

The Stigmatization of the Hijab:
Using Interviews to Unravel the Discourse of Account-Making regarding the Hijab

An Undergraduate Honors Thesis presented by

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Abstract

In this thesis, I interviewed ten Muslim college women on American college campuses, six women who veiled and four who did not. The purpose of this study was to understand how Muslim college women perceive and understand the complexities that surround veiling within the framework of account-making (Scott and Lyman, 1968).

This study investigated two research questions: What are the verbal challenges Muslim-women in the United States expect to respond to regarding their decision about hijab-wearing with different audiences? How do these women justify their choices to wear (or not wear) the Hijab, and how do these justifications vary depending on the context of their upbringing? Therefore, the study involved an analysis of two different groups: women that wear the hijab and women that do not. The study revealed that both hijabis and non-hijabis justify their veiling behaviors with similar themes. However, both groups accommodated Islamic traditions in different ways. Veiled Muslim women revealed justifications that intertwined Islamic traditional values with Western feminist values more than unveiled Muslim women. Although one participant did not identify as religious but identified as Muslim, unveiled Muslim college women revealed that it was easier to abstain from religious discrimination on campus by keeping their religious identity and practice private.

Secondly, this study reveals that Muslim college women recognize that there is pressure to veil within the context of their Muslim circles. However, unveiled Muslim college women accounted for these societal pressures to veil more than veiled Muslim college women. The differing perspectives between the unveiled and veiled shows that justifications for veiling is not simply equated with a symbol of religiosity but is an adaptation of Islamic traditional values to the values and norms of the Western context these Muslim women reside in.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the time of British colonization during the 1800s, the veil has been a contested and symbolically complex item of clothing. Multiple discourses circulating about the veil formed as colonialism emerged as a great power in present-day Egypt, North Africa, and Middle Eastern countries. In order to create a more secular, progressive, and egalitarian colony, British rulers discouraged the veil because they believed the veil symbolized oppression for women. British colonists focused on eliminating veiling practices as a means of progressive reform for women (Ahmed, 1992). The focus on eliminating veiling was a way of making a country look more progressive and presumably, become more globalized. Ahmed (1992) explains “such reforms and the country’s progressively deeper implication in European capitalism brought increased prosperity and benefits for some classes but worse conditions for others... traditional knowledge itself became devalued as antiquated, mired in the old backward ways” (p. 145-146).

The veil is still a contested and complex issue in society that is intertwined in politics. Recent terrorist attacks, such as an attack on the Twin Towers, bombings in Bali, Paris, and Belgium, have not only heightened a new form of hate towards Islam but have brought a tremendous amount of attention to women's veiling. This research project's focus is to understand how discourses around veiling shape the beliefs and actions of Muslim college women living in the United States.

However, it is important to understand that “veiling” as a term is a broad definition for various ways that Muslim women wear the headscarf. The image below describes the various types of veiling practice that exist among Muslim women.

Figure 1. The Eyes Have It. 1



The negative association with the hijab in American and other Western societies means that Muslim women must account for why they do veil. Therefore, I aim to consider the communicative challenges Muslim-American women face in accounting for their choice to wear the hijab or not, and the ways they justify this choice to others. Within the framework of the study of accounts in interaction, the goal of this project is to understand how college-aged Muslim women living in America create accounts of why they do or do not veil. Furthermore, I suggest that a more complex understanding of the hijab can open the pathway and improve understanding of Islamic culture, religion, and communication.

I begin by first providing a media analysis of some popular Western media sources that discuss the hijab to supply a nuanced understanding of current discourses that have circulated about the veil. Second, I review past literature of account-making to provide a foundational framework for this research study. Third, in order to further unpack how Muslim women's accounts adhere to their societal expectations, I provide research from different contexts of veiling. Lastly, I present the proposed research questions for my study.

Media Analysis

Western Media emphasizes a contestation between two primary frames of veiling: one based on a feminist ideology of oppression and one based on the right to have a symbolic expression of piety. Western feminists still promote the idea of veiling as a mechanism used to oppress women. Many news sources critique Muslim women for being oppressed and portray them as in need of saving. For example, after France banned the face veil in 2011, CNN streamed a news report that specifically debated whether women's veiling is oppressive (Muslims and the World, 2012). In a side-by-side debate, Hebah Ahmed, a Muslim blogger who supports the idea of the face veil, and who disagreed with the ban, argued with Mona Eltahawy, an Egyptian columnist who agreed with the ban. Specifically, Eltahawy stated, "I think it (the Niqab) represents an ideology that does not represent Muslim women's rights to do anything but choose only to cover her face...the Niqab dangerously equates piety with the disappearance of women" (Muslims and the World, 2012). Here, Eltahawy used a third-wave feminist perspective to suggest that the headscarf is clearly against women's rights and their freedom. According to Wood (2009) a third wave feminist may "embrace traditional 'girl culture' by placing a premium on being pretty, feminine, sexy, and embracing the latest fashions" (p. 90). Therefore, Eltahawy's argument portrays a woman's body as an essential part of her rights as a human being.

However, Hebah Ahmed contested this ideology when she argued "when I choose to cover this way it's because I am fighting against a systematic oppression against women, in which women's bodies are being sexualized, and objectified...people have to deal with my brain and who I really am and not judge me about my body" (Muslims around the World, 2012). Here we see a direct contrast between these two women. Hebah Ahmed viewed American women as

oppressed while Eltahawy saw Muslim women as oppressed. These contestations represent the impact of cultural context and discourses that surround both women. Eltahawy primarily focuses on a Western feminist discourse while; Hebah Ahmed expresses an Islamist perspective that believes in the right for women to uphold their modesty in society.

Recently, Fox News chose to do a segment on veiling. In this debate between Sean Hannity and Saba Ahmed, an Islamic Lobbyist, Hannity assertively asked Saba Ahmed "Will you speak out against those that use your religion and force women to cover, force women to stay home and they can't drive, force women that they can't be seen without men they are not related to...you're not going to speak out for those women's rights?" (tpmtv, 2014). Hannity's rhetoric relates to the common stereotype that Muslim women are oppressed and not allowed to engage in certain activities. Specifically, this type of rhetoric about Muslim women presents a very narrow-minded view that all Muslim women have no choice but to comply with the law. On the other hand, Saba Ahmed clearly explains to Hannity "every country has their own traditions, laws, and culture, like here in America"(tpmtv, 2014).

There is a constant negotiation about how women's bodies should be presented in multiple societies. Feminists and Islamists are in constant battle over what is oppressive to a women and what is not. More importantly, this media analysis provides a contested and debated context that surrounds the lives of Muslims living in America. Thus, since veiling is recognized as deviant in Western society and is often questioned, Muslim women must account for their behavior in multiple ways. The following section presents the framework of accounting research in order to attempt to understand Muslim women in America.

Review of Past Research and Research Questions

Accounting Research

Scott and Lyman (1968) are recognized as the founding fathers of accounting research. Through the examination of previous scholarship in sociology, they argue that the sociology of talk is underdeveloped. More so, they provide a deeper analysis of the utilization of accounts, which they define as a “statement made by a social actor to explain unanticipated or untoward behavior—whether that behavior is his own or that of others, and whether the proximate cause for the statement arises from the actor himself or someone else” (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 46). They describe two different types of accounts: excuses and justifications. In general, the speaker uses excuses and justifications to fit the context of the situation and save face.

Scott and Lyman’s (1968) definition of Gumperz’s (1964) “speech communities” is important for understanding account-making in the Muslim American college community. Scott and Lyman (1968) commented that speech communities “define for their members the appropriate lingual forms to be used amongst themselves. Such communities are located in the social structure of any society. They mark off segments of society from one another and also distinguish different kinds of activities” (p. 61). Given that the participants identify as Muslim on an American college campus, they may belong to multiple speech communities. For example, I belong to a variety of speech communities as a practicing yogi, a student majoring in communication, and through my social friend circle. Scott and Lyman’s (1968) research suggests, “the types of accounts appropriate to each speech community differ in form and content” (p. 62). An individual may utilize different speech norms when giving accounts in various settings. Therefore, account-tellings are a necessary social element in response to a

deviant behavior. More so, Scott and Lyman (1968) argue that the “study of deviance and the study of accounts are intrinsically related, and a clarification of accounts will constitute a clarification of deviant phenomena—to the extent that deviance is considered in an interactional framework” (p. 62). They argue that accounts are used to relieve tension or stress in a social interaction. For instance, in many elementary classrooms, it is deviant to leave the classroom without permission; thus an account is necessary.

In accordance with Scott and Lyman's (1968) framework of accounts, Sandel (2014) conducted a study that shows accounts change strategically to fit the context of the situation. Sandel conducted research in Taiwan's Chhan-chng to examine how mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law narrated relational conflicts. The data were composed of narrative practices that emerged from open-ended interviews of sixteen mothers-in-law and sixteen daughters-in-law. Three different interviewers questioned participants. The first interviewer was Todd L. Sandel himself, a Caucasian male married to a Chhan-chng woman. The second interviewer was Sandel's wife, who grew up in Chhan-chng. The last interviewer was Sandel's classmate, who is native to a city in northern Taiwan. With three different interviewers, Sandel found that the account-teller's story shifted depending on the interviewer. For example, Sandel (2014) reported, "none of the mothers I interviewed talked about problems with their mother-in-law, whereas half (four out of eight) of the mothers S. W. [One of the female Taiwanese interviewers] interviewed talked about such problems" (p. 374). Sandel (2014) further reported, "if mothers talked about their problems with me, they might have feared I would share these with my in-laws who would then report them back to other members of the community—namely their mothers-in-law" (p. 374). Here, the respondents altered their justifications to coincide with the perceived audience.

Individuals adapt their accounts and justifications depending not only on the context of the interaction but the planned receivers of the justification.

Specifically, Sandel's (2014) research on accounts allowed for readers to have a better understanding of the familial interpersonal relations of the human population in a Taiwanese city called Chhan-chng. The alteration of speech norms of the interviewees gave an in-depth analysis of the cultural values and norms of the studied population. More so, the investigation provided a nuanced understanding of conflict in a cross-cultural setting. For this research study, it is significant to have an in-depth understanding of how cross-cultural research is examined, as well as the common patterns that may be encountered when researchers did not identify with the cultural or religious norms of the interviewee.

Other researchers have used the framework of account-making to gain understanding of participants' relationships within multiculturalism. Buttny, Hashim, and Kaur (2013) examined how Malaysians used their accounts to discuss the state of multiculturalism in Malaysia, which refers to the increasing separation of Malay and non-Malay communities. Buttny et al.'s (2013) data was compiled from a focus group that contained eight middle-aged and older (30-70 years) participants. The ethnicity of the participants of this "group included three Malays, two Chinese, two Indians, and one who described herself as hybrid - of mixed ethnicity" (p. 294). The two researchers that facilitated the focus group consisted of differing ethnicities, one North American, and the other Indian-Malaysian. Buttny and his colleagues found that the participants' discussion of multiculturalism quickly turned into accounts about the growth in social distance between the Malays and the non-Malays.

Buttny et al. (2013) explained: "there was consensus that relations were more strained than in the past, but disagreement over the degree of the strain or how to explain it" (p. 303). The

research participants all came to a consensus that there were more relational problems between Malays and non-Malays than in the past. However, the participant's explanations differed to a significant degree. The researchers found "participants offered accounts to characterize the situation in various ways: as having changed for the worse, as problematic, or as understandable" (p. 303). This study is significant because it demonstrated the intersection of the account making and speech communities' expectations. Even more interesting, these authors reported that the researchers' ethnicities might have influenced the data. The researchers stated, "participants, in turn, may draw certain assumptions about the American's stance, e.g., as neutral, as uninformed, or as critical" (Buttny et al., p. 305). The presence of an American scholar, an outsider of the community, is another factor that may have influenced the talk of the participants to be centered on the differences, grievances, or complaints of multiculturalism in Malaysia. As the researchers had mentioned that they would write an article on this meeting, "this may have motivated participants to speak out and advocate for their position" (p. 305). Here, we can also see another example of the importance of the perceived audience to the construction of accounts. Not only is the frame of the context important to account making, but also the perceived audience is a significant factor that may contribute to these instances.

The previous research has revealed account making in several different contexts of interaction. There are various ways speakers construct accounts to appeal to the listener. More importantly, account-making research in multicultural social interactions specifies the "background expectations that determine the range of alternative accounts deemed culturally appropriate to a variety of recurrent situations" (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 61). That being said, based on societal norms and practices, this study examines the justifications offered by Muslim college women in the United States for either wearing or not wearing the hijab. To understand

the significance of wearing the hijab in the Muslim community, the following section gives background information on Muslim women's experience with the hijab as well as different frames of veiling.

Past Research on Various Societal Expectations of Veiling

Cairo, Egypt

MacLeod's (1992) case study of the new veiling movement in Cairo offers a complex analysis of Muslim women's persistent efforts toward change within the equally persistent realm of gender inequality. MacLeod (1992) argues that part of the problem "is located in a style of struggle women employ to resist the constraints of power, a style I have called 'accommodating protest' (p. 534). She defines "accommodating protest" by describing Muslim women's ambiguous identities as both active subjects and subjects of domination.

MacLeod's (1992) approach of examining lower-middle class working women and their relationship to the new veiling movement leads us to understand how the veil is significant in balancing the natural role of a woman and her new position in the "outside world"--working with the dominant group, men. Several scholars (Afsgar, 1985; Al-Swailem, 1995; Philips & Jones, 1985; Siddiqi, 1983) have found that many Muslim clergy and Islamic elites currently prescribe veiling as a custom in which "good" Muslim women should engage. In relation, MacLeod's (1992) case study expresses how the new veiling served as a "symbolic mediator for many women, expressing and ameliorating women's concerns arising at the intersection of work and family" (p. 550). Islamic elites reject women working outside the home. However, the women actively choose to use the veil as a way to balance the bad action, working, with the good action, wearing the veil. A close analysis of MacLeod's accommodating protest of the new veiling movement in Cairo emphasizes that the two primary frames of veiling, one based on identity and

status and another on adherence to the hegemonic norms of society, are often intertwined with each other, in a way that Muslim women both resist and challenge the societal norms.

To understand the complexities of the two frames as an intersection--as what MacLeod (1992) terms the "accommodating protest,"-- we must unpack how these two frames both accommodate and protest the power relations in which the women are entangled. She argues that "veiling presents a double face; it both symbolizes women's protest against a situation that threatens valued identity and status, and it signals women's acceptance of a view of women as sexually suspect and naturally bound to the home" (, p. 552). To don the veil as a lower middle class working woman in Cairo intertwines the veil as an accommodation to hegemonic norms of a patriarchal society; therefore, as these women leave home to "invade" the men's world, women they become active agents within society but still accommodate the instilled hegemonic norms.

MacLeod (1992) states that there is significant importance to the power relations in which the women are enmeshed. Thus, she raises three possible reasons why women's resistance may take the form of "accommodating protest." She states that the first centers on "the distinctive situation that women occupy with respect to the relations of power that constrain their lives" (MacLeod, 1992, p. 553). Due to the multiple agents of power that the lower-middle class women of Cairo come into contact with, such as men, class relations, and global inequalities, there is no responsible agent for women's subordination. That being said, MacLeod proposes that the veil is an "ambiguous symbolic solution" that speaks to the different political levels of the nature of the overlapping power constraints.

The second factor that influences women's style of protest underscores their "attempt to pursue different goals than other subordinate groups when resisting domination" (MacLeod, 1992, p. 554). Here, women do not wish to switch roles inherently with the dominant group, in

that they embrace their female character as a contribution to the family structure. When the end goal of both partners is centered on a relationship of cooperation and equality, the ideologies of opposition and inversion become less attractive to both counterparts (Margolis, 1989).

Lastly, another reason why "women's struggles may take the form of accommodating protest centers on the constrained nature of choice" (MacLeod, 1992, p. 554). Given that the working lower-middle-class women in Cairo have very few ideological alternatives, MacLeod argues that the actions and behaviors they perform must adhere to their own cultural traditions. She suggests that there are other images available, such as these images of glamorous Western women advertising cars or perfume; however, these images do not comply with the Islamic tradition that Muslim women find more attractive and useful. The evidence found in MacLeod's case study reveals the complexities that the women face in Cairo as they negotiate between their identity and status and the hegemonic norms of society. Therefore, her study demonstrates a nuanced framework of veiling and its existence as bounded to societal power relations. However, the frames of veiling rely heavily on cultural context. In order to understand a different perception of veiling, I examined another social context of a more secular society, one based in Turkey.

Turkey

Göle (1996) examines the factors that influenced young women who are pursuing a university education to adopt traditional forms of Islam, such as veiling, during a time when the veil was banned in universities. The veiling movement in Turkey displayed a complex intersection of the implications of modernity, religion, and gender to Turkish Reform. The Reform raised many challenges to the gender and power relations between men and women. Göle's (1996) discussion of the veiling movement in Turkey reveals veiling as a discursive "symbol that is instrumental in conveying political meanings" (p. 4).

In contrast to the veiling movement in Cairo, the Turkish women donned the veil to become active agents of resistance of the secular state of the country. Therefore, the adoption of the veil by the educated lower and middle class becomes an intersection of gender and religion within the political sphere. The veil intersects religious meaning with a political statement. Within the context of a state in pursuit of secularism, "veiling does not express passive submission to prevalent community norms but, instead, affirms an active interest in Islamic scripture" (Göle, 1996, p. 4). Hence, in opposition to MacLeod (1992), women are rejecting the notion of their subordination in society and replace "the traditional portrait of a Muslim woman with a politicized, active one" (Göle, 1996, p. 84).

Austin, Texas

Read and Bartkowski (2000) examined the "conflicting meanings of the veil among Muslim religious elites and Islamic feminists," (p. 395) and describe how discursive disputes between the religious elites and Islamic feminists affects the identity negotiation among veiled and unveiled Muslim women who live in Austin, Texas. According to research done by the Arab American Institute (AAI), the estimated Arab American population in Texas (2013) was 274,701. It was estimated that approximately 15,000 Arab Americans lived in Travis County, where the city of Austin is located. However, compared to 40,000 Arab Americans that live in Harris County, Texas (Houston), 15,000 is relatively low. Read and Bartkowski's research context reveals a very different approach to the framework of how veiling is performed and utilized to resist but also adhere to the local cultural context. They found that both veiled and unveiled women exercised agency in crafting their gender identities. For example, both groups were active agents in employing individualistic themes of the veil as a "choice" to justify their sisters, who choose a path that diverged from theirs (p. 411). The women of this study were able to

utilize the "individualistic" norms of Western society to construct a justification of why they either don the veil or not.

In comparison, a recent *TIME Magazine* article was written by Mariam Gomaa, a graduate of Northwestern University, discussed that wearing the hijab is a privilege, and Muslim women should be proud of it. Gomaa (2014) writes "at the end of the day when I have fears about continuing to represent my faith without trepidation, I remember that I wear my hijab for the empowerment it grants me in declaring where I stand in a world that — more often than not — is in opposition to all that I am." Here, we see the same individualistic stance that Gomaa (2014) justifies for veiling. She indicates that her faith allows for her to be active in her empowerment and that it is part of her chosen identity. This discourse of empowerment and representation of faith also exists in the explanations that the participants of Read and Bartkowski's (2000) case study use for wearing or not wearing the veil.

Furthermore, Read and Bartkowski (2000) present a nuanced view of how the social context of a Western society provides the women with resources that facilitate their construction of an identity and status. The women that participated in the author's sample were all well-educated middle-class women, which, as the authors argued, may have created a degree of tolerance between the veiled and unveiled women. In sum, the frame of veiling in this U.S context adopts the "individualistic" mindset of American society as a way to integrate veiling as adhering to those norms. This utilization of veiling as an individualistic choice expresses how the complexities of the veil can be both challenged and negotiated to accommodate for choices made. Overall, the veiling practice of Muslim women should be understood and interpreted through the lens of the society's public sphere rather than as simply a religious symbol that is relevant to all Muslim societies.

In a similar study done by Furseth (2011), the researcher sought to better understand the discourse women draw on as they make sense of the choice to wear or not wear the hijab. They asked three specific questions to guide the study. First, which themes are found in the discourses of the women who wear the hijab? Second, what inspired them to cover? Third, which themes are found in the discourses of the women who do not wear the hijab? Furseth (2011) examined twenty-six life stories of Muslim-American women who have lived in the U.S. an average of 23 years. The main focus of this study was to reveal boundary work where the women draw on religious resources to negotiate between different perceptions of what it means to be a devout Muslim woman. Many women in this study who choose to wear the hijab explained their reasoning with a sense of religious obedience and identity. Whereas, women who choose not to wear the hijab explained that their choice was associated with the negative stereotypes of Muslims in the United States. In sum, prior research has examined the discursive strategies that Muslim American women use when faced with an explanation of why they wear the hijab or not (Furseth, 2011; Read & Bartkowski, 2000). The results show that both women who veil and those who do not have similarities in how they discuss their reasons. Furseth's (2011) research is important to this study because it provides an understanding of how Muslim women discuss veiling in a U.S. society. He provides research that indicated that Muslim women who live in the U.S. have a perception of veiling as an intertwining of personal and societal expectations of veiling.

Research Questions

In a worldview, veiling is filled with complexities that vary depending on the social context. Thus, various perspectives on veiling are helpful in understanding the various discourses that have surrounded the practice of veiling since the 1800s. Furthermore, this research project focuses on the context, specifically how a university in the mountain west, shapes the various accounts that participants will give for why they choose to wear the hijab. This thesis offers a different approach for understanding Muslim women by studying them at American colleges. Therefore, this study uses the framework of account making to unravel the complexities of the hijab on American campuses. In summary, I investigate the following two research questions:

RQ1: What are the verbal challenges Muslim-women in the United States expect to respond to regarding their decision about hijab-wearing with different audiences?

RQ2: How do Muslim-American women justify their choices to wear (or not wear) the Hijab, and how do these justifications vary depending on the context of their upbringing?

Chapter 2: Methods

The purpose of this study is to see how Muslim college women living in America make accounts for why they veil or not and to further investigate how these women justify their choices and behaviors. First, I explain the process of collecting and analyzing the qualitative data through the in-depth interviews, which includes details about the participants and procedure. Lastly, I describe how the data was coded through the process of a thematic analysis.

Respondent Interviews

The purpose of this study was to examine how Muslim-American women justify their choice of either wearing or not wearing the hijab depending on the audience with whom they are speaking. In this thesis, I carried out respondent interviews. Respondent interviews are a qualitative form of data collection and analysis. The aim of the interview is to obtain open-ended responses. Respondent interviews are “conducted to find out how people express their views, how they construe their actions, how they conceptualize their life world, and so forth” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010, p. 179). In short, the aim is for the respondents to disclose their subjective experiences.

Lazarsfeld (1944) lists 5 general goals of respondent interviews. First, respondent interviews are designed to clarify the meanings of common concepts and opinions. Second, this kind of interview wants to distinguish the decisive elements of an expressed opinion. Third, respondent interviews want to determine what influenced a person to form an opinion or to act in a certain way. Fourth, this interview technique wants to classify complex attitude patterns. And lastly, respondent interviews want to understand the interpretations that people attribute to their motivations to act. In the traditional model, respondent interviews have focused specifically on

the psychological self. However, recent researchers have employed a different model of the respondent interview “that serves feminist theory, poststructuralism, and/or cultural studies” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010, p. 180). The more recent model of respondent interviews allows interviewees to discuss how they make sense of where they stand as a member in society. Therefore, interview talk can circulate around gender, racial, sexual, and political discourses. Lindlof and Taylor (2010) found that “often, the subjects’ speech is judged to be symptomatic of multiple, contradictory, or rapidly mutating discourses, which is considered an indicator of contending ideologies in the society at large” (p. 180). Although the answers from the interview questions are expected to differ from one interviewee to the next, “many respondent-interview studies follow a standard order so they can be compared across the sample” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010, p. 180). My ordering of questions in the interview adapted to what interviewees said but followed a relatively standard order.

Participants

The participants who took part in this study included ten college-aged women, six who wear the hijab and four who do not. Table 1 provides information about the participants in this study. Pseudonyms were given to the participants, in order to protect their privacy.

Table 1. Participant Information. 1

Name	Wears hijab?	Wore hijab in the Past	Type of Interview	Country of Origin	U. S. Citizenship?
Aadila	No	Yes	Face-to-Face	Pakistan	Yes
Badra	No	No	Face-to-Face	Kuwait	No
Chanda	No	No	Face-to-Face	Kuwait	No
Parvina	No	No	Face-to-Face	Kuwait	No
Hana	Yes	No	Face-to-Face	India	Yes

Rafia	Yes	No	Phone	Saudi Arabia	Yes
Zakia	Yes	No	Phone	Saudi Arabia	Yes
Sabrin	Yes	No	Face-to-Face	Kuwait	No
Reema	Yes	No	Face-to-Face	Kuwait	No
Fathdia	Yes	No	Face-to-Face	Kuwait	Yes

*All the participants except for Rafia and Zakia are current college students in a University in the mountain West. Rafia and Zakia currently attend Universities in the Southeastern region of the United States.

Two of the participants were recruited with a recruitment email, see Appendix A, which was sent out to a Muslim Student club on campus. Six of the participants were recruited through snowball sampling. In this case, I reached out to my friend, who was a member of a Kuwaiti student club on campus, and in result, he gathered several interviewees for me. Thus, a large percentage of my participants are international students from Kuwait. The last two of my participants, originally from Saudi Arabia, were two of my good friends in middle school, which I contacted over phone.

Procedure

In-depth interviews with participants were conducted over the telephone or face-to-face. In general, the researcher gained written consent in different ways, depending on the site of the interview. For interviews done face-to-face, the researcher distributed two consent forms; one form for the interviewee's information and the other which was returned to the researcher. For interviews done by telephone, the researcher sent two consent forms via email; one form was signed electronically and returned to the researcher, while, the other form was for the participant's own records. No interviews were conducted without signed consent forms. A copy of the consent form may be found in Appendix B.

Moreover, prior to the interview, the participants were reminded that any time they felt uncomfortable they could request to leave the interview, skip a question, or turn off the audiotaping device. The same reminders were included with phone interviews. Interviews were audiotaped using different devices. Face-to-face interviews were audiotaped on a password-protected voice memo application within my password-protected iPhone. Phone interviews were recorded on my password-protected note-taking application within my password-protected computer. Once the participants verified their willingness to participate, the researcher turned on the audiotaping device and initiated the interview.

The interviews ranged from 17 to 38 minutes and were held at an agreed upon place chosen by the participant. All interviews, including phone interviews, were located in private study rooms on campus.

A complete list of the interview questions that were used is included in Appendix C. Prior to the questions, I provided a short self-introduction of herself to explain how the interview would work and what major topics it would cover. The interview questions were designed to address the research questions, including general background history of the decision to wear or not wear hijab, general history of religious beliefs, and specific examples of explanations about hijab wearing made in the past.

During the interview, I took limited notes in order to make the participant feel more comfortable. After the interviews were recorded, I took the recordings and uploaded them to a MP3 file onto a password-protected computer. All interviews were then transcribed fully. A full example of an interview may be found in Appendix D. Once the transcription process was completed, I thoroughly examined key terms, themes and quotes that would be useful in the analysis process.

Thematic Analysis

Each MP3 file was listened to carefully and repeatedly to develop a sense of data. Then, I reread my interview transcripts. Following the transcription I developed a codebook that held 15 different codes, first level and second-level codes. Finally, after the coding process was complete I further analyzed the data by categorizing my secondary codes into three primary themes of account- making for both hijabi and non-hijabi women. I found themes that correlated with Scott and Lyman's (1968) theory of account making. I also found themes that correlated with Read and Bartkowski's (2000) research on veiling. Both themes were intertwined with each other to create a critical analysis. Tracy (2013) explained, "themes may also revolve around categories associated with an established theory" (p. 262). Therefore, the themes were better interpreted and understood with the application of Scott and Lyman (1968) and Read and Bartkowski's (2000) research. Finally I applied a third analysis for a more nuanced understanding of how previous research (Scott & Lyman, Read & Bartkowski) can be understood through themes.

Chapter 3: Findings

This chapter highlights three themes found in the one-on-one interviews with veiled and unveiled participants: Religious Devoutness and Representative of Islam, Empowerment/Emancipation, and Readiness. With the framework of account making in mind, I draw on my coded data-transcript to analyze the various types of accounts Muslim college women made. The accounts of women who veiled and did not revealed similar themes but contrasting perspectives. Each theme aims to unravel how Muslim college women intertwine traditional views of Islam and Modern/Feminist views with their private and public identities.

In the final section, I discuss the connections between traditional views of Islam and Modern/Feminist views and how this furthers our understanding of Muslim college women's private and public identities, which I describe as "accommodating tradition." Using the justifications of Muslim college women's perspectives toward veiling as an example, I want to draw attention to these complexities of women's simultaneous attempts to accommodate their traditional views of Islam to fit with the modern world. Furthermore, this study suggests evidence that veiled and unveiled Muslim women accommodate traditional ways of Islam by the perception that the veil both opens possibility in the outside world and empowers their sense of selves

Veiled Participants

Religious Devoutness and Representative of Islam

Previous research has shown "many of the veiled women invoke various sorts of religious imagery and theological edicts when asked about their motivations for veiling" (Read & Bartkowski, 2000, p. 403). Veiled participants expressed a sense of self-fulfillment (Scott & Lyman, 1968) when they followed religious edicts. This study provides evidence that "many

veiled women contend that veiling is commanded in the Qu'ran" (Read & Bartkowski, 2000, 403). Furthermore, theological rationales are used to justify veiled women's motivations for veiling. An elevated sense of self (Scott & Lyman, 1968) was tied with the level of commitment participants had with their religion. For many veiled Muslim college women, the veil allowed for a stronger connection to God, Allah.

Excerpt 1 (Zakia):

I think I was 16 when I started wearing it [the hijab]. For me personally, I knew that wearing the hijab would have to be my first step. At that time I was **discovering my faith** and **exploring it** and I knew that it was the **first step** in the process of becoming who I wanted in terms of my faith and character. I wanted to grow and find myself in college and the rest of my life in relation to the hijab. It serves as a constant reminder of who **I am** and who I want to be. I think it changed my character for the better because I am constantly trying to live up to expectations that come with the hijab and the level of respect that the hijab has in the Muslim world.

Excerpt 2 (Hana):

I do believe it [the hijab] is required because the Qur'an uses a word he-mad which refers to covering the chest and the hair and parts of a women that are usually thought of as beautiful. I very firmly believed that it [the hijab] is something that is **required** and at the same time it **can't be forced upon** somebody, **faith comes from the heart**. In my heart I felt like one way to get **closer to god**, or Allah, was through following his commands and will, and one of those things was wearing the hijab.

These quotes suggest evidence that some Muslim college women base their self-image on Islamic traditions. Excerpts 1 and 2 identify that the veil not only is a religious symbol but also is used as a path in becoming a religiously devout Muslim. Read and Bartkowski (2000) claim "narratives about some women's deliberate choice to begin veiling at a particular point in their lives underscore how religious edicts stand in tension with the women's strategic motivations" (p. 403). Hana and Zakia demonstrate evidence of how this "tension" between religious edicts and their personal motivations intertwine with each other. Veiling not only performs as a way to appeal to religious edicts but also strengthens their sense of selves (Scott & Lyman, 1968)

through religious devotion. More so, Hana highlights the tension that surrounds the choice to veil when she states “I very firmly believed that it is something that is required and at the same time it can’t be forced upon somebody, faith comes from the heart.” Hana demonstrates tension that can exist when force is intertwined with an individual’s faith and personal choice. Excerpt 3 also demonstrates how veiling reflects a way to fulfill one’s sense of self through becoming religiously devout.

Excerpt 3 (Fathdia):

I think it was more of a personal decision when I began wearing the hijab. I was 14 when I made this decision. I made it for **myself** because I was in a place where I wanted to be a bit **more spiritual** and a bit **more religious**.

Several veiled women saw the cultural practice of veiling to also be a way to educate others about Islam. Here, cultural context plays an important role in how women justify their motivations for veiling. Participants felt that the veil was an invitation for genuine questions rather than false judgments and misconceptions.

Excerpt 4 (Fathdia)

I think that especially being in America people see you and **associate you with Islam**. I don’t think that’s such a bad thing because people have perceptions and ideas. And if you do choose to show that you are a Muslim you get to answer those. I have had a lot of conversations about Islam and people’s perceptions. I ask: “What do you think and what is your stance on this?” That is good way to talk about it [veiling] because a lot of people don’t know and if they don’t meet a Muslim they won’t get to ask. So, if someone doesn’t want people to know they are Muslim. Those people won’t get to ask you and you won’t get to **clarify stereotypes** and **misconceptions**. That has a lot to do with my **experience** now.

Excerpt 5 (Hana)

I mean one thing I do hope is that even though it is something very different and there’s always these arguments on the internet like the hijab is a symbol of oppression or its something outdated. I **encourage people to ask** rather than just sit there and read Fox News. The thing is the only way you can stop being afraid of it, is knowing more of it. So I really **encourage** people to do that in my classes because when you come in you can see the fear, not fear, but the hesitance on people’s faces. So I have to prove that I speak English, I’m American and on the same level.

Excerpt 6 (Aadila)

The reason I starting wearing it was because I'm very light skinned. I'm white passing and I really wanted people to ask me questions about Islam and ask me questions about my country. It was around the time were there was a height of Islamophobia. There was war in Iraq in Afghanistan there were troops in Pakistan, so I just wanted be there as a **source of information for people** who don't know a lot and maybe wanted to **know more**.

Evidence reveals that veiled participants found veiling to be a bonus in foreign country.

Veiling provides Muslim women with agency to express individuality and invite others, who may not understand Islamic tradition, to ask genuine questions about their faith and experience.

Empowerment/Emancipation

In addition to providing religious rationales to justify the cultural practice of veiling, many Muslim women who wear the hijab expressed a sense of relief in minimizing sexual attention from men. Read and Bartkowski (2000) provide evidence that veiled respondents “argue that the practice of wearing a hijab actually liberates them from men's untamed, potentially explosive sexuality and makes possible for them various sorts of public sphere pursuits” (p. 405). Excerpts seven and eight demonstrate this phenomenon of liberation from sexual pressures, and the sense of safety the veil provides.

Excerpt 7 (Reema):

Let me tell you how the hijab makes me feel every day. I see people respecting and **treating me** in a way that is really **respectful**, that's the way I really feel. So when I enter a room I get the attention, but at the same time I don't get the sexual harassment. I don't get judged the wrong way. I am **respected** for respecting my **beliefs**. Another main reason why I am wearing the hijab is to be identified as a Muslim woman I am proud of.

Excerpt 8 (Sabrin):

Sometimes when I think about if I didn't wear the hijab I get this feeling and I thank god that I did choose to wear it. Sometimes when I go out I feel that I'm in a bubble when I'm outside with people. I feel **protected** from all the **un-good things** outside of the world.

In contrast, pro-veiling Islamic elites argue “that women’s sexual vulnerability (and, literally, their fragile bodily “ornaments”) should restrict them to the domestic sphere” (Read & Bartkowski, 2000, p. 405). However, many veiled women in this study found the veil as a way to safely enter the public sphere of men. Evidence shows that “this hijab-as-liberator rationale for veiling was repeated by many of the veiled women who pursued educational degrees in schools and on college campuses where young predatorial men ostensibly rove in abundance” (Read & Bartkowski, 2000, p. 405).

Excerpt 9 (Zakia):

The purpose of the hijab is to non-objectify a woman. A woman is supposed to have a level of respect that doesn’t include an object. So a person seeing the hijab is supposed to **look past appearance**, which is the main thing that is associated with being a woman. A person should look past appearance and look at a woman’s heart, mind, speech, and character.

This excerpt reveals that Muslim college women use the veil as a valuable tool to ward off sexual attention and possible harassment by men. Read and Bartkowski’s (2000) research supports evidence that many Muslim women invoked the discourses of masculine-feminine differences to defend veiling. More so, Islamic tradition supports the idea that women are responsible for the management and control of men’s sexuality (Al-Swailem, 1995). An aunt of a participant who wears the hijab supported the traditional views of gender.

Excerpt 10 (Sabrin’s Aunt):

Another aspect, deals with the psychological part of a human. If a man is used to see uncovered women, those who look at their best most of the time, then he would eventually **lose the interest** in a woman’s body. Furthermore, he will get **used to** the screen of bunches of beautiful and attractive ladies, and keep comparing them and switching from one to other for the sake of “JOY”. This attitude will end up with turning him into a **sexual animal!**

In contrast to Islamic elites, the veiled Muslim college women's accounts did not simply replicate Islamic traditional values of gender; instead, a modern perspective of self-empowerment was intertwined with Islamic traditional values of gender differences. Read and Bartkowski (2000) affirm "for many of the veiled women in this study, the respect and protection afforded them by the hijab enables them to engage in extradomestic pursuits that would ironically generate sharp criticism from many pro-veiling Muslim elites" (p. 406). The following quotes further articulate how Muslim veiled women feel that respect and protection are outcomes of veiling.

Excerpt 11 (Sabrin):

Our concept is that our beauty is not allowed to be shown to everybody. **Covering** your beauty is one way of **protecting it**. Wearing the hijab is not just wearing more clothes it's having a proper way to speak, having a proper way of speaking so all of that contributes to the hijab.

Excerpt 12 (Reema):

I explained to him [a colleague] the reasons [I wear hijab] is because we think that women's beauty is so important and that women are beautiful. We think that she should **cover her beauty** just like how every woman hides her jewels and diamonds. In our society whether a guy wants to kiss a hijabi or non-hijabi they always consider how she reveals herself. They feel that **women** should be **special** to their spouse; so being able to reveal your hair to certain people gives them pleasure and it's a benefit.

In accordance to the Qu'ranic references to women's "ornaments" (Read & Bartkowski, 2000, p. 404), Reema compares precious jewels and diamonds to her own femininity. The interviewees believed that modesty is a valued and feminine quality that should not be revealed to all men.

Readiness and Societal Pressures

While foregoing statements provide clear evidence of these veiled women's empowering feelings towards the hijab, many of the veiled women sought to understand their unveiled sisters

intentions to not veil. Some veiled college women compared their unveiled friend's accounts of readiness by reverting to her own personal experiences.

Expert 13 (Zakia)

I guess when I think about that question, I think about my best friend, who doesn't wear it [the hijab]. We talked about it before and I think we both understood that were on the same journey, but were at different points of our life in terms of the hijab. She thinks that she's not **ready** for it. She thinks that even though she is as practicing as I am that she is not ready. Whereas, I started it before I wouldn't say before I was ready but in terms of **readiness** I was **comfortable** in myself enough to **bear the responsibility and confident enough** in my conviction. I knew I wouldn't take it off, whereas, I think that she hasn't reached that level of **comfort** yet in her heart, which is very important in a person who is thinking about wearing it. A lot of times if a person wears it before they are comfortable in themselves they take it off just because life happens.

There is a mutual understanding between the two friends that you must be ready to commit to wearing the hijab. Another term that is significant to Zakia's narrative is her discussion about comfort. She feels that the ability to be comfortable with oneself, spiritually, intertwines with the concept of readiness.

Veiled women expressed tolerance and acceptance toward their unveiled counterparts. Evidence supports that veiled women "are willing to define what it means to be a good Muslim broadly enough to include Islamic women who do not veil" (Read & Bartkowski, 2000, p. 407). The excerpt below further supports this notion.

Excerpt 14 (Hana)

I had one friend, who never wore it [the hijab] ask me if she was being a **bad Muslim** by not wearing it. I had to tell her **that's not for me to decide** nobody made me a judge or jury so I can not tell you whether you are a good Muslim or not. That's up to god but the thing I can tell you it is something that **is mandatory** but it **does not define you**. There are things that I am sure are mandatory or that I shouldn't be doing but I do. One of my cousins, he used to have an alcohol problem. Alcohol is very prohibited in Islam and it's a very big sin, but that didn't make him any **less of a person**. He still cried in prayer he still—I'm pretty sure he has much more **good character** than I do.

Hana entails that a good Muslim woman is not solely defined by if she veils or not. In accordance with Read and Bartkowski (2000), “women in hijab are able to distinguish between what veiling means to them at a personal level (i.e., a sign of religious devotion) versus what the veil says about Muslim women in general (i.e., a voluntary cultural practice bereft of devotional significance).” In Hana’s account of her friend, Hana reveals that veiling relies on a much deeper religious devotion to Allah than a casual cultural practice she performs daily. Furthermore, from the excerpt above we see how societal pressures from Muslim circles can nuance a Muslim women’s choice to veil to a certain degree.

Unveiled Participants

Religious Devoutness and Representative of Islam

In contrast to the Muslim women who used pro-veiling discourses to justify why they veil, participants used anti-veiling discourses to elicit their “abstention from this cultural practice [veiling]” (Read and Bartkowski, 2000, p. 407). Unveiled participants did not feel the need to veil in order to have a connection with their religion. One interviewee stated that a strong religious bond should not be justified by whether or not a Muslim women veils.

Excerpt 15 (Aadila):

Recently, the Muslim club that I am in did an Islam event. A speaker came and she talked about why she wore the hijab. We had a panel of three other women that were all hijabis. They talked about why they wore hijab and they all thought it was to strengthen their faith. **They made a point to say that if you’re Muslim and you don’t wear hijab then maybe your faith isn’t that strong yet.** I mean, I took issue with that. They believe that if you are at a certain level of your faith you will wear hijab.

Another interviewee resorted to humorous irony to instill mockery of veiled Muslim women who think it is necessary to veil if you are Muslim.

Excerpt 16 (Chanda):

They [Chanda's friends who veil] start by asking me if I am going to wear hijab anytime soon. I say no and they ask: Why? You're a **good person**, why don't you just wear hijab? In Islam you have to wear the hijab and it is a **sin** not to wear the hijab. So **I'm somehow a sinner now** because I don't wear the hijab [chuckles].

Here, Chanda evokes humor to justify her understanding of the hijab. Chanda's ironic discourse of being a sinner allows her to disassociate from a religious identity. This rhetorical strategy allows Chanda to claim that she can still be a good person and not veil. More so, Chanda expresses an existence of tension between unveiled and veiled Muslim women.

Furthermore, unveiled participants justified their behavior of not veiling as a way to rhetorically allow these unveiled women to claim "more moderate (and modern) convictions over and against those whose devotion to Allah has in their view been transmogrified into political dogmatism, religious extremism, and racial separation" (Read & Bartkowski, 2000, p. 409). Parvina's justification negates false beliefs about Islam and voices common concerns that surround the practice of veiling in a Western context.

Excerpt 17 (Parvina):

People get **impressions** from how you **look like**. If you tell them I am a Muslim they don't wait to get to know you and **judge the religion**. We [people] judge a religion based on the people we know who follow the religion. Even if people don't talk to me they would see **my hijab** and can **judge the religion**. Sometimes its done in a **wrong** way or **bad** way.

Chanda agrees and states "It's hard to wear hijab in a foreign country just because some people judge and assume that I am a religious person...when a women wears hijab usually means that she is a religious person."

On the contrary, unveiled women communicated the fear of symbolically representing Islam more than the veiled college women. Unveiled women alluded to anti-veiling discourses to justify why they don't veil. Although both groups of women (veiled and unveiled) agreed that

the veil may lead to negative judgments by Western people, unveiled women drew more upon discourses of discrimination to express the danger that exists with veiling and representing Islam in a positive light.

Excerpt 18 (Aadila):

So it [wearing the hijab] was like I had a **beacon** on my head. People would try to pull my hijab off or harassed me in public. It was just very difficult and beyond that there is this whole culture surrounding hijab in Islam. People who are Muslim suddenly think they have a license to tell you how you have to behave when you wear the hijab. I was told you can't talk that way, you can't dress this way, if you are going to be a **representative of Islam** and all Muslims. You have to like be this one type of Muslim. I just got very tired. I got to a point where I still wanted to be vocal about Islam but I wanted **find a different way to do it**.

Excerpt 19 (Badra)

One day I went to my parents to tell them I wanted to wear it [the hijab] but I did not get the answer that I wanted. They did not want me to wear the hijab when I myself wanted to. I didn't know the reason until when I got a scholarship studying in the United States. They were **afraid** because I was their only daughter that I would **face discrimination** here because both my mom and dad faced discrimination.

Read and Bartkowski (2000) claim that dilemmas associated with the veil exist due to the fact that these women live in a secular society that is predominantly Christian. Although it can heighten a Muslim woman's sense of self (Scott & Lyman, 1968), the hijab can also work to create a separation between two cultural communities, secular Americans and Muslims. Read and Bartkowski (2000) provide evidence of how a Muslim woman, living in Austin, Texas, was quick to recognize that the hijab made her feel "special" but at the same time she was considered "weird" by some Americans. Points of tension that surround the veil are evident in cross-cultural encounters (Read & Bartkowski, 2000).

Empowerment/Emancipation

Read and Bartkowski (2000) claim, "unveiled women argue quite straightforwardly that the veil reinforces gender distinctions that work to Muslim women's collective disadvantage" (p.

408). This study's evidence suggests unveiled women acknowledge that some veiled women experienced oppression from "others". For example, Aadila choose to abandon the veil because "people thought they had this license over me and would put the oppression on me." The first account, excerpt 20, attributes the veil with being forced upon another and the second account, excerpt 21, attributes the veil with the ideology of patriarchal oppression.

Excerpt 20 (Parvina):

Some **force** them to do that [wear the hijab] which I think is wrong because our religion states that it has to come from the girl herself. It's something that someone shouldn't choose for you, you have to **choose it for yourself**. That is the number one reason why girls take off their hijab because someone is **forcing** them or **pressuring** them to wear it. I do sympathize with people that take it off. I do think that maybe god would sympathize with them because it wasn't their choice in the first place. .

Excerpt 21 (Chanda)

Some of them [Muslim women] when they want to get **married** her **fiancé** says I want you to **wear hijab** and she does. If something happens between the two say they get divorced she just **stops wearing the hijab**.

Excerpt 22 (Aadila):

One thing to understand in Islam is you don't have to wear hijab and you don't have to do anything and **no one is allowed to say anything with it because they are not god**. You don't have to answer to them, so there are a lot of situations were people are **forced** to do things in the **name of god**. I don't want to do that or represent a religion in ways were I would have to do that... my understanding was that **people are oppressive**.

According to excerpts above, the hijab may be forced upon a Muslim woman. Chanda suggests that a husband has agency to tell the women to veil. Aadila denies the ideology that Islam is an oppressive mechanism but agrees that people are oppressive. The idea of the veil as a mechanism of patriarchal control is a discourse that is circulated by Islamic feminists (Read & Bartkowski, 2000). Unveiled respondents were not ashamed of their ethnic heritage, however, they recognize that veiling may not be an individual choice for many Muslim women.

Readiness and Societal Pressures

Finally, we turn our attention to the account of readiness. Unveiled women gave accounts of “not being ready to veil” to save face in interactions within the Muslim community, especially their peers who do veil. Scott and Lyman (1968) describe accounts to be “routinized within cultures, subcultures and groups, and some are likely to be exclusive to the circle in which they are employed” (p. 53).

Because of the existing background expectation (Scott & Lyman, 1968) that Muslim women should veil, unveiled women offer a justification that everyone in their Muslim circles knows to be socially understandable. The unveiled college Muslim women connected veiling with not only a religious commitment to Islam, but also an immense change in lifestyle. For example, Parvina states, “I don’t think I am ready for such a commitment. In order to wear the hijab you have to agree to represent our religion in a 100 percent good way.” Scott and Lyman (1968), state, “in interacting with others, the socialized person learns a repertoire of background expectations that are appropriate for a variety of others” (p. 53). The account of readiness is an approved account that is honored by the Muslim community. That being said, “everyone knows” in Parvina’s Muslim circle that the hijab is a large commitment. Therefore, the account of readiness works to justify why she chooses not to veil. Another non-hijabi voiced her concern about veiling as well:

Excerpt 23 Chanda:

When a woman wears hijab it usually means that she is a **religious person**. It definitely makes people respect her more, at least in my society. People respect a girl **more** with hijab compared to a girl without one. But to me, you **just have to be ready**. I mean, it’s I feel like it’s a **responsibly** some how... Like you’d have to like **act up**. I don’t know how to explain this but if you’re wearing hijab **people raise their expectations of your behavior**. Even how the way you act with me, you won’t be able to shake hands or anything just because you have your hijab. Like your **whole life is different by wearing the hijab**.

In this excerpt, Chanda expresses the cultural background expectations of wearing the hijab. Read and Bartkowski (2000) show evidence that “several of the unveiled respondents also invoke themes of religious devotion and ethnic identity when discussing the significance of the veil for Muslims in general and for themselves (as unveiled Islamic women) in particular” (p. 408). Evidence suggests that once a Muslim women chooses to veil her religious devotion and lifestyle can change and “everyone knows” this in the Muslim community. Therefore, the account of “not being ready” is honored and not further questioned in this context. When an account is honored “we may say that it was efficacious and equilibrium is thereby restored in a relationship... often a simple excuse will suffice, or the other interactants will employ covering devices to re- store the *status quo ante*” (Scott & Lyman, 1968, p. 52).

Unveiled participants use the concept of readiness to further explain their justification for not wearing the hijab. This signifies a pattern of talk that is used frequently in the Muslim community. However, because each of the participants has a different experience, the justification of readiness functions to be integrated with their personal experiences. As a result, the discourse of readiness is a reoccurring justification that adheres to the Muslim community’s standards of the veil’s importance and its commitments.

Furthermore, non-hijabis oriented to a lack of modernity if they veiled. These concerns were rhetorically voiced through the means of fashion and style. Unveiled participants recognized the societal pressures to not only veil, but veil correctly and properly For example an interviewee stated:

Excerpt 24 (Chanda):

Women with hijab have like a sort of **dress code**. Like you have to cover everything except your face and your hands. You can’t wear open toed sandals or whatever. And if you were wearing shoes similar to mine [strappy sandals] you’d have to cover up your

foot. That's one of the reasons why I am not ready to wear hijab. I mean I think it's hard because that is something that you would be doing for the rest of your life... If you **don't dress properly** with the hijab, **people** would **be judging**: why is she dressing like this. Our society is very **judgmental**. You have to think about what would people think about you, all the time.

Excerpt 25 (Parvina)

Some people wear hijab and wear tight clothes, give off some parts of their body, and show off some bits of hair. That is **not correctly representing our religion** and then in that sense, I am not **ready** to commit to such thing.

Chanda and Parvina expressed a reoccurring justification for the veil as unmodern and prone to judgment within the Muslim community. Participants describe that wearing the hijab is a prodigious commitment to a number of traditional rules. The Muslim college women expressed limitations when it came to veiling.

More so, the evidence suggests that unveiled women justified their action of not veiling by using a method I call "soft-scapegoating." I derive this term from Scott and Lyman's (1968) term scapegoating, which is a type of excuse that is used when a person "will allege that his questioned behavior is a response to the behavior or attitudes of another" (p. 50). Unveiled interviewees attributed the deviant behavior of not veiling as a Muslim with the wrong behavior of others.

Excerpt 26 (Badra):

Nowadays when I go back home [Kuwait], I see those people who keep asking me why I don't wear the hijab not wearing it [the hijab] the **correct way**. I just ask myself, you're telling me **to wear it** and you're **not wearing** it the right way.

Unveiled interviewees express "soft scapegoating" as they account for others' behaviors and actions in correlation with their own actions.

“Accommodating Tradition” and Veiled Women

Women who veil accommodate their traditional values of veiling to be integrated with a Western feminist perspective. More so, veiled participants found the veil to open possibility in a society where Islam is not recognized as the prominent religion. Veiled women found the veil to open the possibility for attending a coeducational school. This finding parallels with research done on Muslim women living in Austin, Texas (Read & Bartkowski, 2000).

Veiled Muslim college students felt that the veil empowered their sense of selves to not be a victim of the objectification of women in Western society. Drawing on themes of feminism, the women are able to justify their personal “choice” to veil with popular pro-feminism discourses that exist among the college campus. That being said, the women fashioned their private identities to be malleable and inclusive enough to contest to the surrounding controversies about veiling, all while being religiously devout.

“Accommodating Tradition” and Unveiled Women

On the other hand, unveiled women found possibility and freedom by not donning the veil. Unveiled college women felt that the veil limited their possibilities in the future. Unveiled participants explained that they were still able to remain religiously devout but were able to blend in more with American college students. More so, they found it was easier to abstain from awkward moments with men by not veiling. For example, Chanda states, “that [shaking hands with men] is really awkward and some men get really offended.” Other unveiled women suggested that veiling might present difficulties in searching for a career in the future. Fathdia, a veiled respondent, accounted for her friend who choose not to wear the hijab, “I do have one [friend] who graduated in business and wants to work in New York. She doesn’t want to wear it [the hijab] and says that it might hurt her moving up the career ladder.” Unveiled respondents

were concerned that veiling would stigmatize their public identities, therefore, limiting their own sense of progression in society.

Non-hijabis expressed a strong sense of freedom of self-expression that is associated by choosing not to veil. Unveiled college women found freedom/empowerment in the ability to wear whatever clothing they want and act however they pleased, without any restrictions or rules. For example, Chanda states wearing the hijab would “limit my freedom like I wouldn’t be able to like wear a swimsuit and there are certain things I wouldn’t be able to do.” Another unveiled participant takes issue with the veil when she states “I was told like you can’t talk that way, you cant dress this way, if your going to a representative of Islam and all Muslims. So you have to be this type of Muslim.” In contrast to veiled women, unveiled women reveal that the veil limits their freedom of self-expression.

Chapter 4: Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter I present a brief summary of my findings and discuss the research questions that were the focus of this study. Also, I examine the study's limitations and ideas for future directions. Finally, I turn attention to methodological reflections of my study to reflect on my progression as a qualitative researcher.

Summary

In this thesis, I interviewed ten Muslim college women on American college campuses, six women who veiled and four who did not. The purpose of this study was to understand how Muslim college women perceive and understand the complexities that surround veiling through the framework of account-making (Scott and Lyman, 1968). For that reason, a review of two categories of literature was necessary. Because this study investigated how Muslim women account for their experiences with the veil, past research (Buttny et. al., 2013, Sandel, 2014, Scott & Lyman, 1968) on accounts provided the foundational framework of this study. Second, previous research (Furseth, 2011, Göle, 1996, MacLeod, 1992, Read & Bartkowski, 2000) on Muslim women's veiling provides background information on societal norms and practices of veiling, within different countries, to further understand how cultural expectations of Islamic culture shape the justifications of Muslim college women.

This study investigated two research questions: What are the verbal challenges Muslim-women in the United States expect to respond to regarding their decision about hijab-wearing with different audiences? How do these women justify their choices to wear (or not wear) the Hijab, and how do these justifications vary depending on the context of their upbringing? Therefore, the study involved an analysis of two different groups: women that wear the hijab and women that do not. After an in-depth analysis of the collected transcripts, the study revealed

several findings. First, this study's evidence suggests that both hijabis and non-hijabis justify their veiling behaviors with similar themes. However, both groups accommodated Islamic traditions in different ways. Veiled Muslim women revealed justifications that intertwined Islamic traditional values with Western feminists values more than unveiled Muslim women. Although one participant did not identify as religious but identified as Muslim, unveiled Muslim college women revealed that it was easier to abstain from religious discrimination on campus by keeping their religious identity and practice private.

Secondly, this study reveals that Muslim college women recognize that there is pressure to veil within the context of their Muslim circles. However, unveiled Muslim college women accounted for these societal pressures to veil more than unveiled Muslim college women. In addition to Read and Bartkowski's (2000) research, this study provides evidence that both hijabis and non-hijabis express tolerance and acceptance one another; however, their accounts about veiling varied in perspective and understanding. The differing perspectives between the unveiled and veiled shows that justifications for veiling are not simply equated with a symbol of religiosity but is an adaptation of Islamic traditional values to the values and norms of the Western context these Muslim women reside in.

Limitations and Methodological Reflections

Some limitations emerged in this study that I would like to recognize. The majority of the participants I interviewed were originally from Kuwait. Only four out of the ten participants were not from Kuwait. It would have been interesting to have more diversity in hometowns from the data I collected, i.e. Indonesia, North Africa, Iran, etc. For example, women in Iran are required to veil under Sharia law. Thus, native-born Iranian women living in America might have experiences that are not accounted for by Muslim women living in Kuwait, where veiling is

an option and not a requirement. Read and Bartkowski (2000) provided evidence that Iranian women are “highly critical of the veil, which has been the legally required dress for women in Iran” (p. 411). On the other hand, Indonesia, which is predominantly Islam, is a melting pot for a variety of religions, such as Protestantism and Catholicism.

A second limitation of my study was that I was an outsider of the Muslim community but an insider in the American college community. Research has suggested that accounts change due to whom the speaker’s perceived audience is (Sandel, 2014). Participants may have altered their accounts to adhere to the perceived audience--that is, myself--in order to avoid judgment and/or to take in to consideration that my views might be different. Sandel (2004), a non-Chinese male married to a Chinese woman, who was interviewing Chinese women, reported a similar finding: “if mothers talked about their problems with me, they might have feared I would share these with my in-laws who would then report them back to other members of the community---namely their mothers-in-law” (p. 374). Perhaps, the Muslim college women feared that if they opposed veiling they could contribute to the false perceptions of Islam and coincide with the popular American discourse of oppression. Although I never communicated my beliefs with my participants, both hijabis and non-hijabis took into consideration that I may not believe what they believe. For example Hana said “men and women were created differently, that’s what I believe so, please pardon me if there’s anything disrespectful that I did say.”

Furthermore, I speculate that, given that my last name is of a Persian descent and I do not veil, veiled interviewees may have wondered if I opposed veiling, or was interested in veiling, myself. Thus, veiled participants may have been reluctant to express an opinion that would discourage another from veiling. On the other hand, interviewees who did not veil expressed less reluctance in sharing information with me. This suggests that unveiled participants may have

been able to identify better with me, therefore, feeling more comfortable with the interview.

Overall, evidence suggests that interviewees altered their accounts in hopes to promote a better understanding of Islam and to nullify any false Western stereotypes of Muslim women.

When looking back at the progression of this study, I reflect on what I have learned about conducting qualitative interviews as a first time interviewer. One of the biggest challenges with researching the cultural norm of Muslim veiling was getting my interviewees to open up and tell me more about their experiences. For my first three interviews, I noticed that participants were sometimes skeptical and concerned why I was questioning them about their actions. Many of the participants had not been interviewed before about why they veil or not; therefore, when I placed the recorder on the table, participants instantly felt a sense of discomfort. As a result, my average time for my first three interviews was 24 minutes and 30 seconds. After this realization, I began to think of ways I could help relieve any awkwardness and “access more information” (Tracy, 2013). One method that I learned was to communicate with participants that our interview was like a normal conversation and they should not feel restricted to talk a certain way. Another method that I learned was to how to probe and follow up. As Tracy (2013) suggests, “to be able to probe effectively, the interviewer must understand the research goals and know the relevant literature” (p. 140). Thus, I applied these methods after my third interview and noticed a tremendous difference. My average time for the second half of interviews was 33 minutes and 2 seconds. Interviewees began to open up and tell me more about certain experiences and thoughts they had about veiling. Some participants even revealed to me things that they do not discuss with their friends or close family.

Future directions

Several ideas emerged from this study that, if studied, might make significant contributions to the field of communication. Excerpts from this study indicate differences in justifications of veiling between veiled and non-veiled participants. Some unveiled women approved of veiling while other non-hijabis took issue with the entitlement of the hijabi culture. On that note, when examined within a focus group of hijabis and non-hijabis how would these two different groups talk about veiling itself? A focus group study might open up a whole other area of types of accounts. In relation, would communication between just a focus group of veiled participants only be different from a focus group of non-veiled participants? In such study actual cross-cultural discourse between veiled Muslim college women and non-veiled Muslim college women could be examined and better understood.

On the other hand, not much research exists on Muslim men, especially Muslim men attending a college university. Because veiling is largely intertwined with men's sexuality (Read & Bartkowski, 2000), further research on how Muslim college men perceive the veil might suggest another perception of veiling. That being said, understanding both accounts of veiling from both binary genders may improve and further nuance the complexities of veiling in the Muslim community.

The examination of Muslim college women's accounts of veiling is an effective way to learn the particular aspects of one's personal experience with the veil as well as the Islamic culture. This study concluded that veiling has many complexities. From the interviewees' comments, we may no longer understand the veil as just a religious symbol but something that has multiple meanings and can either accommodate or not accommodate to each individual in different and interesting ways.

Appendices

Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Hello,

My name is Sara Kiyani. I am a Communication major here at CU Boulder. Because you are a Muslim-American woman and a college student, I am hoping you will participate in my research study. Would you be willing to talk with me about what the hijab means to you and how you talk to different kinds of other people about your decision to either wear or not wear the hijab? An interview will take approximately 30 minutes and will be audiotaped. Your identity will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be used for your name, the university attended, street names etc. We can organize a time to meet on campus, or if that if that were not convenient for you, video chat (i.e., Skype) or a phone call would work as well. Please let me know as soon as possible. I would really enjoy having you as a participant in my study.

Sincerely,

Sara Kiyani

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form



Title of research study: Explaining Wearing or not Wearing the Hijab

Investigator: **Sara Kiyani**

Why am I being invited to take part in a research study?

We invite you to take part in a research study because you have lived experience necessary to investigate this research study.

What should I know about a research study?

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the research team at saki3155@colorado.edu *or you can contact my faculty advisor Karen Tracy at Karen.Tracy@colorado.edu.*

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). You may talk to them at (303) 735-3702 or irbadmin@colorado.edu if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this project is to investigate Muslim-American women’s explanations of why they choose to wear the hijab or not. We are interested in your explanations of how your

decision to wear the hijab has come about and what you tell others about why you wear the hijab or not.

How long will the research last?

The interview that you are participating in today will last for approximately 30 minutes. I will be writing a paper based on these interviews that will be completed December 2016.

How many people will be studied?

We expect 10 people will be included in this research study.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

If you choose to participate in this research, you will be asked to participate in an interview lasting approximately 30 minutes and will be asked questions about your experiences as a Muslim-American women wearing the hijab or not. This interview may take place in-person (at an agreed upon meeting space on the CU boulder campus) or video chat (i.e., Skype) or by a phone call, at a time that is convenient to both you and the researcher.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

You can leave the interview at any time and it will not be held against you. You can also let me know at anytime and you do not have to participate.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You can leave the research at any time; it will not be held against you.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?

This study is of minimal risk to you. The primary risk is that you may feel uncomfortable disclosing information about your own personal experiences with your religion. You may decline to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable and you may withdraw from this study at any time.

What happens to the information collected for the research?

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of this organization.

The data collected in this study (both audio and transcribed files) will be kept in a password-protected file on the primary investigator's password-protected personal computer. Only the primary investigator will have access to this data. In transcripts of the interviews and any research reports, we will seek to protect your privacy by changing or deleting any names (using

pseudonyms), locations, or other identifying information. Data will be kept for up to two years, and then it will be destroyed.

Signature Block for Capable Adult

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

Signature of subject

Date

Printed name of subject

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

1/12/16

Printed name of person obtaining consent

IRB Approval Date

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Self-Introduction: Hi, my name is Sara Kiyani and I will be conducting this interview today. To give a short background of myself. I am a senior here, at CU Boulder, working on my honors thesis paper about the hijab.

I am glad you've agreed to be interviewed. I want to explain how this will work. We'll do about a 30-minute interview that will be tape recorded and transcribed.. Any confidential information, including your name, locations you have been, the university you attend, etc. will be replaced with pseudonyms in this study. In the interview, I would like to focus on your experience as a Muslim-American college woman on campus, and how you understand and talk about hijab-wearing.

Muslim-American women who do wear the hijab:

1. Could you give me a sketch of why you began wearing the hijab and at what age? (Probe: tell me how that happened)
2. What does wearing the hijab mean to you? What does it signify?
3. In your family are there women who do not wear the hijab? If so, why have they made this choice? If not, do you see wearing of the hijab as a choice you can make differently than other family members?
4. How has your family shaped your religious beliefs? (probe where are they from?)
5. Do many of your friends wear the hijab? Do you think it is easy to be friends with Muslim women who do not wear the hijab? Why or why not?
6. Would you say you get reaction on campus when you wear the hijab? What kinds of things do people do and say?
7. Have women who wear the hijab ever explained their choice of wearing the hijab to you?
8. How have these women ,who wear the hijab, explainedtheir choice of wearing to you?
9. Now that I understand your background a little better, could you recall a time you had to explain why you wear the hijab to an older person who is not Muslim-American? (probe: maybe one of your friends' parents) What did you say?
10. Could you recall a time you had to explain your choice of wearing the hijab to an older person who is Muslim-American? Tell me about a situation. What did you say?
11. Tell me about a time you had to explain why you wear the hijab to a person of your age who is not Muslim-American? What did you say? Where did the conversation occur?
12. Has there ever been a time you have explained the choice of wearing the hijab to Muslim-American women who do not wear the hijab?
13. Have you ever discussed to a peer who also wears the hijab why you both wear the hijab? (probe: were there any differences between you two?)

14. And lastly, is there anything that we missed that would be important for me to know or would you like to clarify anything that you have said?

Muslim-American women who do not wear the hijab:

1. Could you give me a sketch of why you choose to not wear the hijab and at what age? (Probe: tell me how that happened)
 2. What does wearing the hijab mean to you? What does it signify?
 3. In your family are there women who wear the hijab? If so, why have they made this choice? If not, do you see not wearing the hijab as a choice you can make differently than other family members?
 4. How has your family shaped your religious beliefs? (probe where are they from?)
 5. Do many of your friends wear the hijab? Do you think it is easy to be friends with Muslim women who wear the hijab? Why or why not?
 6. Would you say you get reaction on campus when you do not wear the hijab as a Muslim American woman? What kinds of things do people do and say?
 7. Have women who wear the hijab ever explained their choice of wearing the hijab to you?
 8. How have these women, who wear the hijab, explained their choice to you?
 9. Now that I understand your background a little better, could you recall a time you had to explain why you do not wear the hijab to an older person who is not Muslim-American? (probe: maybe one of your friends' parents) What did you say?
 10. Could you recall a time you had to explain your choice of not wearing the hijab to an older person who is Muslim-American? Tell me about a situation. What did you say?
 11. Tell me about a time you had to explain why you do not wear the hijab to a person of your age who is not Muslim-American? What did you say? Where did the conversation occur?
 12. Has there ever been a time you have explained the choice of not wearing the hijab to Muslim-American women who do wear the hijab?
 13. Have you ever discussed to a peer who also does not wear the hijab why you both do not wear the hijab? (probe: were there any differences between you two?)
- And lastly, is there anything that we missed that would be important for me to know or would you like to clarify anything that you have said?

Appendix D: Interview Transcript (Aadila)

- 1 **IR:** Ok so, hi, my name is Sara Kiyani and I will be conducting this interview today. To give a
 2 short background of myself, I'm a senior here, at Colorado University, working on my hon-
 3 honors thesis paper about the hijab.
- 4 I am glad you've agreed to be interviewed. I want to explain how this will work. We'll do about
 5 a 30-minute interview that will be tape recorded and transcribed. Any confidential information,
 6 including your name, locations you have been, the university you attend, etc. will be replaced
 7 with pseudonyms in this study. In the interview, I would like to focus on your experience as a
 8 Muslim-American college woman on campus, and how you understand and talk about hijab-
 9 wearing or not wearing the hijab.
- 10 **IR:** So, could you give me a sketch of why you choose to not wear the hijab and at what age?
- 11 **A:** Umm, well I actually started wearing hijab when I was 13, and umm I wore it for five years
 12 and stop wearing it in the summer of 2011,
- 13 **IR:** [okay
- 14 **A:** [and the reason I starting wearing it was because I'm very light
 15 skinned. I'm white passing and I really wanted people to ask me questions about Islam, people to
 16 ask me questions about my country, cause that was, you know, around the time there was a
 17 height of Islamophobia there was war in Iraq in Afghanistan there were troops in Pakistan, so I
 18 just wanted be there as a source of information for people who don't know a lot and maybe
 19 wanted to know more. But um, like I said I am white passing so I never really dealt with a lot of
 20 [racism,
- 21 **IR:** [Mhmm
- 22 **A:** or Islamophobia people
 23 don't really look at me and think like that's a Muslim person I am going to harass right [now,
- 24 **IR:** [mhmm
- 25 **A:** so I was suddenly-it was like I had a beacon on me and people, you know, try to pull my hijab
 26 off or like harass me in public I was like-um, it was just very difficult and beyond that there is
 27 this whole culture surrounding hijab in Islam, who were people who are Muslim suddenly think
 28 they have a license to tell you, how you have to behave when u wear the hijab so I was told like
 29 you cant talk that way, you cant dress this way, if your going to be you know a representative of
 30 Islam and all Muslims you have to be this type of Muslim, and I just-it got very tiring so got to a
 31 point where I was like I still wanted to be vocal about Islam but I'll find a different way to do
 32 [it. So I
- 33 **IR:** [right

- 34 **A:** stopped wearing hijab when I was 18.
- 35 **IR:** 18, so just constantly being asked about it?
- 36 **A:** It wasn't being asked about it was the way people thought they had this license over me
37 because I was wearing hijab, you know,[they would put the oppression on me, you
- 38 **IR:** [right-right
- 39 **A:** know, people would ask me oh do you feel oppressed this way did your parents make you do
40 [it? And it-it just got
- 41 **IR:** [right
- 42 **A:** very-like too much for me,[I wasn't strong enough
- 43 **IR:** [yeah
- 44 **A:** to continue.
- 45 **IR:** Right, right-right. So, you kind of already explained this, but um what does the hijab-what
46 does the wearing the hijab mean to you and, what does it signify? So when you wore it what did
47 it mean to you, you know?
- 48 **A:** To me, it was being a representative of Islam, how Muslims can be different no matter where
49 we are, you know, I was raised in America and I am an American-Muslim, and that can take
50 form in a lot of ways, you know, I wear skinny jeans, I do-I skateboard, I sing, whatever, you
51 know. I am a Muslim who wears hijab. Um, but along side that it is, um you know, showing your
52 modesty when the revelation came in the Qur'an that women should wear hijab, hijab doesn't
53 actually mean head covering it means like, you know, dressing modesty[,so and in that time that
54 also
- 55 **IR:** [right
- 56 **A:** meant covering your hair but now there is a lot of debate about that, so for me hijab is now
57 just dressing properly [and in a certain way.
- 58 **Me:** [yeah Oh okay very cool, so in your family are there women who wear the
59 hijab if so why have they made that choice, if not why do you see not wearing the hijab as a
60 choice you can make differently than other family members?
- 61 **A:** Umm, everyone in my family, I think, at some point wore hijab um, when I was little I had, I
62 think, 2 or 3 aunts who wore hijab and now most aunts were hijab, my Grandmother just recently
63 stopped wearing hijab because um, once you reach a certain point of maturity its not obligated
64 anymore.[Yeah cuz ,you know,you
- 65 **IR:** [Oh very interesting
- 66 **Aadila:** don-like I guess it's a whole-they take it as a whole sexual appeal thing, you know,
67 you're trying to hide that type of beauty.[Umm, and a few of my aunts also have

68 **IR:** [yes

69 **A:** stopped wearing it but they had a lot of the same reasons as me it just became to dangerous,
70 you know, they were attacked in public and what not, er-you know, they have jobs were they-
71 like I have one aunt who is a teacher and there were too many parents who took issue with her
72 wearing hijab, so she actually stopped because of that. Um, and I mean its a it's a choice and in
73 Islam your not meant to judge people so , you know, it was never a big deal when I decided to
74 wear hijab no one really said anything about it and when I stopped nobody said anything again;
75 so It was never really a big deal. I know that in some families it is but uh, you know, thankfully
76 not in mine.

77 **IR:** so when you say like attacked do you mean like harassed like street harassment or like
78 physically [like

79 **A:** [there were both, there were
80 both types, like uh there was one time-and thankfully my aunt wasn't actu[ally the victim in

81 **IR:** [yeah

82 **A:** that one, it was her husband, she was out in public wearing the hijab and there were like a
83 group of four young men who just started harassing her and then her husband was like no don't
84 do that and they just beat the crap out of him. So-like we spent-it was the day before eve and we
85 spent our whole eve in the hospital because he been put in the hospital since they were ,you
86 know, awful like that

87 **Me:** And-that, may I ask was this her[e?

88 **A:** [It was in a Northern part of the Country

89 **IR:** In Augusta, ok[ay

90 **A:** [Yeah we were actually visiting be[cause

91 **IR:** [wow

92 Its like got a huge Muslim community[

93 **IR:** [Yes,yes,ye[ah

94 **A:** [it was just a really awful experience

95 **IR:** Wow, that's interesting, hmm, so do you find that um, women get harassed more because the
96 hijab's more visible then it is with Muslim men? Or[is it kind of like both you know what I
97 mean

98 **A:** [ohh

99 **IR:** because you can see it like far away but sometimes you

100 May not know if the man is like Muslim or not?

101 **A:** yea-yeah I think that is definably a thing like cuz I lot more, but-also with that comes with
102 Islamophobia is tied into racism a lot because you know there is this whole thing with brown
103 people are Muslims and its hard to view like black people

104 **IR:** yes

105 **A:** or white people as a Muslim, I mean-I think on CNN or sorry the BVC website they actually
106 have a whole list of non-Muslims who had-who are victims of Islamic attacks so like there's
107 loads of Mexican people, Hindus so I mean like it can go both ways, but uh from what I have
108 heard it is a lot of the times females that were the hijab

109 **Me:** right and there is a large African American po[pulation]

110 **Aadina:** [yea, yeah

111 **IR:** that were the hijab as well. Very interesting, so how has your family shaped your religious
112 beliefs?

113 **A:** Uhh, were wer-pretty religious like we pray 5 times a day, we were always taught Islam
114 properly you know we have whole conversations about Islam what's right and what's wrong how
115 to live you know to get to heaven. Um, but beyond that we believe were moderate Muslims I
116 know there a lot of people that are like you pray 5 times and you fast all of Ramadan so your
117 really religious but like were not too religious like I don't read the Qur'an all to often I read it 3
118 times when I was younger and I haven't read it since.

119 **IR:** so where are they from, again?

120 **A:** Pakistan

121 **Me:** Okay so both of your parents are from there?

122 **A:** No, I am actually a halfy my father is Pakistani my mommy is American

123 **IR:** Okay okay very cool. So do many of your friends wear the hijab? Do you think it is easy to
124 be friends with Muslim women who wear the hijab, why or why not?

125 **A:** Um, I have a few friends who wear hijab a lot of my friends wear the hijab but it is a bit
126 difficult since I wore the hijab and then I stopped there were a lot of questions mainly from them.
127 Um, and beyond that like I said there is that culture surrounding hijab were people automatically
128 assume someone who wears hijab is a religious authority or must know more about Islam. So
129 they-its, there's a type of arrogance and you know non-hijabis tend to have there voice drowned
130 out by hijabi women who are Muslim, it is a bit difficult but I mean I have been able to keep a
131 few hijabi frie[nds in the struggle

132 **IR:** [yeah Yeah, very interesting, um would you say you get a reaction on
133 campus when u do not wear the hijab as a Muslim-American women what kinds of things do
134 people do and say? So like, if you meet someone who is wearing the hijab and you tell them that
135 your Muslim American, do you get a reaction or a certain kind of reaction or uh does your
136 conversation kind of change?

137 A: Not really, um, there was one girl who would constantly bring it up and she would be like you
138 should wear hijab its compulsory, but I mean mostly-its just uh-you know its your business
139 whats my business is mine yeah, so its usually that. There is though-there's a bit from non-
140 Muslims, I mean do you want to hear about that[?]

141 IR: [yeah,yea go for it!

142 A: I mean, there have been a few times in my classes, I took a writing class my freshman year
143 and um, we were talking about the {Abuckwave} torture uh scandal were they had the photos of
144 the uh, um suspected terrorist[s].

145 IR: [Right, [yes

146 A: [Yeah, so we were talking about that and I was trying to bring up the fact that they were
147 suspected terrorists and no one even knew if they were really terrorists so in the end there were
148 loads of innocent people who'd been attacked in this way and this kid in my class actually
149 looked at me and was like you know, if every single person in your country was killed, I would
150 sleep safer at night and then ended it with no offense,[and I was like

151 IR: [oh my god

152 A: Like okay, like thanks for tha[t so there have been

153 IR: [oh wow

154 A: a few things like that, so me wearing the hijab or not wearing the hijab Islamophobia exists

155 IR: Yeah, right, and when-when was that here at Colorado Univer-

156 A: -Yeah,2011 I think it was the spring semester, so there have been a few things like that so me
157 wearing the hijab or not wearing the hijab islamophobia exists

158 IR: that wont that wont be in there, umm so have women who wear the hijab ever explained
159 their choice of wearing the hijab to you

160 A: Yea, umm we did a women in Islam event for the MSA event recently and had a speaker
161 come in she talked about why she wore the hijab and we had a panel of three other women they
162 were all hijabis and they talked about why they wore hijab, and umm they um they all thought it
163 was too strengthen their faith and they actually made a point to women of saying like you know
164 who don't wear hijab maybe their faith isn't that strong yet, and I mean I took issue with that,
165 they believe that if you are at a certain level of your faith you will wear hijab

166 IR: oh okay, so I think you have already answered this how have these women who wear the
167 hijab explained there choice to u like pretty much saying its just like strengthening faith, okay,
168 um so know that I understand your background a little better could you recall a time you had to
169 explain a time why you wore the hijab to a older person who is not Muslim American, maybe
170 like one of your friends parents?

171 A: I think it was a few times actually, yeah I have an Asian-American friend but she does not
172 have any religious affiliation her mom was interested in it and she asked me about it and she

173 thought that she also thought a lot of people think wearing the hijab means you are a better
174 Muslim so I had to sit with her and explain that it is a symbol and that it is a strengthening
175 element so I mean I've done that before

176 **IR:** so how specifically did you explain it?

177 **A:** I did actually I talked about when in the Qur'an hijab means modest covering, so you know
178 the hijab for men hijab for women I explained that my interpretation is that you have to be
179 modest from your elbows to your neck to your ankles, so yeah that's what I talked about

180 **IR:** and how was her reaction to that, did she take offense to it?

181 **A:** she was fine, I don't think she understood much of it

182 **IR:** Umm, could you recall a time you had to explain your choice of not wearing the hijab to an
183 older person who is Muslim-American?

184 **A:** Yea, umm... my dad was the only one person who asked me about why I stopped wearing
185 hijab so I remember we had this long conversation we just came back from Pakistan and um I
186 hadn't worn hijab there because there were these huge disputes between the more religious
187 people and the less religious people so it was actually quite dangerous for me to wear hijab in
188 public, so um when we came back I just I hadn't so I stopped wearing hijab and my dad asked
189 me about well I cant anymore its just sad that I am representing a country and representing a
190 religion that's like... and I think that's around the time that the {byganzium} incident had
191 happened so I was just really angry at the people who follow my religion and the people of my
192 country and then it continued because I did not have a great experience as an hijabi

193 **IR:** And where did this conversation occur?

194 **A:** At a park

195 **IR:** has there ever been a time you had to explain the choice of not wearing the hijab to Muslim
196 American women who does not wear the hijab as well.

197 **A:** yeah it was sort of a passing conversation we were just sort of sitting we were the only 2 non-
198 hijabis in MSA and shed actually gone to term as president so I was talking with her about and
199 then it so we brought it how was it being a non-hijabi being president of the MSA and then she
200 was like a lot of people were angry about it because they think if your representing you should
201 represent 100 percent

202 **IR:** so lot of connection with that,

203 **A:** she was saying that a lot of people left MSA 1 she was a female president they didn't agree
204 with that and then she was non-hijabi

205 **IR:** Is she already graduated?

206 **N:** No, I think she is about to

207 **IR:** Have you ever discussed with a peer who also does not wear the hijab—well no already said
208 that. So pretty much this question is asking were there any differences between why you both
209 don't wear the hijab.

210 **N:** Umm, For her she grew up in a household where hijab was like compulsory where you have to
211 wear the hijab, okay, so one thing to understand in Islam you don't have to wear hijab you don't
212 have to do anything and no one is allowed to say anything with it because they are not god and
213 you don't have to answer to them, so there are a lot a lot in situations where people are forced to
214 do things in the name of god but that's not a real thing that you have to do so her parents made
215 her wear hijab at a very young age and so when she left her house finally she was like I don't
216 agree with it I don't want to do that or represent a religion in a way where I would have to do
217 that, so I mean we did have a bit of a disagreement there cuz we did have different experiences
218 her understanding was that Islam was a bit oppressive that way but my understanding was that
219 people are oppressive

220 **IR:** right, right, and lastly is there anything that we missed that would be important for me to
221 know or that would like to clarify what you have said

222 **N:** I don't think so, those were really good questions

223 **IR:** yeah ha ha, so alright that's it, umm it

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