors such as filmmaking or design. Interestingly, Iranian families want their children to study in those majors regardless of their gender. On the one hand, they believe men are the breadwinners and it is their responsibilities to provide money for their families, so their son should have the best education opportunities. On the other hand, they also want a good

education for their daughters to make them independent, as they think the law does not have enough support for women, especially after marriage. So, by having a higher education they presume they would guarantee their daughters' future. One of the participants had a masters' degree in Management and had a job in a bank when she decided to leave her job and make films.

"when I told my dad, that I had resigned and I want to study filmmaking, he could not believe it at first" ... "He speaks to me for weeks to change my mind" ... "but I had decided to go to this path (filmmaking)."

Many of them told me that despite the fact their parents were not supportive at first, gradually they became supportive of their work. One shared an interesting story in this regard:

"My mom did not want me to go to study filmmaking in university, even when I was in first years of school, she was not supporting at all. She never mentioned my career in front of others. However, after I produced my first short film and I get my first reward, she became one of my biggest supporters. Now she is bragging about me as a female director in front of our family and friends".

Work-life balance

All the participants were under 40 years old. Some of them were married, but none of them had children. However, most of them felt that regarding family balance, women have more issues. The organisational culture of the workplace is an important factor in career advancement and retention, particularly for women (French, 2012, p. 9). Some films are produced in other cities, and it is harder for women to leave their families (especially if they are married) to make films for a long period. Although they did not have any children, they were concerned that in the future they would not be able to leave their children as easily as men do. Making short films and documentaries does not consume as much time as feature films. So just those participants that had experience of working as a film director's assistant or other roles in the crew felt the difficulty of being away from the family for a long time.

“you need to work long hours, most of the films (especially Tele-films) are made during night’s shifts. When you are working, your family are asleep, when you get home and want to rest, they start their activities. Some parents do not like their daughters to stay at work on a night’s shifts. Some partners do not like it either.”

Most of the people believe, especially in traditional communities, it is the responsibility of women to do the housework and even for those women who work outside the house, still their main responsibility is to take care of their husbands and children. As such, for jobs like filmmaking that have no fixed hours of work or fixed locations, it is not easy for women to leave their family at home and concentrate on their job. The situation can get worse when women have no support from the law; in Islamic countries like Iran, women need to obey their husbands and stay at home if their husbands do not like them to work. One may ask, does this really happen? Do husbands make wives stay at home? Perhaps not for most women, and the new generation of men are more open-minded. But when the situation becomes complex between spouses, the law does not support women. For example, last year the husband of the captain of the women’s football team decided not to let her go to world cup matches in Brazil. Most people around the country became angry about this decision, and for weeks the topic was on top news of the Iranian social media. Many people asked the government to interfere and change the law. But the law is still there and although cases like this would be rare, women still, deep down, know they do not have support from the law.

Opportunities

Gender segregation opens some opportunities for women

In their interviews, some participants mentioned interesting possibilities in filmmaking for women that I had not considered. After the revolution of 1979, the Islamist ideology of gender segregation increased the demand for female doctors, social workers and teachers (Halper, 2005). In some categories such as documentary, the same happened for female directors. A good example of this is in prisons – as men cannot enter women's prisons, female directors who are interested in this area have the chance to make films in these places.

“I made a documentary about women in prisons. Maybe you cannot believe that, but I had funds from the government to that film.”

Another participant told me she made a documentary in courts about women, and there is no need to mention that it is not easy to obtain permits to make such films in Iran.

However, one participant mentioned the sex segregation in some areas (technical areas), cause some problems, too. For example, the lack of female cinematographers in the industry causes some problems for filming in places like women’s prisons.

“For one of my project I was looking for a female cinematographer, because we were not allowed to use male cinematographer in that place, and I could not find any. Because the few one of them who are active in the industry were busy at that time, and there was nobody I could work with in that project.”

Another interesting topic was that some participants felt that it is easier for women to make documentaries, especially in rural areas because, they believed, Iranian families trust women directors more than men.

“if you want to make a film based on someone’s life, you have to go and live with them for a while. In that case, they (most Iranian families) trust you (women) easier than men.”

“It is easier to us as a female filmmaker to communicate with families. One of my male friends had an interesting topic to make a documentary. However, the people who lived in that village did not approve that share their stories with him”.

Other opportunities after the revolution were created for female makeup artists and costume designers in the film industry, because by law, only women can make up women.

Women are not breadwinners in their families

As mentioned in the introduction, in Iranian culture women are not responsible for providing for their families. As such, they have the opportunity to have jobs that do not have fixed and regular incomes. Moreover, again I need to mention that most of these young filmmakers

belong to middle-class families and some of them are supported financially by their families and they do not need to earn money to survive. A few of the participants expressed that they were self-financed and never had an executive producer. One of the participants worked as a manager in a bank and left her job to become a director. To me, if they were men, they could not easily leave their old jobs for their dream jobs or wait for the proper opportunity to make films without having another income. However, not all of them have the same lifestyle, and some work in the film industry if not yet as a director full time, in any other roles they can find.

Women's agency

Activism

As I mention in the introduction, some Iranian women use filmmaking to make changes in society. They use filmmaking as an act of women's activism and the notion of 'I act, therefore, I am', Rakhshan-Bani Etemad, Pooran Derakhshandeh, Tahmineh Milani and many more female directors use filmmaking to involve society in women's issues. Filmmaking creates a space for women to express their issues in society.

In order to answer the third part of the first research question, it is important to mention some facts about filmmaking in Iran. Cinema in Iran aims not only to entertain but also to reflect the aspirations and anxieties of filmmakers toward social issues and become one of tools and measures of cultural, social and political progress in Iran (Khalili-Mahani, 2006). Many renowned women filmmakers make films to make changes and raise awareness in society. Through this method of filmmaking, Iranian audiences, especially women, feel that their problems have been seen and their voices have been heard. That is why, in contrast to some countries, Iranian filmmakers' films are among the box office hits and they are so respected and famous among their fans. When women of Iran do not have many platforms to make their voice be heard, cinema is one the best tools in this respect. And that is why the government places more restrictions on female filmmaking because they usually want to show the topics which are taboo or sensitive in the eyes of government and conservatives. While women filmmakers started this style of filmmaking, in recent years even some male filmmakers joined in trend of filmmaking. For example, *Offside* (2006), a movie by Jafar Panahi (one of the filmmakers who was arrested because of their filmmaking), is one of the rare films which is about women who want to watch a football match in the stadium, but

they cannot, because they are forbidden by law because of their sex. But what does the new generation of women filmmakers think? Does their gender impact on their way of filmmaking?

When I asked them the reasons why they want to make films and become a film director or for whom they want to make these movies, most of their answers were interesting. Most of participants declared that they want to make movies because in this way they can show their feelings and thinking about issues around them. However, interestingly, most of them mentioned they are not feminists.

"I do not see myself as a feminist, but as I am a woman, some of my problems are the same as other women. And I face the same problems as other women in the society, so I make films about these issues. But it does not mean that I am anti-men."

Although some participants expressed that they do not have a feminist viewpoint, most of them declared that they want to make some changes in society and it is not important for them to make films just for the sake of profit. For some of them, their experiences of filmmaking consist of their own problems as a woman in society. It supports the no but version of the post-feminist theory. They want to make changes, and in reality they have a feminist viewpoint but they do not call themselves feminists. So, whether they call it feminist or not, most of them wanted to make changes in society and women's lifestyle. However, as I understood it, they do not want to show just women's problems, they also want to show that women can be strong human beings.

"I am tired of seeing in films that women are vulnerable and passive."

And:

"In my films, I show the social problems, but not in a feminist way. I have respect for men, and I like to show even their problems because I think most of our problems are intertwined."

Post-feminist

During the interviews, most participants were not interested in the topic of gender, but at the same time, they mentioned some barriers regarding their gender. I asked them many questions about different issues in the industry and wanted to see whether it is related to their gender or not. While they mentioned many problems related to their sex, at the same time there was a resistance to accepting that by them. It made me think, how is it possible when there are many obvious gender gaps in the industry and society, that these young women prefer or maybe pretend to not see them and talk about them? Some of them mentioned their problems regarding their family and society's limitations as discussed above, but in many cases, somewhere in the interviews, they talked about their feelings about not being a feminist, or that there is no need to discuss gender anymore because they think they can do anything if they want. According to Gill (2011), one of the features of contemporary creative industries is that inequalities are unspeakable. Additionally, Jones and Pringle (2015) discuss the importance of speaking about inequality in the post-feminist context, as it is typically unspoken and invisible. But how is this related to a country such as Iran? Does the young generation of Iranian women think that they have reached gender equality?

One of the participants express her feeling in this way:

"I have born and grow up in the post-revolutionary era; my generation knows how to deal with the problems. We are aware how to fight with discriminations in the society. We had to learn that, to survive. I am not telling; there is no gender discrimination in the film industry or any other organisations and industries. But we have learned how to change some of these barriers to opportunities. When I first came to the industry, some of the men colleagues made some problems for me, because they could not see a woman with higher qualities. But now they are my friends. They support me and respect me."

This reminded me of another familiar scenario, but this time about politics. During the interviews, because of the sensitivity of the topic, I rarely asked them anything about political issues, but one the participants told me she is not interested in politics.

"because I do not want to become more upset. I have my own problems in life, and there is nothing promising in our political environment. Every

news is an upsetting news. The government just do not do things in a way that we are expecting, so why should I follow something or think about something that I cannot have any impact on it, and I cannot change it. It just makes me angry and sad, so that is why I prefer not even to know about politics".

As I mentioned in the introduction, no one can separate politics from the life of Iranian people. Almost anywhere and anytime, people are talking about politics. But when it comes to the young generation, many prefer to avoid political conversations or even reading or knowing about political actions.

So, should I name it a post-political era, because the same thing is happening in politics as for the topic of feminism? The young generation just does not want talk about the gender issues in society. But why? Is it the same thing as has happened to politics? Then, I remembered when I was a teenager. On the one hand, I was so angry at the norms and cultural issues that limited my freedom as a young girl, and I was nagging all the time about these limitations and barriers. On the other hand, I wanted to prove myself as a different individual from the past generation, from my mom, my grandma, my aunts. I did not want other people to see me as a victim. I wanted to present myself as if I was able to do anything. I wanted society to see me as if I had the freedom of a western teenager. I wanted to show that I could do anything I want and be anyone I wanted. I remember that my friends and I were constantly saying that it was a new era, it was the 20th century. We as women could do anything that we desired to do. But was it really true? Could we do anything we want? I will argue that it was half true. Yes, we were a different generation from our grandmothers. We grew up spoiled by our parents. They told us we could do anything and we should do great things. My grandma always told me as a woman, I should become successful, and I have to earn money to become an independent woman, and I should not rely on my dad or my future husband's money. So, if I were in my twenties and someone had asked me the same questions as I asked the participants, maybe my answers would have been the same. As if I see the problems, but I do not want to accept them; accept the fact that there is a huge gender inequality in society. "One reason gender is not receiving higher priority is that individuals are not aware that inequality exists; in order to support efforts to correct an inequality, they must first recognize the existence of an inequality" (French, 2012, p. 5).

Sometimes, individuals accept inequalities and sexism as a norm in culture and society and do not even notice them. And sometimes, they know there is a gender bias, but they want to ignore it to show that they are not a victim or powerless, as if, if they confess to that inequality, they will be trapped in it and have to obey the norms of the society.

In traditional societies like Iran that are shifting to a modern era, gender is a controversial topic and needs to be under investigation. Not only do women suffer from it, but men also suffer in a different way – men need to prove their masculinity and show certain behaviors. It reminds me of the documentary *The mask I live in*, which is about men in American society and how they suffer from certain behaviors that society expect them to show. The same thing happens for Iranian men, who need to show their masculinity and power to society. And an endless struggle for obtaining power between different genders will occur.

Short film

Although the film is too short to analyse in depth, it is long enough to see what is happening from the perspective of young women filmmaking students in Iranian society. The family and work balance issue was one the topic they mentioned in the film. When the interviewer (one of my friends) asks them whether they think about the financial aspect of filmmaking and why they want to be a filmmaker, most of them said that it is not important for them whether they earn money or not and they want to make a good quality movie. As I argued before, the reason behind that is they do not see filmmaking as a job for making money. This can be because of two main reasons. First, they do not see themselves as responsible for providing for the family financially. Second, is the fact that many women in Iran use filmmaking as an objection to social, cultural and political issues. Tahmineh Milani is an architect; she has her company, and when she is not making movies, she is working as an architect and manager. Many of the others are translators, photographers, painters and have other jobs for earning money. When they started filmmaking they had other sources of earning money, however nowadays their films are successful and sell among the top movies.

Another question was about the role of their gender on filmmaking. To me, the response of some of these young students was interesting. It shows that they were not thinking about their gender. It supports the post-feminism theory and the fact that like western countries, the

young generation does not think about their gender. And it shows the importance of this kind of research in a society like Iran because it can bring the gender issues to the surface again. In a society like Iran that assumes some sexist behavior as normal, it will help the young generation (here the young filmmakers) to be heard and raise awareness.

The next chapter will provide some discussion about the findings in this chapter, and the contribution of the thesis and the limitations will be discussed in detail.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This thesis makes an original contribution to debates about the representation of gender in a creative industry like the Iranian film industry. This is the first study to investigate the Iranian film industry as an organisation on a cultural basis. As Jones (2015) suggest of empirical, theoretical or methodological papers that critically explore creative work and, in particular, the ways in which it is diversified, the study set out to first examine the reason behind the success of some of the famous Iranian female directors. Second, this research aimed to explore the limitations and barriers of the emerging female directors in the film industry in Iran. The study took a thematic method for analysing the interviews of emerging female directors.

The principal theoretical implications of this study are that, first, working in the film industry in project-based jobs needs a strong network and communication and although famous women filmmakers seem to enjoy the opportunity of having proper networks, the young generation of female directors do not. Second, Iranian women filmmakers use filmmaking to make changes and create awareness among society. And third, although they defend feminist viewpoints, they do not claim that they themselves are feminists, which supports post-feminist theory in western literature.

The findings of this research support the idea that the film industry is a gendered organisation based on Acker's theory of gendered organisation. Although, factors such as race, religion, coloniality, sexuality, and class is more important in western literature, in the case of Iranian film industry it is different. As I explained in chapter one, although, Iran is a multicultural country with many races, and it may seem from outside that the race and class would be more important, from the inside it is more complex and race is not a vital issue compared to other factors.

It also supports the importance of networking and communications in project-based organisations like the film industry. Working in the film industry in project-based jobs is an attractive career for young people, and some young women leave their jobs to join the film

industry. But at the same time, the shifting from traditional form of organisation to the new form makes teamwork and networking essential for career advancement in the film industry. However, in such a gender biased environment, women suffer from the networking, particularly in an Islamic country like Iran in which there are so many cultural and social limitations for women to communicate with men. For example, women are forbidden to go to some places with men. Many places are gender segregated, such as schools, sports stadiums, swimming pools, hotels (only married couples can get rooms in hotels). All these isolate women from the male-dominated network within the industry.

Moreover, cultural limitations such as gender segregation in all schools and some universities caused some problems for the new generation in coping with the opposite sex. Both young girls and boys initially stick with their own gender their whole life, and then, in their first years of entering the labour market, compete with each other to prove their power and their abilities to do the job. Young men believe young women are favoured for their sex, and they have no responsibilities for providing for their families, so they are free to do whatever they like. At the same time, young women believe the men in the industry do not take them seriously, so they have to do different jobs to prove themselves as hardworking individuals. The result of this study indicates that while producing their first movie is more difficult for women (because of the networking), the first movie can be a catalyst for them. If they can find a producer to make their first film, and if the film becomes a hit, it makes getting hired for their next project easier.

Additionally, Iranian women suffer from a lack of support from the law, and the government establishes many gender biased regulations, from limiting girls from studying some majors in universities to making them wearing the hijab and veiling. In this study, I did not explore the problems caused by enforcing women to wear hijab but have briefly mentioned some harassment that conservatives and government make for women. For example, women are at risk of being banned from their jobs if they appear in public places with improper hijab, not only in Iran but also if they travel to another country. This is because the government wants to show the world that the imposed hijab has nothing to do with force and women are willingly choosing it. While men of the film industry do not have to worry about these problems, women are always under pressure from the government to portray themselves the way the government introduces Iranian Muslim women. Interestingly, this is the case not just

for Muslim women, but for every woman who lives in Iran, despite their religion. Other problems are the difficulty of finding a balance between their work and family and the film industry does not support women in this regard. Culturally, women are more limited in having these types of jobs, as working in the film industry requires long hours, travelling for a long time and night shifts.

The findings of this investigation complement earlier studies from a post-feminism viewpoint. Interestingly, the young women directors in Iran had the vision of the feminism of the young women in the west. These findings enhance our understanding of the the I'm not a feminist, but.... version of the post-feminist viewpoint. It means that although they do not label themselves as feminist and they do not see a feminist identity for themselves, they embrace feminist goals. In this instance, women of this study belong to middle-class families of Iran. They are educated and want to be and look sophisticated. Although they claim that they want to change the situation of women in Iran, they do not reclaim themselves as feminist. As much of the body of literature in post-feminist theory supports, young women are not opposed to the goals of the feminist standpoint. They demand equal pay and economic independence, but they also emphasise individual effort, as if they work hard they can smash the ceiling glass in the industry. However, I argue that there is an ignorance toward gender issues among them. They want to look like sophisticated and cool girls because Iranian men, like most men in the West, do not find the feminist attitude sexy and attractive. They want to show these men that they are their allies and use it as an opportunity to enter the market.

As the world becomes a global village (McLuhan & Powers, 1989), the young Iranian generation is exposed to western media as well as Iranian media. On the one hand, the portrayal in the media of what is cool and sophisticated needs to be considered. On the other hand, how they portray feminists or activists is also important. This is supported by Budgeon's, (2001) statement about confusing and conflicting messages about what feminism really is. As many of these women stated, they are not men haters, or victims and vulnerable. I also argue that these young Iranian women reject calling themselves feminist because they want to escape from the reality of their cultural norms and pretend that the gender issues are

not relevant anymore. They want to show that they are capable of doing the jobs that are presumed masculine jobs. To conclude, the study has raised the important question of the nature of emerging women filmmakers regarding gender. The young generation, like the generation of filmmakers before them, still believe in using filmmaking to make changes in their society. And although they follow the feminist attitude, do not call themselves feminist and want to make it in their own way.

The answer to the first research question is divided into three parts. First, the restrictions on showing foreign films after the revolution strengthened indigenous filmmaking in Iran and created a new form of filmmaking which was not related to any sexual objectivity of women. As such, women found the chance to present in most aspects of cinema.

I argue that the second reason is that these famous filmmakers have benefitted from pre-existing networks and communication. Most of these renowned directors belong to the cinema family. They are either the wife or daughters of key people of the Iranian film industry. Thus, compared to the young generation who do not have these connections, finding a producer was not that difficult for them. Moreover, all those filmmakers, such as Tahmineh Milani, that did not belong to a cinema family were self-financed. They have other jobs to earn money and finance themselves to make their films.

The third reason for the success of these women filmmakers is associated with the way they make movies. In postrevolutionary Iran, women are treated as 'second-class citizens,' and gender became one of the important factors in social-protest topics. Thus, many of the elite women in the society find filmmaking a tool for showing their objection to the current situation of women's lives. They tried to create awareness in society and change the social norms and gender roles. This type of filmmaking gradually opens up a way for women in society to feel their problems are heard and seen and through these films, their voices are sent to society. Therefore, more people embrace their activist forms of filmmaking and although the subjects of their films are not entertaining, their films are usually among the

box office successes. Nowadays, even men have started to make films about women's issues in the community.

Another contribution of the study is the 5-minute film of filmmaking students in Tehran, which supported the discussed theoretical implications. According to Jones (2015), exploration of the creative industry with creative methodologies, such as visual data, for understanding creative labour is needed in the body of research. The film supports the post-feminist viewpoint that most of these young women do not think about their gender and one of them just answered that she never thought about the gender issues. As such, this research helps to raise awareness among these young women to think about their gender and the social norms that normalised such inequality in society.

In the end, these young women filmmakers were very motivated to do their job and they believed in themselves to make changes in their society and change public opinion about job segregation. They were trying hard to prove themselves as hardworking women. Despite all problems in the society and political atmosphere they fight with the gender norms within the society to show that no outside force can make them not believe in themselves. They aim high and use any possibility to make an opportunity. The women's movement in Iran started in the previous century to make improvements in women's lives and still young women use any tool to gain more rights and raise awareness. Even though every individual has their own perspective to raise awareness in society, they were all on the same page about not being victimised and not feeling pity for themselves. The new generation of women filmmakers decide to make movies in which women are strong and powerful and give the new generation good female roles. There are many stereotypes about women in Iran, but maybe the next generation can change these stereotypes and show the society that their abilities are more than what the public and conservatives think.

Limitations and future research

As this research was the first to explore the situation of Iranian filmmakers in the film industry and their barriers to job enhancement, future research might use a broader sample size and include men in the industry to examine their viewpoints of gender in the film

industry. As there was just one documentary about women filmmakers in Iran, and surprisingly, it was not available to purchase at the time of the research, more documentaries can be produced that include interviews with the key individuals in the industry. Further research can be done to investigate the film industry practices in order to support women; for example, how they can regulate practises to support more flexible workplaces, how they can be more included in the networking, or how programmes can be planned to encourage and help women to find their leadership potential. Further investigation could study the statistical demography of the Iranian film industry to map the gender balance to provide evidence based on future actions. In order to support women in the film industry, raising public awareness can help women filmmakers to show their contribution and change public ideas about the ability of women to do different jobs. This research opened up a way to explore more about the relation of women, generation and feminism and cultural factors. It can be extended to other fields and other industries to compare different layers of society.

The 5 minute movie which was made during this research is available with the thesis to give more insight from the view point of these future filmmakers and show their motivations.

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Appendix: Ethics Approval Letter

Dear Prof. Pullen,

RE: 'Behind the Camera: Iranian women filmmakers and gender inequality in the Iranian film industry' (Ref: 5201600587)

The above application was reviewed by the Faculty of Business & Economics Human Research Ethics Sub Committee. Approval of the above application is granted, effective "02/09/2016". This email constitutes ethical approval only.

This research meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007). The National Statement is available at the following web site:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files_nhmrc/publications/attachments/e72.pdf.

The following personnel are authorised to conduct this research:

Prof. Alison Pullen

Mrs. Vida Aziz Soltani

Mr. Sajjad Alavi

NB. STUDENTS: IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO KEEP A COPY OF THIS APPROVAL EMAIL TO SUBMIT WITH YOUR THESIS. Please note the following standard requirements of approval:

1. The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007).

2. Approval will be for a period of five (5) years subject to the provision of annual reports.

Progress Report 1 Due: 2nd September 2017

Progress Report 2 Due: 2nd September 2018

Progress Report 3 Due: 2nd September 2019

Progress Report 4 Due: 2nd September 2020

Final Report Due: 2nd September 2021 NB. If you complete the work earlier than you had planned, you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. If the project has been discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are also required to submit a Final Report for the project.

Progress reports and Final Reports are available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/human_research_ethics/forms

3. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).

4. All amendments to the project must be reviewed and approved by the Committee before implementation. Please complete and submit a Request for Amendment Form available at the following website:

http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/ human_research_ethics/forms

5. Please notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

6. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University. This information is available at the following websites:

<http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/> http://www.research.mq.edu.au/for/researchers/how_to_obtain_ethics_approval/ human_research_ethics/policy

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project it is your responsibility to provide the Macquarie University's Research Grants Management Assistant with a copy of this email as soon as possible. Internal and External funding agencies will not be informed that you have approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Management Assistant has received a copy of this email.

If you need to provide a hard copy letter of approval to an external organisation as evidence that you have approval, please do not hesitate to contact the FBE Ethics Committee Secretariat, via fbe-ethics@mq.edu.au or 9850 4826.

Please retain a copy of this email as this is your official notification of ethics approval.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Nikola Balnave

Chair, Faculty of Business and Economics Ethics Sub-Committee

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