

WOMEN UNDERCOVER: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES OF  
MUSLIM WOMEN THROUGH MODEST FASHION

by

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**Abstract**

**WOMEN UNDERCOVER: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES OF  
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Significant discrimination is directed toward Muslim women who dress modestly. Despite this Muslims will spend an estimated US\$75 billion on modest fashion by 2020, a 70% increase since 2015. Past research in modest fashion has focused on influencers, the industry, or on veiling. Muslim women's everyday dress practices and their lived experiences have not been studied. Through an intersectional framework, this research uses wardrobe interviews with sixteen Muslim women and digital storytelling with four of them to explore how they embody their identity through modest fashion, how intersectionality impacts their clothing choices, and what contexts influence their sartorial decisions. Three themes emerged: what influences their style; how they shop and style outfits; and what consequences are faced. My research found that by prioritizing modesty as a sartorial practice, these women are diverting the Western gaze, navigating away from superficial and oppressive Western beauty ideals, and challenging narrow Islamophobic stereotypes.

*Keywords:* modesty, female modesty, sartorial agency, dressed bodies, fashion, hijab, Muslim, Islamophobia, intersectionality, fashion diversity, Western gaze, Orientalism

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I begin in the name of God the most Gracious the most Compassionate. This important work aims to overcome stigmas, stereotypes and divisive racial rhetoric. Taking on this scope of hope would not be possible without the support of the faculty and administration in the School of Fashion at Ryerson University. In the final days of completing this project 50 Muslims were brutally massacred in Christchurch, New Zealand while praying in the safety and security of their places of worship on March 15, 2019, and on March 28, 2019 Quebec tabled its secularism Bill 21. As I put the finishing touches on this work it has become very real to me and I am deeply grateful for the support of the school, the university, and my academic supervisor Dr. Ben Barry who continues to open doors to broaden inclusivity and understanding.

I thank my family who have allowed me to ignore day-to-day responsibilities so that I can singularly focus on this project, who have guided me through the graduate studies path, who have dedicated their time to provide feedback and edits to my work, and who have provided all the moral support needed to complete this project. I thank my best friend who reminded me I wanted to go to graduate school and encouraged me to pursue this dream.

Finally, none of this work would be possible without my sixteen diverse, driven, and dedicated research participants. Thank you for opening up your private lives to advance this work. I am looking forward to doing so much more for us through the support provided by Ryerson University and Dr. Ben Barry who continues to pave the way forward.

### **Dedication**

This research study is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents who were displaced through colonization, endured hardships, continued to pursue higher learning in academia and their faith tradition and left a legacy through their progeny, all who aspire to their moral, ethical and spiritual example.

May they rest in peace.

إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَاِنَّا اِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Mirza Mahmood Ahmed Khan (Baba) 1905-1979

Babar Mirza (Granddaddy) 1910-1999

Sayeedunissa Begum (Grandmommy) (1918-2003)

Muneer Bano Ahmed (Amma) (1920-2016)

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The global population of Muslims around the world was estimated at 1.8 billion in 2015 (Pew Research Center, 2017). It is not surprising then that the Muslim *modest fashion* industry is burgeoning with no slow-down in sight. In broader scholarship and in this paper the term *modest fashion* “refer[s] to the many different ways which women clothe their bodies in keeping with their interpretations of what they understand to be the modesty requirements of their faith” (Lewis, 2018a, p. 115). Reuters’ *2018/19 State of the Global Islamic Economy Report* estimates the Muslim spend on modest fashion is projected to be US\$75 billion by 2020 (Thomson Reuters, 2018), representing an annual growth rate of 11% since 2015. As a comparison point, plus size fashion is growing at an annual rate of four percent (Credence Research, 2018). In response to the increasing demand for modest fashion that was not being met by the fashion industry, the global Muslim population began businesses and brands of their own. Interestingly, back in 2005, global brands disregarded modest fashion magazines and bloggers because they wanted to distance themselves from the Muslim community (Lewis, 2018a). Now almost 15 years later we see major brands like Donna Karan, Dolce & Gabbana, Uniqlo and H&M release modest fashion capsule collections. There are now *hijab*-wearing super models such as Halima Aden featured on magazine covers and on fashion week runways walking for Max Mara, Yeezy, and most recently for Tommy Hilfiger x Zendaya at Paris Fashion week (Young, 2019). The word *hijab* is a term commonly used for the headscarf worn by Muslim women.

While the global modest fashion market continues to grow, the world’s perceptions of the global Muslim population continues to be tarnished by an ever-present vilification of the Islamic faith tradition and Muslims who follow its teachings. A growing rhetoric of white supremacist hate has terrorized faith communities (Robertson, Mele, & Tavernise, 2018; Zapotosky, 2017)

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and recently culminated in the deeply tragic massacre of 50 Muslims while in prayer at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand on March 15, 2019 (Al Jazeera, 2018; Montpetit, 2018).

In the United States Presidential Proclamation 9645, known more commonly as the Muslim Travel Ban (Hamedy, 2018; U.S. Department of State - Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2018) has been legally in place since December 2017. Proposed and implemented legislation in France, Germany, Australia, and Quebec, Canada (Shingler, 2019; Thomson Reuters, 2016) continue to legislate women's bodies and Muslims' sartorial practices further deepening the marginalization of the Muslim community in the West. On March 28, 2019, Quebec's Minister of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusiveness, Simon Jolin-Barrette, tabled Bill 21 to "ensure the religious neutrality of the state" (Shingler, 2019). This proposed legislation bans Muslim women from receiving government services if their face is covered with the niqab and would not allow Muslim women in certain public sector jobs to wear the hijab. The Bill seeks to take away the sartorial rights women and men hold today while at the same time stating "the Quebec nation attaches importance to the equality of women and men" (Jolin-Barrette, 2019, p. 5). The question remains, does this Quebec nation believe that limiting a woman's right to dress how she chooses makes her equal to a man?

The social policing of bodies continues as the privileged classes attempt to keep marginalized communities on the sidelines. Research has not given us the knowledge or centered the voices of these communities to fight against this type of policing and marginalization. There is a consistent body of academic research that seeks to understand Muslim women's veiling practices and the phenomenon seen in the growth of the modest fashion industry. Generally, I have found scholarship has focused on the business of modest fashion and its influencers (Akou, 2007, 2010; Lewis, 2010a, 2015b; Peterson, 2016), has used problematic frameworks and

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analysis when exploring Muslim women (Kavakci & Kraeplin, 2017; Williams & Vashi, 2007), or focused solely on veiling practices, lacking an intersectional understanding of the whole person (Anderson & Greifenhagen, 2013; Mansson McGinty, 2014; Marcotte, 2010).

In fully recognizing the intersectional identities of the research participants, my study considers the whole human person and attempts to identify her diverse and complex identities using arts-based research methods. I purposefully titled my research “Women Undercover” to play on the word “undercover” which implies a secretive, clandestine and unfriendly presence. The West has perpetuated an orientalist view of Muslims and Muslim-majority nations for centuries (Said, 1978), where Muslim bodies are fetishized and eroticized or are considered terrorists. The Western gaze is conditioned to believe that we are undercover for some sinister purpose. What I want to communicate is that although we, Muslim women, are under a cover, namely the hijab, under this cover we are really just like anyone else in the West. We love steampunk, the movie *Ghost*, Victorian fashion, hip hop, we are aspiring DJs, and world travelers. This is discovered by exploring intersectional identities.

My research objective is to understand the experiences and fashion practices of Muslim women and to use this scholarship not only to break down growing resentment toward Muslims but also to provide a path towards curbing the resurgence of society’s need to legislate women’s bodies. With this in mind, this research study sets out to answer the following questions: How are Muslim women's cultural identities (e.g., Indo-Pakistani and North American) embodied through their modest fashion choices? How do Muslim women’s intersectional identities (e.g., age, body size, social class, race, marital status, geographic location, etc.) inform how they choose to present themselves through modest fashion? How do Muslim women’s self-image,

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community (e.g. friends and family) and various contexts (i.e., going to work versus going to a restaurant) influence their sartorial decisions?

Clothing is one of the ways we materialize, perform, construct and navigate our identities (Entwistle, 2015). This is as true for Muslim women who veil as it is for any woman. Sophie Woodward's (2007) pioneering wardrobe interview-based study that culminated in the book *Why Women Wear What They Wear* researched women's everyday dress practices; however, it is not a comprehensive study as the book does not "represent all women" (Woodward, 2007, p. 37). This study centres the experience of Muslim women through wardrobe interviews and digital storytelling.

"Wardrobe interviews" is an ethnographic research method that uses participants' clothing items as probes to understand how clothing influences the construction of their identity and the embodiment of who they are. As Woodward says, "clothing materializes questions of identity in a particularly intimate way" (p. 3). "Digital storytelling" is an arts-based research method that puts tools such as storytelling and editing software in research participants' hands. These tools are used to create, explore, and express their marginalization, empowerment, and uniqueness through words, music, visuals, photography, and film (Rice & Mundel, 2018). The resulting short films, or digital stories, become research findings that have been authored by the individual alone. Rather than being analyzed and presented through the researcher's lens these stories are presented authentically and purely by the participants to the observer.

This study is the first comprehensive attempt to explore the practice of modest dressing in a Western context by understanding and giving meaning to the everyday lived experiences of Muslim women who wear the hijab. With this study I hope to bridge the gaps found in previous scholarship by articulating how diverse the Muslim experience can be, based on where one is



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born and raised, the type of household one comes from, or the generation one belongs to.

Additionally, this study is bringing digital storytelling into fashion studies where it has not been used in the past. Digital Storytelling centres research participants' voices in the first person and is presented unfiltered to the observer to draw their own conclusions.

This research makes an academic contribution by centering intersectionality and viewing the whole person which fills gaps in current academic findings. The digital stories produced by participants challenge dominant narratives and stereotypes by giving voice to this otherwise marginalized and misunderstood group. Last, this research informs industry by demonstrating Muslim women's modest clothing practices by articulating what kind of clothes they want, what their sartorial challenges are, and what influences their style.

### **Locating Myself in this Research**

I was born in the United States and brought up in an Indo-Pakistani household in Toronto, Canada, surrounded by multiple ethnic communities. My home environment was both religious and secular. My parents are both children of elite, ruling-class families in India. My mother is deeply devoted to her spiritual practice, while my father is more secularized. We lived a middle-class life in the suburbs and growing up I was actively involved in my local community. When I was younger I was involved in Girl Guides and later in high school I actively campaigned in federal and provincial elections. I fully engaged in the 1980s alternative music scene and my fashion icons were as diverse as Mary Tyler Moore, Princess Diana and Madonna. Alongside this normative Western upbringing, I also attended after-school religious studies classes to learn how to pray and read scripture in Arabic. By the time I entered my adult life I was, on the one hand, fully Western, completely engaged in society with friends from all ethnic backgrounds, wearing power suits to work and trendy outfits when out socially. On the

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other hand, I was be traditionally dressed in the latest Indo-Pakistani fashions, speaking my mother tongue and eating traditional foods. However, neither of these presentations was wholly me. This changed when I started wearing the hijab at the age of 43, and to my surprise I became whole. I no longer had two identities trapped in one body, but I became one person, with a single Muslim-Canadian identity.

To this research I bring first-hand knowledge of the challenges I faced when trying to dress my body modestly. I also have a deeper homegrown understanding of my faith tradition and its teachings, not from an academic perspective but from a cultural understanding, having felt the same pressures many of my research participants have experienced. In addition to this I bring a deeper understanding of the practices and cultures of being Muslim in Muslim-majority countries. Through my formative years we took frequent trips to Pakistan to spend time with family over the summer holidays. With each experience I learned what life was like growing up in a Muslim majority context. I talked to cousins, comparing the very different challenges we had with our parents. I felt the impact of martial law first hand, experienced how unstable politics can impact everyday life, and experienced what it was like to live in a country where almost everyone came from the same religious and ethnic background.

In Canada I never considered myself as marginalized because I am privileged in so many ways. Although growing up I did feel the impact of our family living on a budget, we never wanted for anything more than what we had. I knew I was a descendant of a ruling class family in India and that I came from a long line of educated Muslim women. I never expected that I was or could be marginalized. In the words of comedian Hasan Minhaj I had the “audacity of equality” because I was born here.

Carla Rice (2009) speaks at length about a researcher's subjectivities and asks how ethical relationships with participants can be cultivated while "refrain[ing] from centering our experiences or irresponsibly interpreting those of participants" (Rice, 2009, p. 246). I felt this dilemma was more of an issue for white, non-Muslim researchers than it would be for me. As I read through Rice's discussions I came upon her definitions as follows: "*researcher accountability* through checking interpretations with informants ... *researcher responsibility* through immersing oneself in experiences ... *researcher advocacy* through commitment to producing knowledge" (p. 250). These words, *accountability*, *responsibility*, and *advocacy* clearly communicated that I must consciously ensure I am checking my objective state of mind and that I maintain my objectivity by "*imagining becoming the other...* a stance that ... approach[es] rather than appropriate[s] others' experiences" (p. 261). While I am not centering myself in this research, it is important to note that I have a tacit understanding of the practice of veiling, its nuances, dressing modestly, and why it's done. Ultimately, this differs from past scholars who are primarily white and non-Muslim women and some men.

One of my key findings in this study is that researching women who live in Muslim-majority countries, and then applying that research and learning to the study of women who live in Western European and North American (WENA) countries, is problematic. I explore this in the next chapter. As I'll be referring to women from Muslim-majority countries often, for the purposes of this paper I will shorten the phrase "Muslim-majority countries" to "Muslim countries". "Muslim countries" will mean countries where Muslims make up more than 50% of the population (Pew Research Center, 2011). These countries include but are not limited to the Arab region (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, etc.), Africa (e.g. Tunisia, Morocco, Senegal, etc.), and Asia (e.g. Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, etc.).

### Chapter 2: Literature Review

I have found that no research has been done on the everyday dress practices of Muslim women who wear the hijab and live in the West. Researching everyday dress practices is important because it reveals societal, cultural, and internal or private reasons why a woman wears what she wears. Speaking to Western dress practices, Entwistle (2015) states women are “closely identified with their bodies [and they] ... monitor their bodies and appearance more closely than men” (Entwistle, 2015, p. 22). As evidence she notes that all but one American state (Florida) allow women’s attire to be legally cited in rape cases as evidence of a woman’s consent to have sex (p. 22). She also speaks of professional women’s attire and how Western women will ensure they are wearing a blazer in a workplace public space, such as a boardroom, “to cover the breasts so as to avoid sexual glances from men” (p. 34). When considering Muslim women who veil in this Western context where women are “more likely to be identified with the body than men” (p. 30) what impact does a modestly-dressed and fully-covered body have on its surroundings? What kind of ease or threat does the modest body impose onto Western society? Researching the everyday dress practices of women who cover the body, thereby not allowing Western society to identify them through their body, can help us to understand the impact modest dress has on the Western gaze.

Rather than examining dressing in modest fashion as an everyday lived experience, current scholarship has exhibited a fascination with the rise in demand for modest fashion and the response from the grassroots community to meet those needs. This includes studying magazines (Lewis, 2010b), online business and community activities (Akou, 2007, 2010), bloggers and vlogging (Lewis, 2015a; Peterson, 2016) and other online practices as social media platforms like YouTube channels and Instagram accounts became ubiquitous around the world

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(Kavakci & Kraeplin, 2017; Zappavigna, 2016). Scholarship on the business of Islamic modest fashion began with early writings such as Akou's exploration of the emerging Islamic fashion world (Akou, 2007). In 2010 Tarlo wrote a piece on Islamic fashion businesses and branding titled *Visibly Muslim Fashion, Politics, Faith* (Tarlo, 2010b). Lewis' article in the same year focused on marketing Muslim lifestyles (Lewis, 2010b). Her most recent book *Muslim Fashion: Contemporary Style Cultures* is a compendium of all aspects of the Islamic modest fashion business trend that covers consumer culture, marketing, magazines, online commerce, and worker rights (Lewis, 2015b).

Similarly, there is a lot of scholarship that focuses on the veiling practices of Muslim women. Setting aside the many studies that have been done by Reina Lewis, Elizabeth Bucar and others in Muslim countries, this review looks at studies done in WENA and in each one the focus is on the practice of veiling rather than the individual and how her intersectional identities inform her sartorial practices and broader identity (Anderson & Greifenhagen, 2013; Lewis, 2015c; Mansson McGinty, 2014; Marcotte, 2010; Peterson, 2016; Ramachandran, 2009; Williams & Vashi, 2007). There are some recently published articles that mention intersectionality or recognize there is a lack of focus on intersectionality (Lewis, 2018b, 2019) however, no one has taken a deeper look at the whole person defined by her various social identities.

Overall, scholarship on Muslim women lacks a focus on the whole person, the unique individual. A female Muslim scholar herself, Katherine Bullock (2002) says in the introduction of her book *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil*, "in some ways by writing a book on hijab, I am keeping alive the Western tradition of discussing Muslim women only in relation to their head covering" (p. XLIII). Scholarship is either focused on the sub-cultural trend of the rising demand and economic vitality of the modest fashion industry that dresses the body, or

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scholarship focuses on the head to discuss political, racial, and social issues having to do with veiling practices essentially decapitating the Muslim woman from her body through a Western fetishization of the hijab (Ramachandran, 2009). Current scholarship has failed to realize that the hijab is fashioned as part of an outfit for a day and is not easily thrown on and off like an overcoat (Lewis, 2015b). A Muslim woman's identity is created by the head, yes, but also with the body as one.

One scholar who has contributed extensively to this topic is Reina Lewis who has been doing research on modest fashion in the West for well over a decade. While there are critiques of her work that I will explore in this chapter, her overall scholarship recognizes nuances and she is very careful to distinguish between Islam and the various Muslim cultures around the world. In her essay titled "Muslims and Fashion Now, and Then" published in the catalogue that accompanied the 2018 deYoung Museum exhibit "Contemporary Muslim Fashions" in San Francisco, for which she was a consulting curator, Lewis recognizes the post-9/11 rise of modest fashion and identifies the Western gaze and fascination and fetishization of veiling practices and the harem. She speaks to pre-Islamic veiling practices, provides a cultural history of veiling, addresses more contemporary issues of agency and choice, and speaks to the current discourse and recognizes "contemporary Western Muslim-minority contexts" (Lewis, 2018b, p. 36). Lewis' body of work and recent recognition and exploration of diversity has created an opening for my research to take place.

In this review of literature on veiling practices, the hijab, and modest fashion in the Muslim community in the West, I am only reviewing literature from studies and research done in WENA. From both my lived experience and also my review of literature I have concluded that scholarship that learns from the study of Muslim women in Muslim countries is not directly

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applicable to the study of Muslim women who live in the West. Cultural cues, one's mindset and upbringing are completely different between Muslim countries and WENA. Muslim women living in Muslim countries are not marginalized in the same way that Muslim women in the West are. In WENA Muslim women have been the target of hate. Politics and how one moves through society and navigates the community are vastly different in WENA than in Muslim countries. For instance, living in a society with a long history of democratic elections and stable governments where one is not persecuted for free speech impacts one's behaviours vastly differently than if the opposite is true. Cultural cues are different, although both societies place high expectations on women for how they should dress; in Muslim countries the general expectation is to cover more whereas in WENA women are expected to follow hegemonic beauty ideals that conflate less clothing with emancipation (Michelman, 2003; Ramachandran, 2009). In addition, I have put a stronger emphasis on research published after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in New York, United States, widely referred to as 9/11, as these events changed the landscape for Muslims living in WENA.

This literature review explores the missed opportunities and limitations of existing scholarship within three major themes: the Western gaze; homogenization of the individual and a lack of consideration of intersectionality. First, current scholarship places a strong Western gaze and uses a Judeo-Christian framework to draw conclusions onto Muslims' modest fashion practices which negates Muslim contextual significance and understanding. Second, scholarship tends to homogenize the Muslim experience by making sweeping generalizations and missing local differences and cultural nuance. Third, intersectionality or the recognition and consideration of Muslim women's multi-faceted social identities made up of age, race, class, cultural background, where they were born and raised, and so on have been ignored. I hope to

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rectify these problems and gaps with my study by exploring Muslim women's intersectional identities through modest fashion.

### **Western Gaze**

The Western gaze has been put onto the Islamic world for centuries beginning with the European invasion of the Arab world in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This was a time when Muslim women held significant roles in land ownership and trade and could do so without the permission of their husbands. The colonizing Europeans introduced new centralized systems that “militated against women” (Marsot in Bullock, 2002, p. 21) and took many of these rights away (Bullock, 2002). As the Europeans entered an unfamiliar culture, they took a fascination to the veiling of women. The Western male gaze was not able to fall upon those women, because they were hidden behind screened-in rooms and closed doors, and so they fetishized the veiled body and sexualized the harem (Al-Mahadin, 2013; Bullock, 2010). The local elites who benefited from colonization Westernized their practices (Bullock, 2010) as my family did when in India. I am the first woman on my father's side of the family to veil since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This Westernization, or as colonizers thought of it, “civilization” of the Orient, a term used by Europeans to describe the region adjacent to Europe, including the Biblical lands, is described by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism* as the “Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said, 1978, p. 3). Current scholarship takes from this tradition and places a strong Western gaze onto Muslim women's modest fashion practices by interpreting these practices either from this deep-seated fetishization of the veil or by using a Judeo-Christian framework. Both practices often negate Muslim contextual significance and understanding, as a result, the conclusions being drawn tend to be rooted in Western values and perspectives.



Rhys Williams and Gira Vashi's article titled "Hijab and American Muslim Women: Creating the Space for Autonomous Selves" is a study that has a specific interest in understanding the religious lives of second generation college-aged Muslim women who wear the hijab. The researchers identify as non-Muslim but they do claim the second researcher's Indian identity "may well have increased trust" (Williams & Vashi, 2007, p. 274) with Indo-Pakistani respondents who made up the majority of their sample size. In my own experience as an Indo-Pakistani Muslim I know that people from Indo-Pakistani faith traditions share similar cultures from clothing to food to entertainment. I also know the way we are raised in our respective religious homes is quite different because the faith traditions that we are raised with are quite different. Although an Indian second researcher may have been able to connect and warm up to participants through a shared culture, the interpretation and nuance in what participants' shared may be missed by a non-Muslim Indian researcher, as it would be missed by a non-Muslim researcher of European descent.

Continuing with the same research study, participants are identified as being "daughters of immigrants" (Williams & Vashi, 2007, p. 272) and between the "ages of 18-25" (Williams & Vashi, 2007, p. 273). The authors then state the Muslim participants negotiate and adapt their religious practice to a "new culture" (Williams & Vashi, 2007, p. 269). They fail to recognize that which they just stated. As "daughters of immigrants" (p. 272), many of these participants were brought to the United States by their parents as toddlers or children or they were born in the United States. As a result, the American culture is not a "new culture" (p. 269) for these particular participants. In fact it is the culture they identify as being their own. This research places a strong Western gaze when they do not realize that these women have only known their

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religion, Islam, in the context of Western culture which is nothing new to them. This is a significant oversight and impacts the conclusions drawn and observations made in this study.

In Chapter 4 of her book *Muslim Fashion: Contemporary Style Cultures* Dr. Reina Lewis says “[this] chapter situates the privileging of choice as one of the distinguishing factors of hijabi and modest subcultures, focusing on how the limitations of the neoliberal choice paradigm are recognized, managed, and negotiated through embodied dress practices” (Lewis, 2015b, p. 23). The term hijabi is used to describe a Muslim woman who wears the hijab. Here, Lewis is calling upon an aspect of wearing hijab that is very often misunderstood, from that perspective she is addressing an important part of this dress practice. What is missing however, is a mention or a footnote that this dress practice is also a deeply held religious spiritual practice, a “profound religious experience” (Bullock, 2002, p. 118). The hegemony of the secularized Western gaze often diminishes the significance of religiosity and fails to recognize research participants’ deeply held spirituality, values and religious beliefs.

In the book chapter “Fashion and the Law: The Muslim Headscarf and the Modern Woman,” from *Fashion Media: Past and Present*, author Babara Vinken says “the headscarf and *niqab* are not a religious must, but depend on varying interpretations of the Qur’an. Much more than a religious requirement, they symbolize the fight against modernity, whose battlefield is the female body” (Vinken, 2013, p. 80). This statement does not consider that when it is spiritually motivated, the hijab is welcomed as a necessary part of spiritually-inspired religious practice. Further, not all Muslim women feel that they are “fight[ing] against modernity” (p. 80). In fact, many feel as if they are a vision of a more liberated future for women who do not “accept th[e] exploitation of their feminine form,” (Bullock, 2002, p. XVII) where they choose their level of exposure and are not judged by anyone as being either liberated, or not liberated.

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In the introductory chapter of her book “Visibly Muslim” (2010), Emma Tarlo claims that the use of “images of visible Muslims in the mainstream media undoubtedly feeds and sustains negative perceptions of British Muslims as alien, backwards and threatening” (Tarlo, 2010c, p. 10). Her narrative is empathetic to Muslim women who wear the headscarf and therefore are visibly Muslim and may be marginalized and be put in harm’s way, but the way in which some conclusions are drawn reflect a Western gaze. Stating that being visibly Muslim is “an unfortunate by-product of their appearance” (p. 10) immediately reinforces this idea that to be Muslim is to be unfortunate in some way. She goes on to discuss the reason for the hijab which was articulated respectfully saying “visually signaling...she expects to be treated with a certain degree of distance” but goes on to say “as well as imposing constraints on her own behaviour.” This implies that a Muslim woman’s behaviour is constrained by her headscarf and perpetuates orientalist views of the oppressed “brown woman” (Ramachandran, 2009, p. 35).

This statement in Tarlo’s book *Visibly Muslim* completely misses the Muslim perspective:

Similarly, fashion designers and entrepreneurs engaged in producing and marketing new styles of visibly Muslim dress in boutiques and over the Web are keen to reverse negative stereotypes by promoting clothes which demonstrate the compatibility of fashion and faith ... they contribute to the development of a progressive, modernist, visibly Muslim aesthetic. (Tarlo, 2010c, p. 11)

This quote leaves the impression that the modest fashion effort is about shifting the orientalist view (Said, 1978) that the West has of Muslims. The reality is that the main reason why “new styles of” (p. 11) visibly Muslim dress are created is because Muslims feel they are a part of the Western society in which they live. They were either born here, raised here, or both. They are

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impacted by the same cultural cues, hegemonic beauty ideals, fashion expectations and so on. As a result, they want Western-influenced modest clothing. As modest fashion blogger Dina Torkia said in her review of H&M's modest fashion line "we're not asking brands to sell us what our cultures around the world have already invented" (Torkia, 2018, 5:44). In Western pop culture white Westerners are sometimes shown to immerse themselves in Oriental cultures, for example Tom Cruise in *The Last Samurai*. When the white man is fully immersed in his adopted culture he is revered by the people of that culture and held up as 'greater than' themselves (Tierney, 2006). Conversely, in WENA, racialized and coloured bodies are not offered the same consideration. Racialized bodies can speak the language flawlessly, wear the most fashionable clothing, adapt their palate to the local food and yet are still othered. Muslim women are fans of the same teenage heartthrobs, are inspired by the styles of the same movie and pop stars and want to wear the same style clothing. Muslims are not "keen to reverse negative stereotypes" (p. 11), as Tarlo 2010c) suggests, rather they simply want modest Western fashions because they are from the West.

Orientalist views and Judeo-Christian mindsets permeate the Western gaze. This leads to subtle conclusions that do not fully reflect the lived experiences of Muslim women who were born and raised in the West or who consider themselves fully Western as they have lived the majority of their lives in the West. I will seek to rectify this in my research by exploring the multi-dimensional aspects of what motivates a Muslim woman by focusing on her as a whole person, not just as a believer who veils or just an entrepreneur or social media influencer who has a dream to solve a fashion dilemma.

### **Homogenization**

In the context of this literature review homogenization is defined as the practice of making sweeping generalizations about Muslims with no local differences taken into consideration. Current scholarship on modest fashion is not very specific about exploring the differences between Muslims from WENA and Muslims from Muslim countries. Local differences in culture, practices, and even the people are rarely taken into consideration. It is also little understood or articulated that being Muslim and practicing is not the same for Muslims around the world. Muslims come from vastly different cultures. For instance the food, music and language in the Arab region is different from that in South Asia. Further, there are cultural differences between the countries within those regions. “Muslim women distinguish emphatically between their religion and their culture” (Warner, Martel, & Dugan, 2012, p. 46). Additionally, many studies in modest fashion have been done on Muslim women who live in Muslim countries. When this work is cited in studies done on modest fashion in WENA, the conclusions drawn or examples made do not accurately reflect a Western perspective. Culture, religious practices, and learnings from studies done in Muslim countries can inform greater knowledge but should not be used to draw conclusions when studying Muslims from WENA.

Moving forward scholarship in modest fashion studies should be mindful not to conflate the experiences of Muslim women from Muslim countries and those who live and are born, raised, or born and raised in WENA. The reason is simple: WENA lifestyle and cultures are vastly different from the political and cultural environs of Muslim countries.

In a 2016 journal article titled “Asserting citizenship: Muslim women's experiences with the hijab in Canada” the authors explain the hijab as follows:

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The hijab, a veil, is worn by Muslim women and may be paired with modest clothing such as an *abaya*. The hijab can also include a face veil known as the *niqab*. The *niqab* covers the face while exposing the eyes ... veiled women, both those who cover their faces and those who wear the hijab encounter discrimination. (Rahmath, Chambers, & Wakewich, 2016, p. 34)

As they set up their research topic at the start of the article, these authors put women who wear the hijab and those who wear the *niqab* in the same category. Niqab is the term used for the face veil that covers the nose and mouth. The homogenization of these two vastly different practices under one category of ‘the veiled woman’ is problematic. The niqab is a very specific practice, even among women who wear hijab (Ramadan, 2017). A very small minority of Islamic scholars consider the niqab a religious obligation. Today the schools of Islamic thought who promote the wearing of the face veil are “more literalist and traditionalist ... such as the *salafi*, often called *wahhabi*” (Ramadan, 2017, p. 111). Not all women who wear the face veil can be assumed to belong to these more literalist schools of thought. Women who wear hijab represent a broader spectrum of interpretations of the faith tradition. Homogenizing these two practices into one category overlooks the significance of how different these practices are and how different the mindset and religious belief systems of the woman who choose either practice can be.

In his 2017 article “The Commodity Fetish of Modest Fashion,” Balbir Singh argues that large brands bringing a focus to modest fashion “demonstrate the exploitation of [sic] particular markets, now fetishized both within and beyond their demonization as Muslim” (Singh, 2017, p. 162) and states that in order to “destabilize normative standards” (p. 163) modest fashion must remain a fetishized object. Singh’s opinions and observations can be debated, however for the purposes of this analysis I want to bring attention to his assertion that the rise of “religious head

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dress” (p. 162) particularly the hijab is “concomitant with the rapid intensification of Islamophobia in many Western democracies” (p. 162). This statement is a sweeping generalization of the effects a sartorial practice by a small minority group, namely hijab-wearing women, within a minority Muslim population. The author does not consider or imply that “the rapid intensification of Islamophobia” could be as a result of myriad other factors such as the portrayal of Muslims in pop culture as terrorists, and political rhetoric and action like the Muslim Travel Ban. Singh’s assertion is simplified and has homogenized a bevy of factors in pop culture, media, political discourse, and orientalist thought into an overly simplified statement of blame on the practice of veiling.

In their article “Religious beings in fashionable bodies: the online identity construction of hijabi social media personalities” Kavacki and Kraeplin (2017) provide an updated look at three fashion bloggers by studying how new media, faith and their digital identities “facilitate the construction (re-construction) of a digital identity or persona” (p. 850). In their concluding remarks they say:

While most Muslim women wear modest clothes for the sole purpose of safekeeping their beauty as submission to God, it is evident that religious and cultural norms are challenged so much so that the representation of *hijab* is reoriented sociologically. (p. 864)

While new media is challenging norms and the representation of the hijab is being reoriented, I believe scholars must be more careful when articulating general practices and making broad statements about “most Muslim women” (p. 864). The Muslim population in WENA is quite diverse. There are those, like myself, who embody the Western culture because I was born and raised here. There are those who immigrated here as teens or young adults and this is an adopted culture. There are those who were born here but raised in homogenous communities of Muslims

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and attended Islamic schools with little multicultural interaction in their upbringing. These are just a few scenarios. “Most” of us do not feel one way about anything, especially the hijab and the requirements of modesty which are not specifically articulated by the Islamic faith tradition (Akou, 2010; Ramadan, 2017). There is no one, sole purpose for wearing the hijab. For some, as the author suggests, it may be for “safekeeping their beauty” (p. 864). But for others it may be a spiritual practice, or how they want to present themselves to the world; it may have nothing to do with their beauty or everything to do with it.

In my review of literature I find that homogenizing research findings allows scholars to present findings in neat parcels of knowledge where conclusions can be drawn to gain a deeper understanding of the subject. In so doing, confidence is built that this understanding is meaningful and true because it presents so well. I find this is particularly true for scholars who are unfamiliar with the lived experiences of their participants. It is not appropriate to challenge scholarship done by those not part of a particular community; scholarship carries its own rigorous checks and balances. However, I feel it is valid to point out that when one is not part of a community that the application of a theoretical framework that helps to discover nuances and lived experiences is recommended. In this study I am both self-reflexive of my South-Asian heritage and Muslim identity and am consciously mindful in my role as researcher to maintain my objectivity by “imagining becoming the other” (Rice, 2009, p. 261). In addition I am using an intersectional framework to ensure the multiplicity of social identities and lived experiences of my research participants’ is captured in this study.

### **Lack of Intersectional Understanding**

Intersectionality is the recognition and consideration of Muslim women’s multi-faceted social identities made up of age, race, class, cultural background, where they were born and



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raised, and other social identity markers. These characteristics work simultaneously to create one whole person and are often ignored in current scholarship resulting in a lack of focus on the individual. Rather, current scholarship focuses on larger sub-cultural trends, economic, social, and cultural forces (Akou, 2007, 2010, 2015; Lewis, 2007, 2010a, 2013; Moors, 2013; Peterson, 2016). We don't know how the individual navigates the world and experiences the fashion system. Intersectionality is being used as the theoretical framework in this study. This is discussed in detail in the next sub-section. The following is a discussion on intersectionality to provide context for this theme.

In her theory on intersectional feminism, Kimberle Crenshaw says "Contemporary feminist and antiracist discourses have failed to consider intersectional identities such as women of color" (Crenshaw, 1991, pp. 1242–1243). This intersectional feminist lens can be applied to what is revealed in this review. Crenshaw (1991) continues "the narratives of gender are based on the experience of white, middle-class women, and the narratives of race are based on the experience of Black men" (p. 1298). In a similar vein, the narratives of Muslim women choosing to dress modestly, whether or not they choose to also wear a hijab, are represented by businesses and influencers that dress the body, or political, social or racial issues that judge the hijab or veil. The intersectionality of body and head has not been recognized in the literature that has informed this part of the study, leaving the female modest fashion consumer decapitated and severed from her whole self, body and mind.

In her most recent article, Lewis (2019) acknowledges the intersection of race, body size and religion affiliation but has yet to investigate the impact of everyday dress experiences through a diverse sample. The article begins to recognize the voices of modest fashion influencers who present the black, fat and Muslim identities. Specifically, the article examines

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“the role of fashion markets and media ... of daily religion for the fat and black body” (Lewis, 2019, p. 4). Through some field research and a look at social media and trends in modest fashion businesses, some issues related to the intersection of black and fat are revealed. such as the marginalization of African-American Muslims by the Asian and Arab Muslim communities and the shaming of black and fat African-American Muslims on social media platforms. Overall, however, the conclusions being drawn are not based on everyday dress practices outside of fashion influencers who are a part of the modest fashion industry. As with previous scholarship, this article too considers the head separately from the body when Lewis (2019) says “the interplay of head-cover and of body-cover has a particular role in the articulation of modest embodiment” (p. 17). Lewis has successfully drawn attention to intersectionality, and as this conversation deepens more research and critical analysis will become necessary.

Furseth’s (2011) study of 23 Muslim women who wear and don’t wear the hijab refrained from applying a Judeo-Christian framework to its analysis and was “based on life stories from Muslim immigrants” (Furseth, 2011, p. 365). It gave voice to each individual’s unique narrative which is largely lost in most scholarship. What was missing from the study was diversity. As noted in her description of participants, all were immigrants, living in the United States for four or more years, all had higher education, and identified as part of the middle class. This study is a good example of how to draw learnings from the intricacies and details of Muslim women’s lives by focusing on life stories, but it is only relevant to a narrow portion of the population.

In the article “Religious beings in fashionable bodies” Kavakci & Kraepin (2017) are critical of modest fashion bloggers and critique that way these bloggers merge their Islamic and Western identities:

We found that the digital realm allows for opportunities for multiple constructions of self and that each of our three subjects revealed both an Islamic religio-cultural identity and a fashionable Western identity, at times emphasizing one more than the other, at times combining the two in unorthodox ways ... the themes we pinpointed that seem to reflect this ethos included posts where one or more of the subjects dressed or posed in a suggestive way, exhibited behavior inconsistent with a modest religious identity, such as using explicit language ... [and] offering up borderline provocative imagery wrapped in the legitimacy of marriage.” (Kavakci & Kraeplin, 2017, p. 865)

In particular the researchers are critical of how these bloggers combine their identities in “unorthodox ways” (p. 865). What the researchers fail to recognize is that all three bloggers have one parent who is from a non-Muslim country or from the West. The parents are Cuban, American and English. If the researchers considered intersectionality in a more meaningful way, then the fact these Muslim bloggers identify with a “fashionable Western identity” would not be so curious but completely understandable. The researchers also accuse one blogger for posting “provocative imagery ... wrapped in the legitimacy of marriage” (p. 865). To a Muslim born and raised in the West an image like this is less provocative because of the stated ‘legitimacy of marriage’. When growing up in WENA provocative imagery is ubiquitous and rarely is legitimized within the context of marriage (Michelman, 2003). To see bloggers’ provocative images legitimized by marriage is a refreshing change for Muslims living in WENA. A recognition of these blogger’s intersectional identities and cultural influences at home, and in the societies they live, would have resulted in different conclusions being drawn. It might also have resulted in these bloggers’ content not being criticized as harshly.

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Lewis' (2018) article "Futures in fashion: Modest fashion practices and influence" is a review of the rise of the popularity of modest fashion. Lewis uses modest fashion in this article as a case study for "embodied everyday religion, gender and power" (Lewis, 2018a, p. 115) and provides a clear definition of modest fashion which she says "refer[s] to the many different ways in which women clothe their bodies in keeping with their interpretations of what they understand to be the modesty requirements of their faith" (p 115). She discusses the rise of the modest fashion industry and how the power of the internet helped to build businesses to meet the community's needs. She recognizes that "in modest fashion, emerging definitional practices are marked by fluidity and contestation in which the commitment to recognizing and supporting diversity of interpretation and practice is both a defining characteristic and a constant threat to field integrity" (p. 120). Lewis reviews what has been happening in modest fashion, provides nuanced understanding of its critics and shows how modest fashion has had an inter-faith influence; however, the individual is not being studied. All the conclusions drawn about the industry are based on the flourishing commercial market for modest fashion and the online influencers who provide a view into the lives of veiled women, but does not run as deep as the type of insight I am providing through wardrobe interviews in my own study.

People have intricate and sometimes complicated histories. This is true for every community of people and is especially true for colonized nations. For instance, a Muslim woman who is Indian can be 25% English because her grandmother was the daughter of English colonizers and fell in love with a local Indian boy. Muslim women can be inter-racial and be brought up being educated in and celebrating both Eastern (Muslim) and Western (Christian) traditions if one parent is from a Muslim majority nation and the other from a non-Muslim majority nation. When intersectionality is not considered these facts can remain unseen. This is

rectified in my study by engaging in conversation with research participants about their everyday dress practices (Entwistle, 2015) which form their identity on a daily basis.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Many of the missing nuances and insights that emerged in my review of past scholarship can be rectified by using an intersectional approach. Intersectionality is a vast topic of scholarly conversation and there are many interpretations and many ways this framework has been mobilized. For the purpose of this research I will be following the work of Kimberle Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, and Chandra Mohanty.

Kimberle Crenshaw's (1991) seminal work on intersectionality identified three types of intersectionality: structural, political, and representational. Structural intersectionality is illustrated through the experience of immigrant women who came to America to marry and became victims of domestic abuse. When the law was changed to try and protect these women the very conditions required to qualify for protection made it difficult for these women to obtain the evidence needed to escape from their abusive situation. The evidence included "reports and affidavits from police, medical personnel, psychologists, school officials and social service agencies" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1248). Gaining access to these types of public services and resources is difficult for recently arrived immigrants who may encounter social barriers and who are also in abusive relationships that force them into submission. These factors "illustrate how patterns of subordination intersect" (p. 1249) and can keep certain populations away from services intended to support them. Political intersectionality is illustrated by political movements like the Civil Rights movement that benefited black men more than it did black women and feminism which benefitted white women more than it did black women demonstrating that "antiracism and feminism are limited, even on their own terms" (p. 1252). Representational

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intersectionality is “when one discourse fails to acknowledge the significance of the other” (p. 1282). Crenshaw illustrates this point with the example of the rape of a Central Park jogger by a black man. She explains, when feminist voices speak they contribute to “forces that produce disproportionate punishment for black men who rape white women” and when antiracists speak “of racial domination, they belittle the fact [that] ... all people ... should be outraged by gender violence” (p. 1282).

In their book *Intersectionality* Hill Collins and Bilge (2016) provide guidance on how intersectionality can be used as an analytical tool. They suggest when using intersectionality to analyze, one must contextualize “one’s arguments, primarily by being aware that particular historical, intellectual, and political contexts shape what we think and do” (Hill Collins & Bilge, 2016, p. 28). In addition to recognizing context, they support what has been said before about intersectionality, that “intersectional frameworks reveal how race, gender, sexuality, age, ability, and citizenship relate in complex and intersecting ways” (p. 16). This is where Mohanty’s (2000) work comes into play. Although Mohanty is critical of Western feminism and its view of “third world women” (Mohanty, 2000, p. 302), it is relevant to an application of an intersectional theoretical framework to Muslim women who veil and live in WENA as these women are devalued as women of colour by the way they are “represented in cultural imagery” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1282) and constructed in popular culture similarly to the third-world women Mohanty refers to. Mohanty goes on to say “simplistic formulations are historically reductive; they are also ineffectual in designing strategies to combat oppressions. All they do is reinforce binary divisions” (p. 311). These “simplistic formulations” ignore the context Hill Collins and Bilge speak to above and fall into the trap of using stereotypical tropes. Combined, these factors hinder the ability to overcome oppression.

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When the work of these scholars is considered together, it applies well to the hijab-wearing Muslim woman living in WENA. Representational intersectionality has eluded this group as most scholarship, media and popular culture are merely interested in veiling practices without considering the whole human person. Political intersectionality impacts women who veil with continued political rhetoric and legislative efforts here in Canada and Europe in an effort to legislate the veiling woman's body. Structural intersectionality also fails the veiled woman as she is othered in media discourse and popular culture with no effort put toward doing away with the fetishization of veiling practice. Applying Hill Collins and Bilge's advice about recognizing context and being reminded by Mohanty to not be historically reductive can rectify the issues raised in previous scholarship on Muslim women.

Using an intersectional framework addresses and helps us move past these critiques in the following ways.

### **Western Gaze.**

Researchers also have intersectional identities and when these intersectional perspectives are not considered self-reflexively researchers end up applying a strong Western gaze onto their scholarship. For instance, some researchers come from Muslim countries and bring with them a particular context and set of beliefs and values that shape how they analyze and process their findings. This is the same for researchers who come from non-Muslim majority (WENA) nations where laws and societal norms are based on Judeo-Christian doctrine. Because Judeo-Christian beliefs are ubiquitous these scholars tend to use this framework that has no contextual significance or understanding of Islamic practices in their analysis.

### **Homogenization.**

The conflation of ethnicity, race, schools of thought, sartorial choices, and life experiences continues to perpetuate in scholarship. A Muslim scholar in America who escaped Afghanistan with her family in the trunk of a car and came to America as a child refugee will tell a very different story about her life and her relationship with her faith than someone who was born in the United States and has lived a privileged middle class life in the West. An intersectional framework demands we look past the cover and learn why Muslim women believe what they believe and how they got to that belief system.

### **Lack of Intersectional Understanding.**

Overcoming a lack of intersectional understanding is achieved when using an intersectional lens because it allows us to look beyond the modest Muslim woman as “just another Muslim woman.” Rather, we begin to see how a Muslim woman’s life and clothing experiences are influenced by many other factors, like belief systems and life experiences, which are often overlooked by researchers.



### Chapter 3: Methodology

I used an arts-informed methodology and the methods of wardrobe interviews and digital storytelling for this study. Wardrobe interviews use participant's clothing items as probes to understand how their clothing influences the construction of their identity, the embodiment of who they are, and how they want to present themselves to the world. These interviews allow the researcher to enter the participant's personal space, i.e., their bedroom and closet where "the act of choosing what to wear [can be] discussed as a practice of identity construction" (Woodward, 2007, p. 5). This allows the participants to open up what is typically a safe and intimate space to the researcher where both can discover how people, cultures, and belief systems influence sartorial choices.

Digital storytelling is the process of combining story telling with filmmaking to create a narrative that embodies a core belief or message a participant wants to or feels compelled to convey through the audio-visual experience of film. It is an arts-informed method that "can provide alternative approaches to knowledge representation and advancement" (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 58) and in so doing bring the human experience closer to audiences, and "advanc[e] knowledge [by] bridging the connection between academy and community" (Cole & Knowles, 2008, p. 59). When using an arts-informed method, researchers create safe spaces where participants can express themselves through making.

Using clothing as objects to create conversation can help us understand women's experiences of discrimination because so much of what they experience is embodied in how they are dressing and presenting themselves. Participants in this study recall being yelled at in a grocery store and having their hijab pulled off their head in middle school. Providing a familiar space and objects, namely their closets and clothing, to Muslim women to express the

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complexities of their identities, beliefs and choices will help them tell their stories and communicate their embodied experiences (Entwistle, 2015; Woodward, 2007).

### **Recruitment**

This research sets out to explore the intersectional identities of Muslim women through modest fashion. A discriminating criterion was set to study women who have been wearing the hijab for two years or more. This was done for two reasons. One, to manage the scope of the research given the time allocated for the project. Second, in my personal experience, it takes two years to fully embody the practice of wearing the hijab as a regular routine, one that is part of the natural steps of getting dressed in the morning. When I started wearing hijab 12 years ago my struggle was not with the practice of wearing the hijab but with getting comfortable with how to wrap the scarf, deciding what pins or accessories work best to keep it in place, and understanding the style I thought looked best. In this study, I wanted to speak with women who had these logistics sorted out. Recruiting for this study was focused in Ontario, Canada because there was no funding available to travel further afield.

Participation in both stages of the study was voluntary, however those wishing to participate in Part 2, the digital storytelling workshop, had to have first completed Part 1, the wardrobe interview. I designed a recruitment poster (Appendix A) that was posted on my social media sites. The poster included the title of the study, its purpose and included my photo showing that I too wear the hijab. This was deliberately done to reassure potential participants that the research was coming from within their own community. I believe this benefited the recruitment process as I reached recruiting saturation within a month of posting my flyer. Recruiting was done by snowball sampling. This guaranteed a comfort level for both parties (participant and researcher) as each knew a mutual contact who could speak to the other's

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character and intentions. To ensure I recruited a diverse sample of participants I encouraged my social media followers to share the recruitment poster with Muslims from all ethnic backgrounds.

### **Recruitment Outcome**

The final sample size for this study was made up of 16 women ranging in age from 23 to 73 representing a variety of ethnicities, body sizes, socio-economic status and professions, see Tables 1 and 2. In order to qualify for the study participants needed to be 18 years old and over and to have worn the hijab as a regular practice for 2 years. The majority of participants were in the early career/young family (age 27-37) category and maturing/40s category (age 38-48), totaling 11 out of 16 participants. At each end of the age spectrum we had three participants in their 20's (23, 24, and 25), one participant who was 51 and one retired participant who was 73. Forty-four percent of participants were from the middle-income social class, 31% from the upper-middle social class and 25% were working class. Eighty-eight percent of the group had a post-secondary education (63% Bachelors and 25% Masters). Occupations were varied from unemployed to student, entrepreneur to a range of professions from dietician to public servant, engineer and teacher. The ethnicity leaned more toward Indo-Pakistani with 70% identifying from various parts of that region, 25% identifying ethnically from the Arab region, and 12% from Africa. Two-thirds of participants identified as Canadian, of these 44% were born and raised in Canada, and 25% were raised in Canada. The balance (31%) were born and raised elsewhere and came to Canada as adults. All participants except one spent the majority of their adult life living in Canada, ranging from five to 44 years. Fifty-six percent of participants are married with children, 38% single with no children and 6%, one participant, is separated.

Participants represented a wide range of body types and purchased clothes from size small to double extra-large. Almost two-thirds of participants said they purchase clothing larger

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than their size. Fifty-six percent of participants have been wearing the hijab for over 10 years, 25% for six to nine years and 19% for two to five years. Overall a good mix of intersectional identities was represented. There was diversity across each category, whether that was age, education, social class, ethnicity, or body size. A high percentage have lived in WENA countries for a majority of their life, in particular the greater Toronto region in Ontario, which provides a strong base from which to draw findings about Muslim women from the West. As inquiries about the study came in participants were provided with an email explaining the study (Appendix B) with the comprehensive consent form attached (Appendix C).

Recruitment for digital storytelling was done via email. During Part 1 of the study, the wardrobe interview, participants who showed an interest in Part 2 of the study were sent the dates, time commitment and location details for the workshop six weeks in advance on December 13, 2018. Those who could commit the full time required for the workshop, one Friday evening and all-day Saturday and Sunday, confirmed their participation. We had six confirmed participants by early January 2019. One participant dropped out due to illness and one canceled the day the workshop was to begin. We ended up with four participants and held the workshop at The Catalyst, a research space at Ryerson University on Friday January 25, from 7 pm to 9 pm, and on Saturday and Sunday January 26-27, 2019 from 10 am to 6 pm.

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Table 1

*Women Undercover Demographic Data I*

Participant Demographic Data						
Pseudonym	Age	Social Class	Education	Career	Ethnicity	Born/Raised
#2 Roshan	23	Middle	Bachelor's	Student	Pakistani/Indian/Punjabi	Canada/Canada
#13 Huda	24	Middle*	Bachelor's	Unemployed	South Asian	Canada/Canada
#12 Aisha	25	Middle	Bachelor's	Unemployed	Arab/Palestinian	Jordan/Canada/US
#3 Aneela	27	Working	Master's	Graduate Student	Pakistani/Gujrati	Pakistan/Saudi Arabia
#10 Naseema	27	Working	Master's	Underemployed	Lebanese/Canadian	Canada/Canada
#5 Deebea	33	Working	High School	Student/Designer	African/Ghanian	Ghana/Canada
#15 Rabia	33	Middle	Bachelor's	Designer/Entrepreneur	Pakistani	Pakistan/Saudi Arabia/Canada
#11 Laila	34	Middle	Some College/Prof Cert	Family Business	Syrian	Canada/Canada
#7 Saima	36	Upper-Middle	Master's	Engineer	South Asian/Pakistani	Qatar/Qatar
#6 Huma	38	Upper-Middle	Bachelor's	Teacher	Canadian/South Asian	Canada/Canada
#9 Mariam	39	Working*	Bachelor's	Dental Hygienist	Indian/Muslim	India/India
#16 Ghazala	40	Middle	Bachelor's	Unemployed	Arab/Canadian	Canada/Canada
#14 Erum	43	Upper-Middle*	Master's	Dietician	Indian	Dubai/Dubai
#1 Mona	44	Upper-Middle*	Bachelor's	Civil Servant	Canadian/Indian	Canada/Canada
#4 Yasmeen	51	Upper-Middle	Bachelor's	Home-based Business	Pakistani	Pakistan/Pakistan
#8 Halima	73	Middle	Bachelor's	Retired	Muslim/Indo-Pakistani	India/India
	twenty-somethings	31% Upper-Middle	12% High School or equiv		69% Indo-Pakistani	44% Canada/Canada
	early career/young family	44% Middle	63% Bachelor's		25% Arab	25% Combination
	maturing/40s	25% Working	25% Master's		6% African	19% South Asia
	middle-aged					12% Arab Region
	retired	*researcher identified				

*Note.* Participant age, social class, education, career, ethnicity, are shown here in separate columns. In the last column the country of birth is shown first, and country where they were raised is shown second. Shaded names in the right column identify the four participants who took part in the digital storytelling workshop.

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Table 2

### *Women Undercover Demographic Data II*

Participant Demographic Data							
Pseudonym	Majority of Adult Life	Years in Canada	Relationship Status	Children	Years Wearing Hijab	Size	Buy Larger than Size
#2 Roshan	Canada	23	Single	0	6-9	S, M	1.0
#13 Huda	Canada	24	Single	0	10+	S-XXL	0.0
#12 Aisha	Canada	5	Single	0	2-5	S, 8-10, M	1.0
#3 Aneela	Canada	18	Single	0	10+	XL	0.0
#10 Naseema	Canada	27	Married	0	6-9	12-18, XL, XXL	0.5
#5 Deeba	Canada	26	Married	1	2-5	4-6, 8-10	1.0
#15 Rabia	Canada	22	Married	2	10+	12-14	1.0
#11 Laila	Canada	34	Single	0	6-9	8-10, M	0.0
#7 Saima	Canada	17	Married	3	10+	12-26	1.0
#6 Huma	Canada	38	Married	3	10+	12-14	1.0
#9 Mariam	Canada	9	Separated	2	10+	M, 12-14, L	0.5
#16 Ghazala	Egypt	21	Single	0	10+	8-10, M	0
#14 Erum	Canada	18	Married	3	10+	8-10, M, 12-14	0.0
#1 Mona	Canada	44	Married	2	6-9	S, 8-10, M	1.0
#4 Yasmeen	Canada	30	Married	2	2-5	16-18, XL	1.0
#8 Halima	Canada	42	Married	3	10+	L	1.0
							10.0
	94% Canada		56% Married	56% children	19% 2-5 yrs		63%
	6% Egypt		38% Single	38% no children	25% 6-9 yrs		
			6% Separated		56% 10+ yrs		1=Yes
							.5=Yes & No

*Note.* First column indicates where participants have lived the majority of their life, followed by the number years lived in Canada, marital status, number of children, years wearing hijab, range of clothing sizes worn. The last column shows which participants purchase clothing larger than their size.

### **Data Collection**

#### **Wardrobe Interviews.**

Sixteen wardrobe interviews were conducted between September 17 and November 5, 2018. Most participants were located within the Greater Toronto Area; two were in Ottawa. Wardrobe interviews are a type of ethnographic study that brings the researcher into the participant's bedroom to conduct the in-person interview in front of the main clothes closet. Here I engaged the participants in discussions around various items of clothing, how they assemble outfits and what influences their choices. This format allowed the exploration of all parts of their wardrobe in a setting that was familiar to participants and allowed them to open up and share memories of worn experiences both positive and negative.

I conducted interviews in front of women's closets because that is precisely the place where women "negotiate their bodies, respectability, style, status, and their self-perception and is therefore a crucial moment in understanding why women choose to wear what they wear" (Woodward, 2007, p. 2). Because the process of entering the personal space of a bedroom and closet can be intimidating and/or uncomfortable for both the researcher and the participant, I started with questions that established a comfort level between the researcher and participant, beginning with a general discussion on clothing practices (see Appendix D for interview guide) that took place in the dining or living room, where they are accustomed to hosting guests. This discussion centered on style preferences, how those have changed, and how their interest in fashion developed. Once a rapport was established a tour of the wardrobe brought me into the private space of the bedroom. Many of my participants had already set up a chair for me in the space, some even had snacks and drinks on hand and one offered me a laptop desk for note taking. This level of personal contact allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the

relationship “between the garment and their body image, subject positions, consumption practices and social encounters ... [while paying] close attention to how language articulate[s] [their] experiences” (Barry & Weiner, 2017, pp. 5–6).

As our interview progressed I asked deeper questions about specific garments and participants laid outfit choices on a bed or chair for me so I could photograph them along with any special undergarments or accessories they used to complete the look of an outfit. It is interesting to note here that although I was wearing the hijab in all of these interviews as I was outside of my home, most of my participants were not. Rather, they were dressed casually with their hair styled in the typical way they would in the privacy of their home.

The wardrobe interviews lead to stories about where each outfit was worn, when they are worn, how they came together as favourite outfits and that led to understanding how they choose outfits and what they wear to different events in their life like work, formal occasions, and time spent with friends and family. Favourite outfits were photographed, with participant’s permission, and all interviews were audio recorded. At the end of each interview, participants completed a demographic questionnaire and were asked if they might be interested in part two of the study, digital storytelling. Those who showed an interest were added to the recruitment list for the digital storytelling workshop.

### **Digital Storytelling.**

Digital stories allow marginalized voices to be heard in a format that is easily transmitted and understood by privileged communities (Rice & Mundel, 2018). As Patricia Leavy states “the more we understand about human cognition, the clearer it becomes that narrative, stories, and the arts can play a major role in teaching diverse subject matters” (Leavy, 2015, p. 15).



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Digital stories have proven to be effective for my research because the practice of wearing the headscarf for Muslim women is a deeply personal experience. Where current scholarship fails to uncover this deeper, nuanced experience, digital stories have allowed my research participants to have agency over their stories and express these deeper feelings. In addition, the combination of a more traditional research method alongside an arts-based method creates a particularly effective research toolkit to investigate the nuances and complexities around intersectional identities. Arts enables researchers “to understand and share a more holistic understanding of [the]...human condition” (Barry, 2017, pp. 2–3) and disseminate these new knowledges beyond scholarly circles to the public. Arts-informed methodologies challenge dominant power structures in research and empower marginalized communities to express their stories through their perspectives.

In April 2018 I took a workshop with Re●Vision: The Centre for Art and Social Justice at the University of Guelph. This Centre is where the multimedia story-making methodologies I used in my workshop were developed. My completion of this workshop and creation of my own digital story qualified me to facilitate the workshop for this research study. The intention was to recruit up to six participants from the group who did the wardrobe interviews; we ended up with four. The workshop was held in The Catalyst space at Ryerson University. For a detailed breakdown of how the workshop was executed please see Appendix E. An analysis of two digital stories created in this workshop is provided in the next chapter.

### **Data Analysis**

The personal in-depth wardrobe interviews conducted in this study resulted in volumes of qualitative data, approximately 750 pages of double-space typed transcribed interviews, that was coded and analyzed using the three step coding process, described in more detail below. Briefly,

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these steps are open coding (using descriptive tags to identify themes and phrases), axial coding (categorizing the themes and phrases), and finally selective coding (where relationships are drawn to develop the narrative) (Gläser & Laudel, 2013).

Each interview lasted 90 minutes and was audio-recorded while I took notes and photographs. Immediately after each interview I wrote additional notes focusing on demographic information and family life. I also wrote notes about each photograph recalling details associated with the image. This included details of where it was bought and why, how they shopped, where they wore the outfit (to work or a special occasion), and, what, if anything else they wear with it (an undergarment, layering piece, or accessory). Digital audio recordings of each interview were sent out to three different transcription services, refer to Appendix J for details on why multiple transcribers were used.

In the open coding phase I categorized the questions from the interview guide into four main categories: style, embodying culture, influences, and industry. Participants' answers were sorted into these four categories. In the axial coding I reviewed the categories and found that three themes emerged: 1) influences on style; 2) shopping/styling/assembling outfits; and 3) the consequences of wearing. Within each of these themes I developed six codes in the first two themes and three codes in the last and coded the content based on these 15 codes. In the selective coding phase I combined some of these codes down to nine codes. For example, the codes 'adapting' and 'safety' were combined when I realized the adaptation of wardrobe was happening to ensure personal safety. When preparing to travel some women were adapting their hijab to be worn with hats or like durags so as not to appear visibly Muslim. The final three themes and nine sub-themes are presented and discussed in the following chapter.

### **Chapter 4: Findings & Analysis**

The goal of this research is to communicate meaningful insights about Muslim women outside of the context of oppression and choice, and the burgeoning modest fashion marketplace. This study explores the experiences of Muslim women beyond veiling their head and consuming modest fashion. It acknowledges their intersectional identities, looks at how they make their sartorial choices and how their embodied dress impacts their lives. Three themes emerged from the research data that have not been exhaustively explored in current scholarship on Muslim women and modest dress. These themes are: 1) what influences Muslim women's style; 2) how Muslim women shop and style their outfits; and 3) what consequences Muslim women face when presenting themselves in the way they chose. All participants were assigned pseudonyms in order to protect their privacy.

This research reveals that modest-dressing Muslim women experience the same frustrations with the fashion industry that most women do but for very different reasons. Women who are not Muslim are frustrated with the fashion system because their bodies do not fit normative beauty ideals created by the fashion system itself (Woodward, 2007). Muslim women are equally frustrated with the fashion system because clothing does not fit their ideals of modesty. By making a religious commitment to themselves to wear hijab, Muslim women in WENA are at once invoking their agency to wear the hijab and challenging the very system that creates the unattainable beauty standards that limit women's agency to present themselves to the world as they please.

#### **Style Influences**

The first theme speaks to constructing one's style and what influences the participants' individual presentation. These influences included a desire to visibly and purposefully identify

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as Muslim; Western pop culture and sub-culture; and last, a wish to leave a positive social impression. The intersectional characteristics that were most salient to this theme were age and class. Women who reached mid-career by presenting themselves professionally understood the importance of presenting oneself authentically, meaning, as a Muslim. They experienced that authenticity builds trust by leaving a positive impression with those whom you encounter. The sub-theme of being influenced by sub-culture was more prevalent with young professionals from Arab and African backgrounds more so than those from South-Asian backgrounds. In my personal experience as a South-Asian I believe this is because the influence of colonizers began much earlier in Arab and African regions. South-Asian cultures have maintained a very rich and diverse fashion tradition and people from that region are able to get limitless inspiration from their ethnic heritage. Last, the sub-theme of leaving a positive impression and desiring acceptance was common across all age groups.

### **Muslim Identity.**

Past scholarship and this study have shown that Muslim women who wear the hijab do so not only as a spiritual practice but also as a purposeful marker of their identity (Lewis, 2015b; Tarlo, 2007, 2010a). Here we explored the reasons why these women want to be identified as Muslim, despite a continued negative and orientalist perception of Islam and Muslims in the West (Ramachandran, 2009; Singh, 2017). As a racialized body, Canadian-born participants recall taking an interest in fashion as a way to fit in and not be mistaken for an immigrant with an accent. As they grew older they realized that no matter how fashionable and stylish they looked, they will always be different. For Mona her difference was because of the colour of her skin. She says:

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How I do my makeup, how I do my hair, the clothes that I choose, all says that I'm Canadian, that I know what fashion is, that I follow the times that I'm not 'off the boat.' The fact remains, our skin tone is our skin tone. So, it doesn't really matter what I'm wearing or how I put myself together.

Mona, 44, was born in Ottawa, Canada and dressed modestly her whole life, conscious of wearing longer tops and looser clothing while still following the latest "Canadian" fashions, see Figure 1. She was often mistaken for being Sikh or Hindu and found being continually misidentified very frustrating. She thought wearing the hijab would clear up this confusion but did not know how her family would feel about it. Mona asked her pre-teen daughters if they would be embarrassed if she started wearing the hijab. They said no and her husband didn't care; he said "wear it, don't wear it, cry about your hair, don't cry about your hair, doesn't matter to me." Mona asked herself, "if they don't care, then why do I care?" Letting go of her aesthetic labour to fit in with normative Western beauty ideals was difficult as she was letting go of a lifetime of effort to look "Canadian." In the end, presenting herself as visibly Muslim was a relief. She was no longer being confused with other cultural traditions and the need to constantly correct wrongly placed assumptions about her disappeared.

Aneela was born in Pakistan and raised in Saudi Arabia until she was nine years old. She has been in Canada for 18 years and has been wearing the hijab since high school. When she moved to Canada she began meeting Muslims from other cultures. This inspired her to create her own identity as a Muslim. She turned to social media sites including YouTube for inspiration and came up with her own style. Now she ties her hijab turban-style and pulls pieces out to stylize the turban, or she makes braids with the scarf and styles it as part of her outfit-of-the-day. Aneela

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says “it’s just become a part of my Muslim identity, when I talk about my hijab I say the practice of wearing the hijab or the practice of veiling, I always call it a practice not just wearing it.”

The Western gaze often homogenizes the lived experiences of racialized bodies that do not have the privilege of blending into the wider landscape. Standing out from the crowd and being misinterpreted and misidentified is frustrating. These women, whether in their early 40s like Mona, or late 20s like Aneela, experience a sense of relief when they express their identity as visibly Muslim. For them, being seen clearly as Muslim avoids the frustration of correcting misplaced assumptions about who they are and what they believe and practice. Although previous studies on veiled women have mentioned a “desire to display publicly their Muslim identity” (Akou, 2007; Bilge, 2010; Eid, 2015, p. 1905) these studies did not discover, as this study has shown above, why a Muslim woman desired to be clearly identified as Muslim.

### **Western Culture.**

Past scholarship on modest fashion consumers shares that Muslim women are influenced by high street shops and keeping up with the latest fashions (Lewis, 2007; Lewis & Tarlo, 2011). However, this research fails to explore the breadth and depth to which Western culture influences the Muslim consumer. The influence of Western pop culture is global and reaches Muslim countries around the world. Muslims from those regions are inspired by pop culture just as much as Muslims living in the West (Janmohamed, 2016). This study found the same and more to be true. Muslims living in the West are not only exposed to popular culture but to sub-cultures that are unique to Western societies such as Goth, punk, vintage and period clothing that are refashioned for use today. Muslim women take their style cues from religious doctrine, hegemonic fashion ideals, and other diverse factors.

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To fashion her style Deeba is deeply inspired by her faith and also draws from popular culture and Muslim social media influencers. She is 33, a modest fashion designer and currently enrolled in a fashion design program. She says her interest in Hollywood movies started when she was a little girl in Ghana. The first Hollywood look that made an impression on her was the hot pink suit Whoopi Goldberg wore in the banking scene in *Ghost*. Tia Carrera's wardrobe in *True Lies* and the entire mix of costumes in *Coming to America* are her style markers, even today. In addition to developing a love for sparkle, colour and unique designs from these influences Deeba says living in Toronto is a huge influence "I mean in one city you find 90 countries!" She is inspired by the Muslim women she sees in Toronto and by internationally-based modest fashion influencers like Dian Pelangi, Basma K, Chinutay and Habiba da Silva, and by the hip hop music scene. Despite this broad range of style influences Deeba maintains:

So the modest style comes from wanting to please my Creator. I must be covered up because I'm precious and valuable, not for everyone to see. That's how I feel in my hijab.

It makes me feel expensive. I feel expensive, like a queen.

Deeba's desire to dress modestly is rooted in religion and is done for a higher purpose. This makes her feel greater than the average person and certainly not like an oppressed woman in need of being freed.

Naseema, 27, was born in Canada to a Lebanese family and said American pop culture had no influence her. Rather, she was drawn to the steampunk movement and Gothic romance. She said, "my interests are not very mainstream, I like Victorian fantasy, steampunk, and vintage, like an indie kind of Bohemian look as well" (Figure 2). The way she chooses to present herself to the world is influenced by the sub-cultures of the Western landscape where she grew up. The only aspect of her heritage that she believes influences her style is a love for "over-the-

top designs” as designer labels and extravagant looks are loved by her older Arab immigrant aunts and family friends who save their money to purchase designer clothing and accessories.

Beyond the influences normally associated with Western style, such as the runway, fashion magazines and what is carried in retail shops, Muslim women who dress modestly are influenced by a wide array of trends and sub-cultures. This was true for all participants in this study. One South Asian participant said she watches Korean web series. Another said she shops at Korean-owned clothing boutiques and both gave the reason that the Korean culture understands the modest look. Another participant, who is in her late 30’s, said she watches old Egyptian dramas to get ideas on how to style her outfits. Similar to the Downing Peters (2014) ethnographic study of fat women, women who dress modestly also “subvert the mainstream fashion system [when] cultivating fashionable self-identities through their engagement with dress and personal adornment” (Downing Peters, 2014, p. 47). In the same way, women who want to dress modestly find a way of “cultivating [their own] fashionable self-identities” (p. 47).

### **A Positive Impression.**

It is common to read in past research on modest fashion the impact that Orientalist views on Islam have had on the Muslim community. This, coupled with the increased political rhetoric further marginalizing Muslim communities through actions such as the 2016 Burkini bans on the beaches in France and the current White House administration’s Muslim Travel Ban, puts even more pressure on women who are visibly Muslim to leave a positive impression. Interestingly this study found the positive impression participants felt they were making had little to do with the hijab and more to do with their clothing choices or chosen outfit-of-the-day.



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Mona, who was born in Canada, felt the pressure of looking good and leaving a positive impression early in life. Her mother, who immigrated to Canada from India, liked to get fashion cues not from celebrities but from ‘credible’ news anchorwomen. This would translate into expectations set by her mother for Mona to dress well, to “look nice and pretty.” To this day, at the age of 44 and with two teenage daughters, Mona feels like she must dress up herself and ensure her daughters are also dressed well when going to visit her mother. Not putting in the extra effort would invite judgmental comments about not being presentable. Interestingly the pressure here is not on the hijab but on the style of the clothing on the body and the care taken to wear makeup. In fact, Mona’s mother never wore the hijab. Mona has the opposite experience with her mother-in-law who is of European descent, a white Canadian and non-Muslim. Mona says when they visit her husband’s family, it doesn’t matter what she and her girls are wearing or look like; they are loved just the same. Mona concludes by saying, “when you talk about fashion and choices and stuff like that, there is a lot of pressure in [her] family.” As past scholarship has taught us, marginalized bodies don’t have the privilege of blending in and must put in the additional aesthetic labour to try and blend in or make a positive impression (moore, 2018).

Huma’s experience of leaving a positive impression is entirely different. She is a high school teacher in Toronto and she recalls an exchange with a male colleague who was surprised she was pregnant. Huma said “you can’t tell I’m pregnant, I’ve gained so much weight,” and he replied “We don’t even look at you like that.” Huma said she feels her hijab and modest clothing keeps her sexuality at bay and she appreciates not being sexualized. She took her colleague’s lack of ability to notice her body as a compliment because she now knows they consider her ‘one of the guys’, meaning she is not objectified but rather seen as an equal.

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Overall participants recognize that dressing professionally, like a TV news anchorwoman or teacher, (Figure 3), leaves a positive impression with the observer. Saima, 36, speaks to her work as an engineer: “When you dress properly people see you more professionally and if you dress lousy they think like okay, yeah, whatever, she doesn’t know what she’s doing...especially when you're dealing with wearing a hijab," see Figure 4. This study builds our understanding of the sartorial practices of Muslim women who wear the hijab by highlighting how important the clothing on the body is to the overall impression left. Previous studies, even those that speak to “sartorial biographies” (Tarlo, 2007) focus on the head and the veil and take only a cursory look at the clothed body. This study reveals that the outfit-of-the-day that modestly clothes the Muslim woman’s body plays a critical role because she knows her overall look will leave a positive impression.

### **Styling and Shopping**

Here we discuss how Muslim women who dress modestly shop for and style their clothing. Participants employed three tactics in order to meet their sartorial goals. First, adapting clothing to one’s own needs; second, layering pieces to the modesty level and style they desired; and third, establishing strict rules of styling. My analysis confirmed that the requirements of modesty are consistently understood across ethnicities, age, class, etc. However one social identity did prevail in the third finding, establishing rules of styling. Women who were older with families and more advanced in their careers and therefore lived busier lives did overwhelmingly assemble outfits by a set of rules for styling. This helped them save time while shopping or assembling an outfit at home.

### **Adapting.**

In order to meet their need for modesty a number of research participants were adapting the use of a garment. Where a particular item of clothing was meant to be worn one way, it was being adapted for use in a different way. This represents a level of creativity that is born out of a willingness to find sartorial solutions within a fashion system that does not meet the demand for diverse tastes and needs.

The hijab can be any fabric a woman chooses to use to cover her head. As such, many hijabs bought by women in the West are bought in mainstream stores, whether dollar stores, department stores, or boutiques. In a sense, many of us are adapting scarves, designed to be worn around the neck or as a fashion accessory, and wearing the scarf as a practice of our faith and devotion to God. Laila takes the adaptation of scarves as hijabs to another level. She picks a fabric that drapes well in a colour that could look like blonde hair from a distance. She drapes the centre of the scarf over her head so that equal lengths hang from either side of her face. Then she'll take a second scarf, with a print in a different fabric and referring to the printed scarf says, "and then I'll take this one and I guess maybe wear it like a, what would you say like a durag, but it's one of my favourite looks and again I've got a lot of compliments on it so I'll go like that," see Figure 5. To create another look Laila says she might pair the same draping hijab look with a hat, see Figure 6. When she went to an Indian wedding she matched her outfit with a jersey hijab that she twisted into the look of a braid and wore her 'braid' from the back over her shoulder to the front, similar to the look shown in Figure 7. Laila says, "you got to do what keeps you happy with wearing the hijab and that's my point ... have fun with it."

Many participants said they adapted dresses to wear as tops. Huda, 24, said she wore a dress to her convocation with leggings, see Figure 8.

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I'm more into wearing dresses [as shirts] because as a Muslim woman with hijab, it's hard to find shirts that are long so you have to opt for dresses. Literally the transition of me starting to wear dresses is as soon as I became a hijabi.

Ghazala, 40, is drawn to the look of fitted mini dresses. In order to adapt them to her needs, she opens the seams on the sides. When opened up, the dress becomes a tunic-style top and meets her aesthetic, style, and modesty requirements, see Figure 9.

Most women innovate by blending or changing the intended use of items from their wardrobe in ways they may not have worn before. They take cues from shop windows, looks they see day-to-day, fashion magazines and other fashion authorities, such as social media influencers (Woodward, 2007). The way modest dressers navigate a fashion system that does not meet their needs is demonstrated in many creative ways. They alter the use of a garment, for example turning scarves into braids, or wearing halter tops on their head to cover their hair, then wearing a visor on top of that to complete the look. They alter garments by taking seam rippers to the garment to modify how it fits the body. Or, when they find that one perfect clothing item, they have duplicates custom tailored in different fabrics, see Figure 10. This represents a lot of effort, extra spending, and desire to make current fashions work with one's modesty needs. The risk is, when consumers with diverse needs are making do with what's available, the fashion system may not feel the pressure to diversify their product offerings. Muslim women who dress modestly invest creative and aesthetic labour to refashion and adapt garments to their needs.

### **Layering.**

Muslim women who dress modestly are constantly layering their clothing to meet their modesty requirements. My own lived experience and those of the participants in this research is

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that the clothing from the mainstream fashion system is either too short, too transparent, too low-cut, cut too high, or any combination of these shortcomings.

Aneela, 27, says “I wish I didn’t have to layer either with something underneath or something on top, I wish we had choices in lengths.” To overcome the constant demand for the aesthetic labour that goes into pulling an outfit together Aneela and Naseema, both 27, wear all black layering undergarments. No matter the colour of their top, skirt or scarf, their accompanying leggings, t-shirts or sleeves, see Figure 11, are always black.

Modest fashion dressers are exasperated with the amount of planning that has to go into an outfit. Huma, 38, says she has to think twice about anything she finds while shopping. This is the internal conversation she has with herself every time she finds an item of clothing that she is drawn to: “Can I just put this on and leave the house?” If not then she asks herself, “What do I have to modify to make it wearable for me?” She comes up with the solution(s) to fix the garment and then asks herself, “Is this too much work or expense to fix?” If the answer is “yes” she does not purchase the piece.

Laila, 34, Huda, 24, and Ghazala, 40, expand on their frustration with layering. Laila said she packed for a trip to New York and meticulously planned each outfit. She took a favourite pair of ripped jeans and forgot to pack her tights, which she layers underneath cover her bare legs, and so she could not wear her jeans. She describes layering as tedious. Huda is frustrated with doing a mental checklist every time she styles an outfit: is the top underneath see-through, is it long enough? Do I feel good in this? She says:

There's a lot to process when you're putting clothes on and putting your outfits together, a challenge, definitely. I wear a lot of layers just to wear this one outfit, just to make it a bit modest (Figure 12). There is a camisole (to fix the neckline), a tank top (to make it more

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opaque), the dress, leggings (to make up for the short hemline), jean jacket (to make up for the short cap sleeves) and hijab, that's a lot of layering.

Ghazala is unapologetic about layering “My pet peeve is layering, I want to cover more of my ass and it's hard to do so I have to do layers.”

Across all ages, ethnic backgrounds, and lifestyles, the frustrations with layering are real and ever-present. These experiences tell us that a lot of aesthetic labour is needed to dress fashionably and modestly. The women who do not have the interest in fashion, or may not have the creative skill set or time to research ideas, or do not have the money for the effort of fashioning together modest styles turn to sartorial solutions from other cultures. An example is the abaya, a floor-length loose-fitting lightweight overcoat that modestly covers the body in one easy step. Woodward (2007) says “women have to measure whether their bodies live up to the clothing” (p. 12). In stark contrast to this we have learned here that Muslim women do the opposite. They measure whether the clothing lives up to their modesty requirements. When clothing fails the modest fashion dresser's body they invest the aesthetic labour to get the look they want or give up and turn to the abaya. The latter choice puts the Canadian Muslim modest fashion dresser at risk of being accused of not assimilating into Canadian culture (Forani, 2019).

### **The Rules.**

For Muslim women getting dressed has little to do with the headscarf; that is often a last thought that is wrapped as a finishing touch to an outfit. Reading the scholarship available on Muslim veiling, the conclusion drawn seems to be that the only piece of cloth a Muslim woman is deeply concerned with is the veil or hijab (Bilge, 2010; Eid, 2015; Mansson McGinty, 2014; Williams & Vashi, 2007). This study has shown this is not the case. Fifteen out of the sixteen women who participated in this study said when assembling an outfit for the day, the decision on

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which hijab to wear came last. Participants spoke at length about the garments that cover the body and each garment's suitability. Transparency of fabric, length, cut, fit and numerous other qualifiers need to be met before being considered part of an outfit. In order to help style consistently, these women, primarily from the 35+ age range, have established rules of styling that they follow. These rules also guide their purchasing decisions.

Mona, 44, is more aware of the silhouette of an outfit. She says, "If I'm wearing a flowy dress, I don't want to wear a big flowy scarf because it's like flowy and flowy." The design or styling decision that she is making has nothing to do with her headscarf but the impression she wants to make with her outfit. As a working professional, she wants to make sure that any "flowy" fabric that moves dramatically as she walks or stands is tempered with a more tailored piece that provides her overall presentation with a polished look. For instance, if she is wearing a wide leg pant that moves and flows as she walks she will wear a more tailored jacket, top and hijab where the fabric may be tucked-in with no length of fabric dangling loosely. The opposite can also be true. If her top is looser fitting and flows as she walks, she will pair that with a tailored straight-leg or skinny pant, and again the hijab will be tied so no loose ends are dangling. This illustrates that Mona is tuned into the conventional business professional dress codes that were first established in the early 1980s for women in business (Entwistle, 2015).

Huma, 38, is focused on ensuring her entire outfit looks good. She says, "All pieces have to look like they belong and fit together well." The style of each piece needs to work with the others; for instance, if she is wearing a longer top, then she would wear a skinnier pant. Similarly to Mona, above, she says "a wide pant with a wide top looks bad." At the same time, she does not wear tight clothing. With a wide pant she would pair a more tailored top but one that is not fitted to her figure. In addition, she has strict rules about colour. She allows one piece of her

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ensemble to have colour, but after that all her add-on pieces are black. For example, a favourite jumpsuit is tan and black. Everything she wears with it, such as a cardigan to cover the arms, is black. This rule does not apply to the hijab as she would match that with the colour of the feature piece, in this case the tan colour in the jumpsuit, see Figure 13.

Rules were typically developed by participants who were over 35 years old and worked full-time as professionals (e.g. civil servant, high school teacher, engineer). Rules helped them find ways to meet their own modesty needs and establish a consistent presentation of themselves in a professional setting. Woodward's (2007) study in the United Kingdom revealed that in general, women have rules for how to assemble an outfit. These rules are set by their own sense of style but also through cues they get from social media, fashion magazines and television which dictate what shapes look best on various body types. This study found modest dressers are not susceptible to these kinds of rules because the goal is to hide the body shape, not enhance it. Participants fashioned their own rules of modesty based on their personal interpretation of the same style cues. Modest dressers are not caught in the web of rules that perpetuate the ideal body type by implying clothes can help to camouflage the figure so that one can be perceived as having the right body (Woodward, 2007). Modest dressers live outside of this manipulation, yet they are acutely aware of professional codes of dress and make their own rules to comply. These Muslim women, as is true for any member of Western society, "attend unconsciously or consciously to [cultural] norms and expectations when preparing the body for presentation in any social setting" (Entwistle, 2015, p. 11). The fact that they do it with a higher degree of modesty that includes a hijab marginalizes their body and makes them more visible.



### **Consequences of Wearing**

This theme explores the experiences Muslim women have when dressed modestly. Current scholarship explores whether or not veiling is a choice, how hijab-wearing women feel about veiling and how they are inspired by modest fashion style influencers (Akou, 2010, 2015; Kavakci & Kraeplin, 2017; Lewis, 2010b; Mansson McGinty, 2014; Tarlo, 2010b; Williams & Vashi, 2007). There is little research that takes an in-depth look at Muslim women's lived experiences through every day dress practices. In this study I identified three themes when exploring the consequences of dressing modestly. First, always being different, no matter what; second, the hijab boosting pride; and last, the need to adjust for safety. The intersectional qualities that are most salient as it relates to the consequences for wearing the hijab were ethnicity and marital status. Those who presented as lighter-skinned and could be "white passing" when wearing a headscarf camouflaged under a hat were able to adjust their sartorial practices to feel safer. Interestingly, this also worked for one participant who is darker-skinned but travels with her husband who is a white Canadian. Women whose ethnicity was distinct experienced outright hatred while running mundane errands. Overall, single women felt more vulnerable in certain circumstances, like crossing the border to the United States yet they were the ones who wore the hijab with more pride and referred to it as a crown, security blanket or a marker of their importance or preciousness in the world.

#### **Always Different, No Matter What.**

Clothes are an identifier. They can communicate class, gender identity, and professional status. Many people are judged based on their sartorial choices. However, women who wear the hijab have the experience that no matter what they wear, whether it is off the fashion runways or not fashionable at all, they are judged by their headscarf alone.

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Huma, a 38-year-old mother and high school teacher, recounts an experience in the grocery store. As she was running through the store with her children to pick up a few items, a woman confronted her and said, “you shouldn’t be wearing that, it doesn’t match here in Canada.” Huma said she was so busy with her children, she ignored the comment and then later wished she had said something. This incident also got her thinking that hijab-wearing women will never be fully accepted because they will always look different. She said,

I can wear the exact same outfit that they’re wearing. I could wear the skinny jeans with the short top and everything but I’m still going to have a hijab on and I’m still going to be different than you so it doesn’t matter what I wear. You’re still going to only see my hijab which is why I feel that I should stand up and wear it!

This demonstrates both a point of frustration and pride. A lot of aesthetic labour goes into presenting oneself fashionably in a modest way and, although the hijab is the last item to be worn to complete an outfit, it is the first item that is seen by others and hijab-wearing Muslim women are judged immediately. The other side of this frustration is the proud moment when one can confidently exclaim, “if you’re not going to see me for who I am, I might as well be my most authentic self” and wear the headscarf anyway. The question remains, are hijab-wearing Muslim women in WENA putting all this aesthetic labour into the impression they are making and really having no impact on challenging stereotypes? This would be an interesting avenue to explore.

Halima, now 73, recounts when she started wearing the hijab 25 years ago. Halima worked as the head of the daycare centre in a large university in Toronto. She saw the parent of a child who had come to the daycare years before, well before she began wearing the headscarf. As the parent approached her, Halima asked, “Do you recognize me? The reason I’m asking is I didn’t wear the hijab when you came here regularly.” The parent responded, “Didn’t you do that

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before? I don't remember you without it." Halima received this as a positive response, feeling as if she was being blessed with circumstances that made it easy for her to be at peace with her decision to wear the headscarf. However, this pre-9/11 incident also speaks to how racialized bodies are assumed to be different. Even though Halima was wearing Western clothes and styling her hair, this parent never saw her as similar but in an "othered" way and always assumed she had worn the headscarf.

Although identity is formed both by one's social activity and clothing choices simultaneously (Woodward, 2007, p. 19), meaning one looks different going to the gym versus going to a wedding, these participants' experiences raise the question: is this also true for bodies that represent a minority or marginalized population? Hijab-wearing women put in the aesthetic labour to ensure their gym outfit meets their needs and reflects athletic wear trends. They put in the same effort to ensure their professional attire suits their work environment. But is this labour lost when the only item that is seen by those who don't wear the headscarf is the headscarf? What impact does this have on hijabis as they make their way through Western society? Will they ever be able to claim an authentic Western identity?

### **Hijab Boosts Pride.**

Another consequence of dressing modestly with the hijab was how it boosts the pride of the wearer. In discussing veiling practices, scholars have mentioned that hijabis have a sense of pride and confidence (Lewis, 2015b, 2018a; Tarlo, 2010c) when wearing the headscarf. However, these scholars have not explored where the sense of pride and confidence comes from and how it is embodied by the hijab-wearing woman.

Halima recounts several "pride boosting" incidents at her university once she began wearing hijab. A French professor, who she knew was atheist, began bowing slightly when

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greeting her to say hello. Halima received it as an extra level of respect that he was offering to her. As the head of the Co-Operative daycare facilities at the university, Halima would often sit in on meetings when negotiating with the union. A meeting with the Co-Operative members and the union was held shortly after Halima started wearing the hijab. When discussions came to an impasse someone at the table said, "Okay, stop. Let's ask Halima." When Halima asked why the person responded, "You're the only honest person here who will give an honest opinion." Halima said she had not experienced this kind of deference in previous meetings. Last, when she would sit with groups in meetings or other gatherings her colleagues would direct anyone with a glass of wine not to sit beside Halima because she didn't drink wine. Halima said this not only instilled a sense of pride within her but strengthened her belief in God's wishes as the Almighty was making it easy for her to wear the hijab.

Huda, 24, is an aspiring community activist and ran in the Mississauga municipal elections in 2018. She did not secure a seat as School Trustee but she got a lot of exposure in the local political arena. Huda says, "I felt like I had more power to be fashionable I guess. It sounds weird, I feel like the hijab gave me more confidence." She found it very empowering to wear the hijab. She was more comfortable talking to strangers, giving speeches, and she felt like her hijab gave her a special power that made her more confident. She described it as "having this crown, I thought I'm empowered, I felt I could be self-reliant in a sense. I feel it gave me this strength and power," see Figure 14. When asked if the hijab was like a Wonder Woman bracelet, deflecting negative thoughts, she responded it was more like having a security blanket.

Wearing the hijab can change the way people interact with you in many positive ways whether it is deferring to you because you seem trustworthy or treating you with a deeper level of respect. It can also boost one's confidence and pride and provide a sense of security that

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comes from not being fully exposed or vulnerable to the world because of a bad hair day or another more deeply held insecurity. Existing scholarship has focused on Muslim women's desire to be received positively by dressing fashionably (Lewis, 2018a), but there is no discussion around the actual positive effects of veiling in the West. These findings advance research by pointing to actual examples where people have responded to a Muslim woman in hijab in a positive manner. These findings challenge assumptions and conventional wisdom and demonstrate that wearing the hijab can produce a level of trust, respect and positive interactions. Certainly there are also negative experiences, but we now see that negativity is not the only experience a Muslim woman who veils encounters.

### **Adjusting for Safety.**

Participants in this study and in past research have spoken to the pride and empowerment they feel when wearing the hijab. But the Orientalist view and recent acts of terror perpetrated against Muslims alongside divisive political rhetoric also has hijabis concerned about their safety. Participants respond to these concerns by adjusting a presentation of themselves to help them out of harm's way.

Aneela, 27, wears a turban-style hijab which she feels provides a degree of protection from judgement; she rarely wears her hijab in the traditional way that surrounds the face, covering the neck. Nevertheless, she does identify as Muslim and feels that this identity is easily recognized by airport officials when traveling. She is a graduate student of religion and says, "I'm not brave enough to read books with an Islamic title on the plane." She was 10 years old when the terrorist attacks known as 9/11 took place in September 2001. She has lived in a post-9/11 world her whole life and what she has read about crossing borders concerns her. Once President Trump took office and started pushing the Muslim Ban, she became fearful of traveling

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to the United States. When preparing to attend an academic conference in the United States, her parents told her it was best to be safe and, despite their strictly held beliefs advised her not to wear the hijab when traveling through the airport. Because wearing the hijab is a spiritual practice that Aneela felt is done to please the Creator, she could not completely remove it. She said she wore the hijab “half and half” with the scarf pulled back showing her hair and loosely draped over the back of her head. She said the tactic worked as it took her only moments to cross the border. Once she safely got to the other side she said to God, “Thank you God, I’m sorry.” She felt badly for abandoning her spiritual practice to ensure her safety.

When traveling to the United States Yasmeen, 51, does not like to wrap her hijab in the traditional manner. Before a trip she purchases tube tops, meant to be worn around the torso and wears it on her head, in the same fashion one would wear a winter toque or cap and smooths the extra fabric to the back of her head to cover her bun or ponytail. She then accessorizes this makeshift head covering with a visor or baseball cap. This creates the look of someone wearing a durag under a cap. This style of hijab does not cover her neck, which she normally covers when at home. Yasmeen is willing to sacrifice the traditional wrapping technique for her safety and to protect herself from judgmental glances and racial slurs when traveling. She says her son calls the look the “cancer patient hijab” because retail store staff treat her very nicely thinking she may be covering her head because of hair loss from cancer treatments!

The sacrifices these women are making take them away from the practice of their faith to ensure they feel a sense of safety and security. Acquiring a feeling of safety is their goal, not in a world led by radical regimes and extremists but inside democratic societies that value free speech. For every person that takes a slight bow while greeting a Muslim woman wearing hijab there is a vastly more scary reality at border crossings and while taking care of daily tasks. Every

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marginalized body and identity grapples with sartorial safety: as madison moore (2018) says, there is great privilege in being able to go to the store to grab a sandwich and not be noticed. As my research demonstrates, a connection can be drawn between the experiences of queer people and Muslim women. These groups are so different yet both are judged in a Western gendered normative world.

Society wants nothing more than for us to play by its rules, and we're punished for it when we don't. The fact that beautiful eccentrics put themselves on the line every day despite the odds shows how important they are not only as aesthetic geniuses but as political activists too. (moore, 2018, Kindle Locations 177-180)

This statement is as true for moore's "beautiful eccentrics" as it is for Muslim women in hijab.

### **Digital Storytelling Analysis**

Attending a digital storytelling workshop and creating a digital story of my own gave me firsthand experience of the pride I felt when my words, feelings, and thoughts were stitched together with text, sights and sounds into an authentic representation of my message that can't be edited, altered or presented through someone else's lens. Rice and Mundel (2018) state as "receivers of the stories we revise our assumptions about particular bodies and histories and how they are defined within dominant cultural narratives and institutional structures" (Rice & Mundel, 2018, p. 212). Storytelling methodologies help centre and amplify voices that are not burdened by professional storytelling methods used in documentaries, films, and other professionally produced media. The storyteller chooses the story, supporting visuals and sounds, and how they come together to completion. This process reveals complex intersections of identity, belief systems, securities, insecurities and provides a deeper more meaningful insight into the storyteller and author.

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In this section I provide an analysis of how digital stories help us gain a deeper understanding and new knowledge within each theme that emerged from the analysis done above. The first video is by Hanan, titled “Underneath This Hijab, I’m Still Human,” the second video is by Nina, titled “Beyond the Cover.” To view these digital stories online refer to Appendix K.

### **Hanan: “Underneath This Hijab, I’m Still Human.”**

#### ***What influences Hanan’s style?***

The power of Hanan’s message is embedded in the juxtaposition of her images and words. The image accompanying “what do you see, an oppressed damsel in distress waiting to be set free” (Hazime, 2019, 0:30) is accompanied by a photo, see Figure 15, showing the storyteller jumping with arms wide open as the wind catches her skirt, in a meadow by an azure blue lake wearing a crown of flowers with her pink hijab and flowery-printed dress billowing in the breeze. The image could not be further from the “truth” of the words. With each stereotypical assumption made about her and the words hurled at her the storyteller expresses a vastly different narrative through her visuals. It is this juxtaposition of script with images that is the message. She is telling us that the negative assumptions about her inspire her clothing choices. Despite being considered “a shy prudish hijabi hiding from her own shadow” (1:05) she wears fire engine red headscarves, crowns made of flowers, decorative masks and beautiful brightly coloured billowing clothes. Her style is influenced by the opposite of what she feels people see when they see her.

#### ***How does Hanan style her outfits?***

In her digital story Hanan chose to share several photographs of herself in various outfits. What we learn by observing her video provides deeper insight into her completed looks



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than what was presented in the wardrobe interviews. For instance, her vintage blue dress was presented to me as a favourite in the wardrobe interview, see Figure 16. In her video we see this same dress accessorized with a wide belt and a crown of flowers in a colour array matched to the blue in her outfit, see Figure 16. Another example is Hanan's blue dress with pink flowers. In the wardrobe interview she showed the hijab that matches the dress and the colour of sleeves she wears with it, see Figure 17; in her video the outfit comes to life when styled with a pearl necklace, flower crown, belt, and bag. From this observation we learn that accessories, beyond just the hijab, provide Hanan with the exact look she desires. Hanan did say in her wardrobe interview that her hijab was not more or less important than her other accessories like hats, belts, flowers and purses. She doesn't prioritize the hijab, she considers it as part of the finishing touches for her outfit-for-the-day. Advancing our understanding of the veil in Muslim women's lives, this study continues to reveal that the hijab is not the most important part of an outfit for Muslim women who veil but is only considered one element of their look.

### *What consequences does Hanan face when dressing modestly?*

In her narrative Hanan does not speak directly to what consequences she faces while dressed modestly. However, her imagery and script read together tell us she is uneasy with the Western gaze. For instance, she shows a moving image of human eyes surrounded by brown and grey circulating smoke, see Figure 18, while asking sternly "Tell me, when you look at me what do you see?" (Hazime, 2019, t. 00:02). This is accompanied with the haunting sounds of chimes. The unsettling eye image combined with the forcefulness of her voice and the eerie sounds from the chimes gives the distinct impression that she doesn't see this gaze as a loving, supportive and uplifting gaze but one that has an unknown purpose, is not trustworthy, and must be sternly spoken to and confronted.

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In a 2-hour long wardrobe interview Hanan never articulated any sense of discomfort with the Western gaze. In person, the focus of her conversation was on her clothing items, how she assembles outfits and her love for various styles of clothing. The digital storytelling workshop provided her with an alternative way to communicate that created a safe space for her to access deeper feelings she many not have known how to articulate while interacting with a research/interviewer. The workshop allowed her to write her own narrative in her own time and choose freely from the communication methods of word, sight, and sound to create her own story.

### **Nina: “Beyond the Cover.”**

#### ***What influences Nina’s style?***

Nina’s digital story is made up of 33 photographs and 11 video clips of herself in various locations wearing different outfits each place, representing her various social identities. She narrates her experience as a hijabi with the questions she has been asked. One part of her narrative gives us one clue as to an influence on her style when she mentions Beyoncé: “Some days I too want to have wind blowing in my hair, like Beyoncé does” (Nina, 2019, 1:35), she says with a chuckle. Having exhausted her audio narrative, I looked to her visual story to find what influences her style. In one video clip Nina reveals that hip hop influences her style, see Figure 19. In this clip she is dancing using hip hop moves while wearing a hoodie. Beyond that it is clear to see that her style is inspired by her lifestyle. Nina’s images fade in and out and range from scenes on the beach, rooftop patios to desert tours and tourist destinations. Each of her outfits suit her surroundings. I counted eight nightclub looks, seven athletic looks, and several looks from her travels, see Figure 20. Being fashionably modest has been studied by many scholars but these studies have focused only on social media influencers, not on the everyday

dress practices of Muslim women who are not social media influencers. What we are learning is Muslim women fashion an outfit-for-the-day based on their activities that day and based on their own unique modesty requirements. This is different from what we learn in previous scholarship from fashion influencers who assemble looks from the latest retail brand releases.

### ***How does Nina style her outfits?***

The video shows that Nina's clothing choices are always appropriate to her circumstances. She uses accessories when they are needed: hats and sunglasses for outings on sunny days, chunky jewelry and evening purses for nights out on the town. Her dressed body is fully covered with long skirts and long sleeves. In these ways she represents a normative representation of the fashionable yet modest hijabi. Where her style differs from many hijab-wearing women is in the fit of her clothing. Many participants in this study were focused on hiding the shape of their figure, this was not true for Nina. Nina's clothing hugs her hourglass figure yet she is fully covered with no décolletage or skin showing on her legs or arms. She has fun with her outfits wearing flowing jersey sundresses where you can see she layers to meet her unique modest requirements, see Figure 21.

### ***What consequences does Nina face when dressing modestly?***

Nina's audio narrative begins with the questions people ask her, "How do you speak English so well? You were born here? Aren't you hot in that? Was it your choice to put it on? Did your husband make you put that on? (Nina, 2019, 0:02). She says "as frustrating as these questions can be, and sometimes I can't help but roll my eyes" (0:31), she reflects on why she gets asked these questions and says "maybe it's related to something that they saw on TV, maybe I'm the only Muslim that they know and feel comfortable asking, regardless it's an opportunity for me to educate them on what it means to be a hijabi and why we do it." (0:43). Nina's tone of

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voice and word choice tell us she feels the burden of being asked questions all the time and this is the consequence she feels as a hijabi. The register of her voice is low and while she says “educate them on what it means” her intonation lowers indicating the feeling of burden versus excitement when one’s intonation would naturally be higher.

Nina is naturally quite gregarious. In our wardrobe interview she was speaking with an exuberant tone of voice, making jokes then laughing at them herself. Listening to her introductory comments in her video revealed a completely different side of Nina that was not seen in the wardrobe interview. This workshop allowed Nina space and time to reflect on her experiences as a hijabi and articulate what she feels people want to know based on the questions that she has been personally asked. When preparing for the workshop she sat with her sister who contributed many more sample questions. In the end Nina decided to use only those questions she had been asked personally. This narrative is Nina’s own personal journey and authentic voice representing the day-to-day lived experiences of one Muslim woman who wears hijab. Her digital story now lives online and forms a collection of authentic hijabi experiences in the West, narrated in their own voices and presented to the world as is. No directorial cuts or theoretical lenses have been applied.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

What does it mean to be undercover? To be pretending you are something that you are not? To be inauthentic with the deliberate intention to misguide, lead astray or even trap? Living in the West, the women in this study, and I, are under the scrutiny from the Western gaze every single day. We are physically under a cover that hides a seemingly innocuous part of our body, our hair. Why do we cover? What are we up to? In this study, I have expanded how we understand Muslim women who wear the hijab by centering their dress practices and challenged how fashion studies understands this category of woman.

### **Academic Contribution**

The academic contribution of this research is embedded in the approach taken in this study. Focusing intersectional aspects provides a more robust understanding of Muslim women and dress. I have not conflated studies and conclusions drawn in scholarship done in the East with scholarship done in the West, and the subtle differences in Muslim women's lived experiences have been honoured here. This study advances the work of two scholars. Reina Lewis who has been researching modest fashion for over 10 years and Sophia Woodward who has done pioneering work in studying the everyday dress practices of women.

Reina Lewis has conducted research on modest fashion in both Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority regions. She has studied the practice of veiling, the rise of modest fashion influencers, and the proliferation of modest fashion businesses. She recently was consulting curator for "Contemporary Muslim Fashions," an exhibit held from September 2018 to January 2019 at the deYoung Museum in San Francisco that left visitors with an "elevated understanding of the global Muslim community, how they are expressing their identity, choice and empowerment through fashion, and with the realization that the Muslim fashion market is one of

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the fastest-growing segments in fashion today” (Mirza, 2019). Lewis’ long-term body of work created an opening for this study to take place. This project expands on Lewis’ scholarship by studying the everyday dress practices of Muslim women who veil and how modest fashion manifests in the lives of its consumers.

This research also advances the work of Sophia Woodward (2007) in *Why Women Wear What They Wear* beyond the experience of a largely white British population. Where Woodward revealed a constant level of stress in front of the mirror at home "as women are wondering not only whether they like their new skirt, but whether it makes their legs look too short or their bottom look too big” (Woodward, 2007, p. 17), for Muslim women who cover, this level of insecurity and self-doubt does not present itself in the same way. When Muslim women dress modestly, one cannot tell if they have flabby upper arms, a double chin, or thick ankles. Muslim women’s "shortcomings" as defined by Western beauty ideals are no longer shortcomings but private parts that are protected from the judging gaze that has been trained by normative hegemonic and unattainable beauty ideals. This alone is empowering. None of the insecurities that inform a women’s sartorial choices exist for the modest fashion dresser. It makes sense then that many participants felt like the hijab was a security blanket or crown, as they were protected from the gaze with a sense of security, feeling like they were above the judgement of others. For the modest dressers who participated in this study, body size may impact whether she chooses to wear a skirt or pant; however, she never questions her body shape being too much or too little for a particular look. Woodward says,

As women look at their dressed bodies in the mirror, they do so in the context of omnipresent images of fashionable bodies ... perpetuat[ing] normative ideals of beauty

and femininity. The impact these images have upon how women see their own body shapes is a hot topic in current public discourse.” (Woodward, 2007, p. 3)

This discourse gets more interesting when contemplating the impact images that depict the Western beauty ideal have on the modest dresser. I argue the modest dresser is taking back her agency from the Western forces that tell her to live up to certain ideals of beauty. When thought of from this point-of-view, who then is oppressed? The non-Muslim women trying to live up to Western beauty ideals or the Muslim woman who is covering her body shape?

### **Expanding Methodology**

This research study introduced the use of an arts-based research method, digital storytelling, to fashion studies. In this study, the digital storytelling workshop gave voice to participants and provided a tool for them to share their authentic selves free from both the Western gaze, and the academic’s lens that could be coloured by a Western gaze, or theoretical discourse that negates their contextual reality. Participants become authors, producers, and directors of their very own digital stories. “Women’s relationship to their clothing arises out of the sensual experiences of wearing items on their bodies” (Woodward, 2007, p. 3), meaning clothing is a sensory experience that connects the mind and body. Digital stories provide an opportunity to express what women are feeling and experiencing through words, sounds, images and video. The multi-sensory experience of visuals, music, sounds, poetry and storytelling provides a richer dataset of information and a deeper understanding of a research participant’s embodiment of her clothing that cannot be retrieved from an interview alone.

The majority of research done about Muslim women has been done by white British women or Muslim women who were born and raised in or are from Muslim countries who impose their own assumptions and ideas onto Muslim women’s experiences in the West

(Kavakci & Kraeplin, 2017; Lewis, 2015b; Tarlo, 2010c). This limitation has been overcome in this study because I am a hijab-wearing Muslim woman who was born and raised in the West. Part of what I am doing is drawing on my own lived experience and taking the depth of the research further by giving my participants voice and agency through digital storytelling. I am not centering myself in this research, nevertheless I have a tacit understanding of the practice of veiling, its nuances, dressing modestly, and why it's done.

This combination of digital storytelling with traditional interviewing is innovating methodology in fashion studies by giving voice to a marginalized and misunderstood community that often stands in harm's way because their sartorial choices make them hyper-visibly Muslim. In this study, the potential of digital storytelling is seen through the lens of fashion and can serve as a model for how the complexities of intersectionality can be explored and communicated by research participants and communicated to the broader world through digestible multi-media narratives.

### **Contribution to Industry**

This study provides rich insight into diverse Muslim women's experiences with clothing. The voice-of-the-customer (VOC) is articulated here and provides designers, brands or manufacturers with clues to these modest dressers' needs, desires, and requirements.

Muslim women who veil use clothing not only to fashion an outfit-of-the-day but also to feel safe and to overcome racial biases. Women from all generations and ethnic backgrounds are looking to Western brands to offer them Western clothing that is not transparent, has higher necklines, longer hemlines and full sleeve coverage. They do not want clothing that appropriates their ethnic clothing; they want Western clothing, the same clothing everyone else is wearing but considered for modesty. The digital stories created in this study are very telling. Muslim modest



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dressers are into subcultures like steam punk, hip hop and vintage. They are as diverse as customers who do not look for modesty traits but will happily wear them.

What the industry needs to learn is that unlike the ‘normative’ fashion consumer they currently target, who is determining if her “clothing is ‘really me’ ... balancing personal style with external sartorial expectations and media constructions of body” (Woodward, 2007, p. 6), the modest fashion consumer is balancing personal style with sartorial expectations that she has constructed for herself from her own belief system, while rejecting “media constructions of the body” (p. 6).

### **Future Research**

In her research, Woodward (2007) discovered that a woman’s relation to her body comes from a bombardment of images and expectations put upon Western women by the ideals set by fashion houses, advertising agencies and brands. My study found the relationship to the body that women who dress modestly have is based on their own ethics and values. There is an opportunity here for future research to explore what influences a woman’s relationship to her body. Do ethics and values only come into play when faith-based modesty is a priority? Are there women who are not Muslim who desire modesty? Because intersectionality assumes varied experiences of similar events an intersectional theoretical lens must continue to be used to reveal the “differential experiences of common events” (Kohlman, 2016, p. 34). These findings will bring more diverse voices-of-the-customer into view and may begin to shift attention away from creating hegemonic beauty ideals to giving the customer what they want.

Another area of future research is related to the approach that has been taken by researchers when studying Muslim veiling practices. I have found overall that Western scholars who study and write about veiling practices in the West and cite studies of veiling practices in

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the East begin to conflate the practices of two very different worlds. Although I have not scrutinized the literature in this research along these lines, I intend to evaluate scholarship that meets these conditions much more critically for consideration in informing my future research.

Ultimately this research demonstrates that we have to rethink our approach to studying marginalized communities. Researchers need to be mindful of a multitude of social identities by keeping intersectionality at the core of their work and they must “deconstruct the Western gaze by querying both its fears and anxieties” (Al-Mahadin, 2013, p. 16). Perhaps white Western scholars have been reluctant to do this as it may reveal that “it is the western gaze that is being repressed by the hijab, not the woman wearing it” (p. 16).

Figures



*Figure 1.* One of Mona’s typically “Canadian” ensembles considered by her to be the latest in fashion. Shown here, a favourite lace top with unstructured blazer and matching scarf worn as a hijab.



*Figure 2.* Naseema's Victorian fantasy dress. Top left and centre picture is the front of the dress, the far right photo is the back. The long sleeves and cut of the dress meet her modesty requirements and she covers her hair and exposed décolletage area with a hijab. She finishes the look with the hat, pictured bottom left.





*Figure 3.* A typical outfit Huma will wear to work as a high school teacher. Here she pairs a colourful pant with a muted-tone top and neutral hijab.



*Figure 4.* A typical outfit Saima will wear to work as an engineer, a black pant with long top and matching hijab with a geometric pattern.



*Figure 5.* Laila's two scarves. A plain jersey colour to mimic hair, and the decorative patterned scarf to wear like a durag.





*Figure 6.* A blonde-colour hijab shown with suede cap and the outfit she would wear with that look.





*Figure 7.* Blonde colour hijab worn as a “braid.” Photograph: Instagram.



*Figure 8.* Huda's convocation dress worn as a long top with black leggings shown paired with the cardigan and hijab to complete the look.



*Figure 9.* An H&M purchase, a fitted mini-dress in a heavier fabric. When the side seams are opened, the dress becomes a long hip-covering tunic-style top. The fabric is folded over on the right side to show the length of the opened seam.





*Figure 10.* From Saima's wardrobe, on right, the teal top was bought online and met Saima's modesty requirement of full-length sleeves and enough length in the bodice to cover her hips. Saima purchased fabric and decorative gems from a Canadian national retail fabric store and had identical tops made in red and purple, shown on the right.



*Figure 11.* Sleeve accessory available at modest fashion retails. Shown here is the opening where the arm is inserted and the left arm sleeve. This extends beyond the photo (below) and is one piece that includes an opening for the right arm.



*Figure 12.* This outfit represents the number of layers it can take to make an outfit meet modesty requirements. This includes a camisole, tank top, the dress, leggings (not shown), jean jacket and hijab.





*Figure 13.* The tan and black jumpsuit is paired with black layering pieces only, except the hijab which will match the tan colour in the jumpsuit



*Figure 14.* Huda's typical campaigning outfit. The long sleeveless coat was perfect for cooler Fall days knocking door-to-door. The lapels of the jacket held her campaign buttons and she matched a simple black hijab with this look that empowered her and gave her voice.





*Figure 15.* Hanan’s video “Underneath This Hijab” screenshot demonstrating Hanan’s energetic pose. (Hazime, 2019, 0:32)



*Figure 16.* Vintage blue dress shown on left in the wardrobe interview. On right in the digital story accessorized into an outfit with a wide belt and crown of flowers. (Hazime, 2019, 3:54)

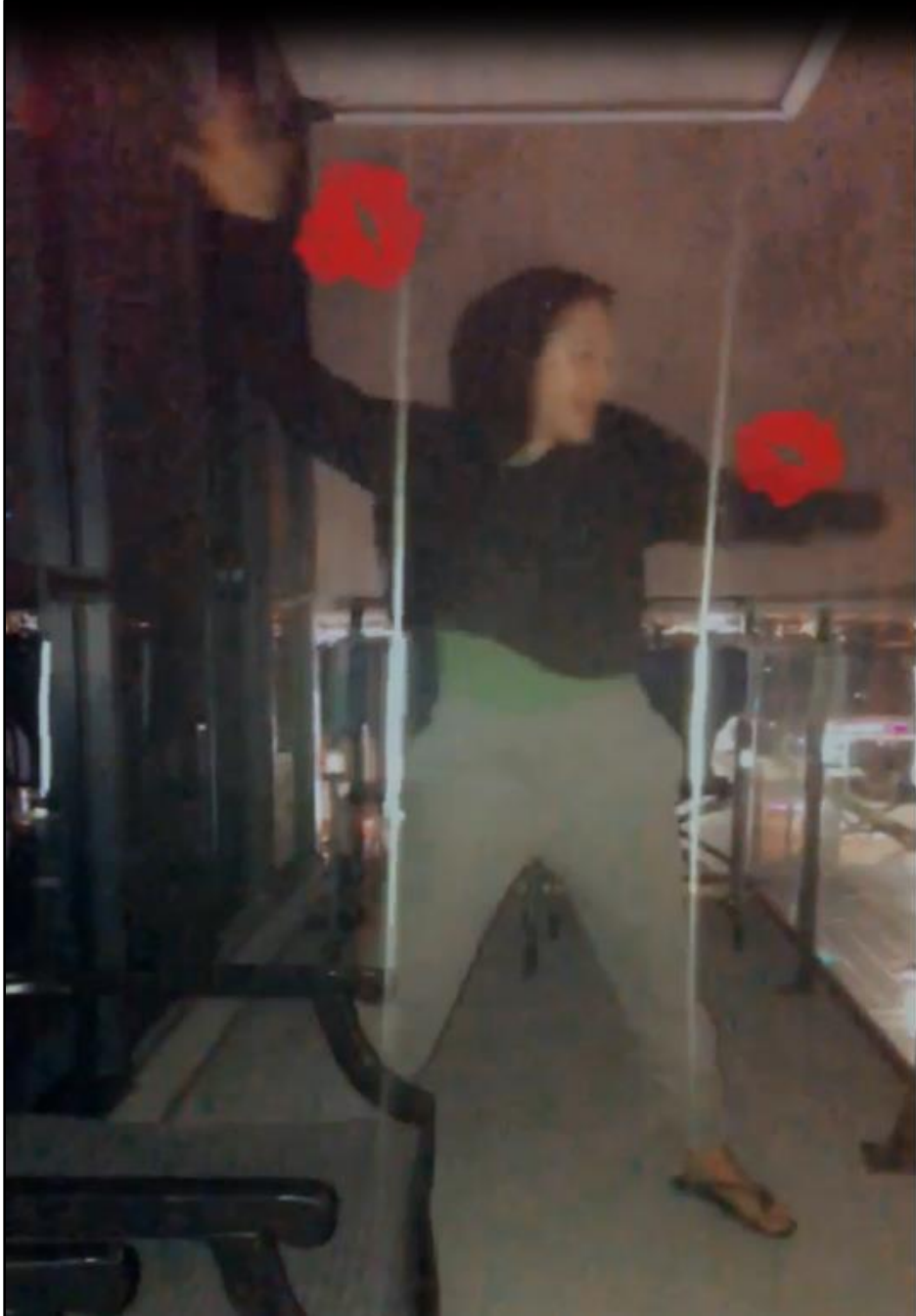




*Figure 17.* On the right, dress shown with hijab and sleeves at the wardrobe interview. On the left a screen shot from the video (Hazime, 2019, 0:50) showing the same outfit with pearl necklace, flower crown, wide leather belt and over-the-shoulder bag.



*Figure 18.* Screenshot of the image of human eye creepily staring while Hanan asks "Tell me, when you look at me what do you see?" (Hazime, 2019, 0:02)



*Figure 19.* Nina on her balcony, dress in a hoodie, dance hip hop style. (Nina, 2019, 2:38)

## WOMEN UNDERCOVER



*Figure 20.* A sampling of Nina's looks inspired by her lifestyle traveling, going to work, dancing, driving, and getting dressed for evenings out with friends. All images are screenshots from her video. (Nina, 2019)





*Figure 21.* Nina wearing figure-skimming dresses with a layering shirt underneath to give her the modesty coverage she desires. (Nina, 2019)

## Appendices

### Appendix A – Recruitment Flyer





**Women Undercover:**  
Exploring the Intersectional  
Identities of Muslim Women  
through *Modest Fashion*.

Because we are more than our veil!

ROMANA MIRZA, RESEARCHER  
MA CANDIDATE, RYERSON UNIVERSITY

## HELP US

ADVANCE DIVERSITY IN WOMEN'S FASHION

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:  
[romana.mirza@ryerson.ca](mailto:romana.mirza@ryerson.ca)

### WHAT TO EXPECT

1



Participants take part in a 2-hour wardrobe interview in your home where we will talk about your style while you show me your wardrobe.

Participants must identify as female, be a minimum age of 18, and have been wearing the hijab as a regular practice for a minimum of two years.

2



In the Digital Storytelling workshop, you will create a 2-5 minute fashion story about your experiences with modest fashion in video format.

Participation in Part 1 is a pre-requisite for participating in Part 2. The workshop will take place at Ryerson University over 2.5-3 days, from 10 am to 6 pm in January 2019.

Only participants who meet the eligibility criteria will be contacted to participate.

**Participate in Part 1 or Part 1 & 2 - your choice!**

There is no cost to participate in either or both parts of this research.



The purpose of this study is to examine Muslim women's intersectional identities by studying their fashion consumption practices. The goal of this work is to uncover new insights about the relationship between women, modesty and their Western identities.

**To participate or for more information:**  
[romana.mirza@ryerson.ca](mailto:romana.mirza@ryerson.ca)

 @rbmirza  @romana\_mirza

I am conducting this research as part of my graduate studies for partial completion of my Master's degree under the supervision of Dr. Ben Barry. This research has been reviewed by the Ryerson Research Ethics Board. (File #2018-268)



Appendix B – Research Participation Confirmation Email

We are working on a new academic research study titled “Women Undercover: Exploring the Intersectional Identities of Muslim Women through Modest Fashion” to advance diversity in women’s fashion. We are writing to ask whether you might be interested in participating in our project.

The purpose of this study is to examine Muslim women’s intersectional identities by studying their fashion consumption practices. The goal of this work is to uncover new insights about the relationship between women, modesty and their Western identities as well as to understand how digital storytelling can be utilized to disseminate research. What I have found in my academic research is that most scholars have difficulty grasping the essence of who we are as Muslim women living in the West. Most scholarship is either focused on our practice of veiling alone, without exploring who we are as individuals and why we choose to present ourselves this way through clothing. Or, without understanding the intricacies of who the consumer group is (who is creating this demand in the first place) they are interested in the rapid rise of demand for modest fashion.

Participation in our project involves two parts:

- The first part is a two-hour interview in your home during which we ask you about your fashion experiences while you provide a tour of your wardrobe. This interview is audio-recorded and some photographs are taken of your clothing. You can choose to participate in part 1 only.
- The second part is a digital storytelling workshop that will take place over 2.5-3 days, from 10 am to 6 pm in January 2019. It will be held in an accessible location at Ryerson University in downtown Toronto. In this workshop you will create a short film about your experiences with modest fashion. We will provide all the hardware, software and training for you to create your very own audio/video digital story, at no financial cost to you. You must participate in part 1 in order to participate in this part 2 workshop.

I am conducting this research as part of my graduate studies for partial completion of my Master's degree under the supervision of Dr. Ben Barry. Findings from this research study will be shared at conferences and in publications.

You are welcome to forward our email and the attached poster to any other women who might be interested in participating. To qualify as a participant, you must identify as female, be 18 years of age or older, and have been wearing the hijab as a regular practice for a minimum of two years. We are looking for women of all ages over 18 and of all ethnicities, body types, and walks of life to apply. Only participants who meet the eligibility criteria will be contacted to participate.

Please let us know if this might be of interest to you – and please know there is no pressure to participate in our study. There is no impact on our relationship or your relationship with Ryerson University should you choose not to participate. This research has been reviewed by the Ryerson Research Ethics Board (File #2018-268).

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

Romana B. Mirza  
Researcher  
MA Candidate 2019, School of Fashion  
Ryerson University  
[romana.mirza@ryerson.ca](mailto:romana.mirza@ryerson.ca)

Dr. Ben Barry  
Research Supervisor  
Chair, School of Fashion  
Ryerson University  
[bbarry@ryerson.ca](mailto:bbarry@ryerson.ca)

Appendix C – Consent Form



**Ryerson University  
Consent Agreement**

You are being invited to participate in a research study on Muslim women and how they express their identity through modest fashion. Please read this consent form so that you understand what your participation will involve. Before you consent to participate, please ask any questions to be sure you understand what your participation will involve.

**PROJECT TITLE: Women Undercover: Exploring the Intersectional Identities of Muslim Women through Modest Fashion**

**INVESTIGATORS:** This research study is being conducted by Romana B. Mirza and is being supervised by Dr. Ben Barry, from the School of Fashion at Ryerson University.

Romana B. Mirza is a graduate student. This research is being done as part of her graduate studies for the partial completion of her Master's degree.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact:

Romana B. Mirza  
Researcher  
School of Fashion Graduate Program  
Ryerson University  
350 Victoria Street,  
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3  
[romana.mirza@ryerson.ca](mailto:romana.mirza@ryerson.ca)  
Ryerson Phone: 416-979-5000  
Mobile: 416-999-4371

Dr. Ben Barry  
Research Supervisor  
Director, School of Fashion  
Ryerson University  
Kerr Hall South, 243L

350 Victoria Street  
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3  
Phone: 416-979-5000, ext. 7318  
Email: [bbarry@ryerson.ca](mailto:bbarry@ryerson.ca)

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:**

This project examines Muslim women's intersectional identities by studying their fashion consumption practices. The goal of this work is to uncover new insights about the relationship between women, modesty and their Western identities as well as to understand how digital storytelling can be utilized to disseminate research. Findings from this study will be reported at academic conferences and published in academic journals, fashion industry magazines, and other fashion and business industry publications.

**WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO: PART 1 - WARDROBE INTERVIEW**

The first part of the research will be a Wardrobe Interview that will take place in your home, in front of your closet where you access your clothing on a daily basis. This will require the researcher to come to your home, with their laptop, notepad, pens, camera and one recording device to record the 2-hour session that you will have with your wardrobe and photograph some clothing pieces.

- You will be interviewed in order to gather your thoughts, feelings, and opinions about fashion. You will be asked to (a) describe your background and experiences with fashion and (b) provide a tour of your wardrobe and discuss your garment uses and memories. Photographs of some of your clothing will be taken.
- Completion of the wardrobe interview and demographic questionnaire will take approximately 2-hours.
- The interview will be held in your place of residence in order to allow the researchers access to view and photograph parts of your wardrobe. A photography consent form will be provided so you can consent to the extent to which the photography of your clothing is used.
- You will not be required to wear any of the outfits you are showing. Everything will be observed on hangers or folded, as you store them.

At the end of our session you will fill out a confidential form requesting demographic data. It is important that this study research women from different backgrounds and experiences as we want to uncover the widest diversity of Muslim women possible. On this questionnaire you will be asked your contact information, age, gender identity, ethnicity, education, marital status,

number of children, household income, country of residence, where you were born and raised, what countries you have lived in, how long you have worn the hijab and your clothing size range.

You can participate in Part 1 only. Participating in Part 2 is voluntary, there is no impact on your relationship with the researcher or your relationship with Ryerson University should you choose not to participate in Part 2.

The findings from this research study will be available to you upon completion of the researcher's Masters Research project, anticipated in May 2019 and, if requested, will be provided to you via a link to the Ryerson Digital Depository, so that you can access the results at your own discretion and convenience.

\*\*\*\_\_\_\_Please initial here if you give us consent to contact you with the link after the research is completed.

### **WHAT YOU WILL BE ASKED TO DO: PART 2 - DIGITAL STORYTELLING**

In Part 1 you will be asked if you wish to be contacted about digital storytelling as a part of the consent form. Please note, you can only participate in Part 2 if you fully participated in Part 1.

- Digital storytelling workshops will take place once interviews are complete, as soon as a date and time can be agreed upon (within 3 months of completing wardrobe interviews).
- At the end of each of the interviews you will be re-asked whether you are interested in being contacted about digital storytelling (to ensure that you are still interested after having been interviewed).
- All interested participants will be contacted via email 1-2 months prior to digital storytelling workshops.

During the workshop process, we will endeavor to make the space as comfortable, private, and accommodating as possible. At the beginning of the workshop, we will spend time setting up the terms of the space – what storytellers need to make the space as comfortable as possible.

Storytellers have different needs, and will have the choice of working largely independently or with facilitators and other storytellers. You are under no obligation to share your story with anyone. We will ensure that there is quiet working space for storytellers during the workshop. All storytellers will be asked not to discuss the content of the films outside of the workshop space, and each participant will be asked what (if any) feedback they wish to receive from others during the workshop.

- Digital storytelling workshops will take place on the Ryerson University campus

## WOMEN UNDERCOVER

- In the workshop, 4 - 6 participants (per workshop) will create a short (2-5 minute) narrative film about their experiences
- Romana, the researcher, will facilitate these workshops; if funding and time allows she will hire a co-facilitator and/or have a volunteer assist (these individuals will be added to ethics protocol with a change request if this is the case)
- Digital stories are made up of images, sound, and film. All hardware and software and royalty-free image, sound and film sources will be provided at the workshop. In some cases participants like to create their own sounds by audio recording a narrative, creating their own images by taking photographs, or filming video. This is completely optional. It is not necessary to create one's own sound, images and film. However, for those who wish to do so, guidelines and support will be provided in the workshop.

Workshop duration will be 2.5-3 days (with a full day counted as 10am-6pm)

- Member check: interview and digital storytelling participants will have the option to participate in member-checking by seeing a summary of analysis (of interviews and films) and providing input via email
- Digital storytelling participants will have the option of reviewing analysis of their individual film

### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS:**

The benefit of participation in the wardrobe interview is to support the development of new knowledge in the areas of fashion, the participant's own understanding of their relationship to clothing and a clearer view to their own personal brand or how they choose to present themselves to the world.

The benefit of participation in the digital storytelling workshop is participants will be trained in technical skills to create digital-based media using a combination of audio clips, voice recordings, photography, video footage and any other art-based materials they may create during the workshop. In addition, they will gain the skill of storytelling that may help them represent themselves or their circumstances more easily.

I cannot guarantee, however, that you will receive any benefits from participating in this study.

### **WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS TO YOU AS A PARTICIPANT:**

You might experience minimal psychological risks associated with answering questions about fashion, body image, and identity. Recalling your experience with fashion and identity could be potentially traumatic due to Islamophobia, sexism, issues with body image or issues related to

discrimination. If you become uncomfortable during the interview, you have the right to stop temporarily or permanently from answering questions. You also have the right to not respond to questions that you are uncomfortable with answering. If you become uncomfortable at any time during the workshop, you have the right to stop temporarily or permanently from participation.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY:**

#### Part 1 – Wardrobe Interview:

- The data from this research project will be presented at academic conferences and published in academic journals. Your identity will be kept confidential. We will report your demographic information and direct quotations from the interview under a given pseudonym, and all incidentally identifying information will be removed from our report.

#### Part 2 – Digital Storytelling:

- Your real name and likeness may be utilized in your digital story at your discretion. Please note that should you provide permission to do so that your digital story may be shown through screen shots (photographs) of your video, or video clips in academic publications and at academic conferences, as well as on social media and any related website such as the researcher's site, the Centre for Fashion Diversity and Social Change or Ryerson University's School of Fashion websites. A Video Release Form will be provided so that you can choose the extent to which your video is shown.

#### Future Research:

- Data from this research project may be used in the future for another research study conducted by the same researcher.

#### Data Dissemination:

The data from this research may be used for any of these following purposes:

- Educational purposes (e.g., in classrooms, social justice, and academic conference presentations, etc.)
- Training purposes (e.g. for community workers, at future digital storytelling sessions, etc.)
- In publications (e.g., in fashion magazines, academic journals, or media outlets)
- Artistic purposes (e.g. photography festivals, etc.) as a method of knowledge mobilization about experiences of identity and fashion
- On the researchers own and/or the *Centre for Fashion Diversity and Social Change* and/or *Ryerson University's School of Fashion* website as a method of knowledge mobilization about experiences of diverse identity representation through fashion.

A copy of this research study can be provided to you via a link to the Ryerson Digital Depository, so that you can access the results at your own discretion and convenience.

\*\*\*\_\_\_\_\_ Please initial here if you give us consent to contact you with the link after the research is completed.

### Storage of Data:

- The researcher will store the transcription of your interview on a password-protected USB in a locked filing cabinet for five years. The researcher will store your audiotaped interview, consent form, demographic questionnaire and survey responses in a separate locked filing cabinet from the USB for five years.
  - No one will have access to your consent form, demographic questionnaire and survey responses except for the researcher and research supervisor. The researcher and research supervisor as well as a Canadian-based transcription company will have access to your interview. While this company will transcribe the audiotape of your interview, they will not have access to your name.
  - The audiotape and transcription of your interview as well as your consent form, demographic questionnaire and survey responses will be destroyed after five years.
  - Photographs, audio files and videos captured as part of the digital storytelling process will be stored on a password-protected external hard drive. A participant release form for your Digital Story will be provided to you.

## **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL:**

### Part 1 – Wardrobe Interview

- Your participation in the interview is voluntary and you may answer only the questions with which you are comfortable. There is no impact on your relationship with the researcher or your relationship with Ryerson University should you choose not to participate. You may withdraw from Part 1 for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.
- Should you choose to withdraw, please contact either the researcher or research supervisor and your answers will be destroyed and will not be used in the study.
- Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until the results have been disseminated through a conference presentation or journal publication. After this date, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.



- Withdrawal from Part 1 does not impact your relationship with Ryerson University or the researchers.
- Your participation in Part 1 does not oblige you in any way to participate in Part 2. Should you wish not to participate in Part 2, there is no impact on your relationship with the researcher or your relationship with Ryerson University

Part 2 – Digital Storytelling

- You must have fully participated in Part 1 in order qualify to participate in Part 2.
- Your participation in Part 2 is voluntary and you have no obligation to participate in the digital storytelling after Part 1 is completed. There is no impact on your relationship with the researcher or your relationship with Ryerson University should you choose not to participate. You may withdraw from Part 2 for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.
- Should you choose to withdraw, please contact the researcher or research supervisor and you will not be included in digital storytelling.
- Once the digital stories are published, with your permission, see release form below, dissemination will begin and it will not be possible to withdraw your data. This is due to the immediate viral nature of social media that may result in your story being disseminated through shares and likes.
- Withdrawal from Part 2 does not impact your relationship with Ryerson University or the researcher.

**QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY:** Contact the researcher using the information at the top of page 1.

This study has been reviewed by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board (File #2018-268). If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study please contact:

Research Ethics Board  
c/o Office of the Vice President, Research and Innovation  
Ryerson University  
350 Victoria Street  
Toronto, ON M5B 2K3  
416-979-5042  
[rebchair@ryerson.ca](mailto:rebchair@ryerson.ca)

**Women Undercover: Exploring the Intersectional Identities of  
Muslim Women through Modest Fashion**

**CONFIRMATION OF AGREEMENT:**

**PART 1 – WARDROBE INTERVIEW**

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to participate in the interview portion of this research project and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**PART 1 – AUDIO RECORDING**

I agree to be audio-/video-recorded for the purposes of this study. Your signature below indicates that you agree to have your interview audio-recorded. The researcher, research supervisor, and the transcription company will be the only parties to hear the recording. The researcher will store your audiotaped interview in a locked filing cabinet that is separate from the USB with the transcription for five years at which time the drive will be electronically wiped clean. I understand how these recordings will be stored and destroyed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**PART 1 – PHOTOGRAPHY**

I agree to items from my wardrobe be photographed for the purposes of this study. Your signature below indicates that you agree to have select items from your wardrobe to be photographed. The researcher and research supervisor will be the only parties to view these photos in the initial phases of the research project. The researcher will store your wardrobe

## WOMEN UNDERCOVER

photographs for five years. I understand how these photographs will be stored and destroyed by wiping the storage drive clean.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### PART 2 – DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to participate in the digital storytelling portion of this research project and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement.

You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### PART 2 – AUDIO RECORDING

I agree to be audio-/video-recorded for the purposes of this study. Your signature below indicates that you may choose to create audio recordings for your digital story. The researcher, research supervisor will hear the recordings. You will have the choice to play these recordings for the other participants in the digital storytelling workshop. The researcher will store your audio files in a password-protected external hard drive in a locked filing cabinet for five years at which time the drive will be electronically wiped clean. I understand how these recordings will be stored and destroyed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Appendix D – Interview Guide

**Interview Guide for Muslim Women's Wardrobe Interviews**

**Complete the consent form.**

**Ask to photograph key pieces in their wardrobe.**

*Remind participant she does not have to respond to questions she does not wish to answer.*

**Warm-up Open-ended questions:**

1. How did you become interested in fashion?
2. What parts of the world have you lived in and how has that changed your fashion choices?
3. Has your style changed over the years? Please elaborate.
4. How do you describe your style? How has it changed over time?
5. What influences your sense of style?

INTERVIEWER: Pause to check in with the participant as follows:

- ask the participant to pause and check-in with themselves on how they are feeling
- ask if they need a break
- remind them they can stop at any time
- ask if they are comfortable to continue with the interview

**Wardrobe Open-ended questions:**

6. What are your favourite outfits, can you show me some examples?
7. Why are these your favourite pieces?
8. What do you wear when you go to work, can you show me an example?
9. Where do you buy your work/school/leisure/day-time clothes?
10. What do you wear to formal events, can you show me examples?
11. What do you wear to other events in your life? What are those events and can I see some examples of the outfits?

INTERVIEWER: Pause to check in with the participant as follows:

- ask the participant to pause and check-in with themselves on how they are feeling
- ask if they need a break
- remind them they can stop at any time
- ask if they are comfortable to continue with the interview

12. What role does fashion play in your life?

13. What or who influences your fashion choices?

*Probe for the role of magazines, advertisements, social media, celebrities, fashion icons, peers and family*

14. Describe your fashion shopping patterns, where do you shop?

*Where do you buy your clothes? Are you in a particular mood when you shop for clothes? When do you usually shop for clothes?*

15. How do you decide what to wear in the morning? What is your process? How much time do you spend selecting what to wear?

*Probe for mood, schedule for the day*

16. Please give us a tour of your wardrobe. *What are your favourite pieces? Why? What are your least favourite pieces? Why? What outfits make you feel most confident? Why? What outfits make you feel the least confident? Why?*

INTERVIEWER: Pause to check in with the participant as follows:

- ask the participant to pause and check-in with themselves on how they are feeling
- ask if they need a break
- remind them they can stop at any time
- ask if they are comfortable to continue with the interview

17. What are the challenges and concerns you face when shopping for clothes? What are the challenges and concerns you face when putting outfits together?

*Probe for ideals around modesty, coverage and Western ideals of body image*

18. What are your thoughts regarding the mainstream fashion industry?

*Probe for clothing styles, sizing, issues surrounding modesty.*

19. Are there any changes you would like to see in the women's fashion industry?

- What are these changes?
- How can the women's fashion industry improve your experience when shopping for clothes?

20. Is there anything about women and fashion that I have not asked you?

### Appendix E – Digital Storytelling Workshop Diary

To prepare for the workshop we worked with the staff at The Catalyst to gather all the technical equipment we would need for the weekend (Appendix F), and secured a commitment from Hugh Elliott, manager of CoLab to attend the workshop on Saturday and Sunday as our technical support and on-site trainer. Correspondence was sent to participants (Appendix G), with logistics information about the workshop and a guide to royalty-free content (Appendix H), to help them prepare for the weekend.

When they arrived participants were given a detailed agenda (Appendix I). The workshop began on a Friday evening where we introduced the group and the digital storytelling method. This is where I explained that digital storytelling is a process used to bring ones thoughts, ideas, and feelings together into a cohesive story that is written using visuals such as photographic images, visual art, text and graphics; sounds, such as music, sound effects, voices, conversation, interviews and spoken word; and finally, film including custom film clips recorded by the participant and stock video footage. I explained once all this is collected the story is assembled by the participant inside an intuitive movie making software, we used Apple's iMovie, and edited into a short 4-6 minute film. I provided further background on this story-making methodology by sharing that it is used to give voice to marginalized communities to help them express their experience and build an "understanding [that] shift[s] policies/practices that create barriers to social inclusion and justice" (Rice & Mundel, 2018, p. 211). I told them that they will "rework material from [their] lives" (p. 211) and "receivers of the stories ... [may] revise [their] assumptions about particular embodied histories and how they are defined within dominant cultural narratives and institutional structures" (p. 221). Finally I communicated that digital storytelling will provide an intersectional perspective on Muslim women who wear

modest fashion and their experiences. Digital stories provide a path to enable misunderstood and marginalized communities to move away from the Western gaze and by doing so illuminate new understandings of their experiences. These stories also become mediums that are publicly and readily accessible to people and have the potential to be shared widely and change perceptions. We ended Friday evening inviting participants to share their story ideas and ask questions about the process.

On Day 2 we began with a check-in to go over any questions or thoughts participants had overnight. The bulk of the morning was spent working alone to develop storylines and scripts. I touched in with each participant periodically to help them sort through ideas and provide feedback. After the lunch break I introduced Hugh Elliott of CoLab to the participants who conducted a live tutorial of iMovie for participants. The bulk of the afternoon was spent on the computer finalizing storylines, recording narrative, and starting to collect and compile media assets such as sounds clips and photography into iMovie. Near the end of our session I worked with each participant to summarize their progress and make a plan for completion on Day 3.

On Day 3 I conducted very short check-ins with participants as they arrived. The morning was spent continuing to work on editing and finalizing their digital stories. Participants worked independently and Hugh was called on to assist with special features such as zooming in and overlaying audio with images and video. As their videos were completed with titling and credits Hugh downloaded the final videos for screening at the end of the session. After getting permission from all participants Dr. Ben Barry, the supervisor of this study and Hugh were invited to the final screening where we had a chance to celebrate everyone's work and talk about their experiences. Participants appreciated the safe space of the workshop to develop their narratives and bring their multi-media stories to life.

## Appendix F – Equipment List

12/20/2018

Ryerson University Mail - EDC Equipment Reservation CK-280822



Romana Mirza &lt;romana.mirza@ryerson.ca&gt;

**EDC Equipment Reservation CK-280822**

1 message

do-not-reply@webcheckout.net &lt;do-not-reply@webcheckout.net&gt;

Thu, Dec 20, 2018 at 3:16 PM

Reply-To: do-not-reply@webcheckout.net

To: romana.mirza@ryerson.ca Jacky was going to

Cc: jauduong@ryerson.ca cc: Kevin

Dear Romana Mirza:

Your reservation CK-280822 has been sent to EDC.

Here are your reservation details:

Pickup time: Friday, 25 January, 2019 9:00 AM

Return time: Monday, 28 January, 2019 2:00 PM

Reserved resources:

1. A Resource of type T5i Chargers (BIN 015)  
 2. A Resource of type T5i Chargers (BIN 015)  
 3. A Resource of type T5i Chargers (BIN 015)  
 4. A Resource of type FC - Production Macbooks - Retina  
 5. A Resource of type FC - Production Macbooks - Retina  
 6. A Resource of type FC - Production Macbooks - Retina  
 7. A Resource of type FC - Production Macbooks - Retina  
 8. A Resource of type FC - Production Macbooks - Retina  
 9. A Resource of type FC - Production Macbooks - Retina  
 10. A Resource of type FC - Production Macbooks - Retina  
 11. A Resource of type FC - Production Macbooks - Retina  
 12. A Resource of type FCAD - Manfrotto Compact Tripods (NEW)  
 13. A Resource of type FCAD - Manfrotto Compact Tripods (NEW)  
 14. A Resource of type Canon T5i  
 15. A Resource of type Canon T5i  
 16. A Resource of type Canon T5i  
 17. A Resource of type T5i Batteries - (NO MORE THAN 2 BATTERIES PER CAMERA)  
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- NOT ON THIS LIST:  
 Blue Snowball podcasting mics  
 8x Headphones  
 1x HDMI cable  
 1x HDMI Mac dongle  
 1x Guest Wifi
- FDSC  
 1x Card Reader  
 4x 64/128 GB SD Cards  
 8x headphones from Dollarama
- ME:  
 my laptop  
 my external hard drive 2T
- PARTICIPANTS:  
 USB Key
- with iMovie (and GarageBand?)
- DSLR
- DSLR battery packs
- 8x laptop chargers

This reservation will be held for 30 minutes past your pickup time. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact EDC at 416-979-5000 ext. 7534.

Thank you.

This e-mail address does not accept incoming mail.

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/?ik=db9e284db8&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f%3A1620403289164334170&siml=msg-f%3A16204032891...>



Appendix G – Pre-Workshop Correspondence

**Women Undercover: Digital Storytelling Workshop**  
**Friday January 25 to Sunday January 27, 2019**  
**Ryerson University, Rogers Communication Centre**  
**The Catalyst, 2nd floor, 80 Gould Street**

Workshop Summary

**Goal:**

This research project is about exploring your intersectional identities through modest fashion. This workshop will be an opportunity for you to explore your various identities by developing a 2-3 minute video or what we call a digital story.

I attended a workshop to learn how to facilitate this session and I created a digital story of my own which you can [view here](#).

This workshop will be an opportunity to learn new skills in photography and video editing and building relationships with others. We invite you to make this workshop your own, focusing on what is most meaningful to you. If there is anything we can do to help make the experience more comfortable for you, please let me know.

**Who is attending?**

We have five participants who have all completed the wardrobe interviews I conducted last fall. How time flies!

In addition, Dr. Ben Barry who is my supervisor will drop in for introductions on Friday. He'll come on Saturday for a couple of hours to facilitate the development of your stories and he'll be back on Sunday for more facilitation where needed.

Hugh Elliott is the head of Co-Lab at Ryerson and is a tech expert who will assist with teaching you the software and assisting with your editing, I'll also help with that.

Our idea- and story-sharing times will be with our all-female group only. Also, if any of you want to only work with me, I can support you to develop your story and on the digital side. Our aim is to create a safe space for everyone.

**Preparation:**

No advance preparation is required. However, if you have some time in advance, think about a story you might want to develop, images you might consider using, sounds that might evoke the mood you wish to create, objects that are important to you, or anything else that you can think of that would make your story your own. If you are bringing images, sound, video, or other files

with you, have them ready on a USB flash drive. If you begin to develop a written script before you arrive, aim for 200-350 words.

Your story is yours. You can make it about whatever you desire. If you are a designer launching a brand, perhaps it's about your brand. If you are a writer, perhaps you can bring one of your stories to life with music, video and audio of you reading your poem or story. If you are an explorer, maybe you can explore an aspect of your identity or of the context in which you live. This is totally up to you. You can give this some thought in the next week if you'd like.

**AGENDA:**

**Day 1: Introductions to Digital Storytelling - 7 pm to 9:30 pm.**

After welcome, introductions and an overview of digital storytelling we will set aside 90 mins (approx 15-18 mins for each person) to share story ideas.

**Day 2: Making Your Story - 10 am to 6 pm**

After a quick morning check-in, please aim to arrive between 9:30 and 10 so you have a chance to grab a coffee and settle in, you will develop your story outline and begin gathering your images, recording your scripted story, and begin determining what images and video you would like to use. We will provide you with a list of sites where you can download royalty-free images, audio and video. You can also bring materials with you to shoot, we'll have cameras on hand or you can bring digital files.

After lunch you'll begin compiling your media assets into iMovie and creating your story.

**Day 3: Editing and Screening Your Stories - 10 am to 6 pm**

You will continue to work on editing and finalizing your digital story. We will then be screening everyone's stories and you will have a chance to celebrate and talk about our experiences.

You will get a detailed agenda on Friday. Please don't hesitate to email or contact me via mobile. My email is [romana.mirza@ryerson.ca](mailto:romana.mirza@ryerson.ca) and mobile is 416-999-4371.

I will be sending you an email with directions, parking and restaurant information.

Sincerely,

Romana B. Mirza  
MA Student  
School of Fashion, Ryerson University

### Appendix H – Guide to Royalty-free Content

#### Sources of Free, Public Domain, and Creative Commons Content

There are many sources for royalty-free, public domain, and Creative Commons (CC) –licensed content. This list contains links to a few popular sites. For a comprehensive guide to a wide range of CC-licensed content in many formats and subject areas, see this Creative Commons Guide from the University of British Columbia: <http://guides.library.ubc.ca/c.php?g=698822&p=4961441>. There is a 2.5 minute video that is a great introduction to copyright and Creative Commons.

#### Images

Unsplash: <https://unsplash.com/> - it's Canadian!

Pixabay: <https://pixabay.com/en/>

Wikipedia Commons: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)

Flickr Creative Commons Search: <https://www.flickr.com/search/advanced> - choose license desired from drop down menu at top left of page

Google Images: [https://www.google.ca/advanced\\_image\\_search](https://www.google.ca/advanced_image_search) - select desired “usage rights” at bottom of form

Wellcome Images: <https://wellcomecollection.org/works?wellcomeImagesUrl=/>

Open Clip Art Library: <https://openclipart.org/>

Vector Icons: <https://www.flaticon.com/> - site provides source to credit

#### Music

Free Music Archive: <http://freemusicarchive.org/>

digCCMixer: <http://dig.ccmixer.org/>

Jamendo: <https://www.jamendo.com/search> - license details are shown after clicking download icon

#### Sounds

Sound Bible: <http://soundbible.com/>

Free Sound: <https://freesound.org/>

#### Video and Film

YouTube Advanced Search – enter your search term then use filters to restrict your results to Creative Commons content: <https://www.youtube.com/>

Getty Images Footage – filter by “royalty-free”: <https://www.gettyimages.ca/creative-video>

Appendix I – Digital Storytelling Workshop Agenda

**Women Undercover: Digital Storytelling Workshop**  
**Friday January 25 to Sunday January 27, 2019**  
**Ryerson University, Rogers Communication Centre**  
**The Catalyst, 2nd floor, 80 Gould Street**

**Friday January 25, 2019 - 7-9:30 pm**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Who</b>
7-7:30	Welcome & Introductions	Dr. Ben Barry, Chair - School of Fashion (video) & ALL
7:30-7:45	Introduction to Digital Storytelling	Romana
7:45-9:15	Story Circle: each participant shares their story idea	All
9:15-9:30	Final Questions/Wrap-up	All

**Saturday January 26, 2019 - 10 am - 6 pm**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Who</b>
9:30-10	Arrive, grab a coffee, settle in	All
10-10:30	Morning Check-in: questions, thoughts	All
11-1	Open Studio: working alone, or with facilitator to finalize scripts, storyboard, and develop images. Voiceovers can be recorded for those who are ready	All + Hugh for recording & editing support
1-1:45	Break for lunch	All
1:45 - 2:15	iMovie Tutorial - overview of video editing software and key tools	Hugh
2:15-4:00	Open Studio: Assembling assets, editing, image and video production, organizing storyboard. Voiceovers can be recorded.	All + Hugh & Romana for support
4:00-5:30	Open Studio: begin editing and assembling digital story	All
5:30-5:45	Check-out and Overview of Day 2	Romana
5:45-6:00	Wrap-up, secure equipment/files.	All

## WOMEN UNDERCOVER

**Women Undercover: Digital Storytelling Workshop**  
**Friday January 25 to Sunday January 27, 2019**  
**Ryerson University, Rogers Communication Centre**  
**The Catalyst, 2nd floor, 80 Gould Street**

**Sunday January 27, 2019 - 10 am - 6 pm**

<b>Time</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Who</b>
9:30-10	Arrive, grab a coffee, settle in	All
10-1:00	Open Studio: editing image and video production, alone or with facilitator's support	All + Hugh & Romana for support
1-1:45	Break for lunch	All
1:45-3:15	Open Studio: editing image and video production, alone or with facilitator's support	All + Hugh & Romana for support
3:15-3:45	Finalizing stories and adding credits/titles	All with support from Hugh and Romana
3:45-4:15	Exporting Stories	All
4:15-5:30	Screening Final Stories/Videos: Participants share their videos	Participants & Romana
5:30-6:00	Closing thoughts and check-out	Participants & Romana

## Appendix J – Transcription Services Details

Three different transcribing services were retained for this study. This need was brought about by one primary factor, namely the use of foreign language words in these interviews. As the researcher and participants were all trilingual to some degree, there were words spoken in Arabic and Urdu. For example, Muslims say “*in sha’ Allah*” when they want to communicate the sentiment “I hope so.” This particular phrase is translated to “if God so wills” (see Glossary). In order to capture these words in the transcribed documents I looked for transcribers with Arab and South-Asian backgrounds who would understand these words in a recording and would be able to transcribe them in English in the transcript document. Here is a summary of the transcribers used for this work.

The first transcriber had the best understanding of colloquial terms used in Urdu and Arabic. Words like *salwar kameez* (Indo-Pakistani outfit), *abaya* (Arab long coat) and *in sha’ Allah* (God willing) were understood by the transcriber including short sentences that were spoken in Urdu which were transcribed in English. Often when saying something casually such as “and stuff like that” an Urdu speaker would say it in Urdu; in the transcription this was typed in English.

The second transcriber understood the clothing terminology and Arabic terminology and was better adept at understanding voices with a slight accent and recordings with more ambient noise.

The third transcriber worked best with audio recordings that were clear and where the participant had no noticeable accent.

Appendix K – Digital Story Links

Three digital stories mentioned in this paper can be viewed online at this website:

<https://fashionsocialchange.com/womenundercover/>

From page 59, “Unfinished” by Romana Mirza.

From page 60, “Underneath This Hijab, I’m Still Human” by Hanan Hazime.

From page 62, “Beyond the Cover” by Nina.

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## **Glossary**

This glossary includes specific vocabulary that Muslim women use to describe their clothing.

This vocabulary is now commonly used in scholarship about modest fashion or veiling in the Muslim community. Many of these words are from the Arabic or Urdu language, as noted.

### **Abaya**

This is a term from the Arabic language and is used to describe a garment that is worn over one's outfit of the day. It is a long floor-length coat typically made of a light-weight fabric and sized and cut loosely so when worn one's figure is completely hidden.

### **Arab**

This term refers to the region of the world that includes: Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen (Migiro, 2018).

### **Hijab**

This is a term from the Arabic language and has been adopted by the broader Muslim community to describe the headscarf worn by Muslim women.

### **Hijabi**

The term commonly used in the Muslim community to describe a woman who wears the hijab.

### **In sha' Allah**

This is an Arabic phrase translated to English it means "if God so wills" or "God willing."

### **Islam**

Islam is an Abrahamic faith tradition that began in the seventh century of the Common Era (CE) (Gianotti, 2011). The origins of Islam can be understood through the Hebrew Bible or "Old Testament" and the story of "Abraham, the father of monotheism and the traditions of Judaism,

## **WOMEN UNDERCOVER**

Christianity, and Islam” (p. 67) whose son Ishmael formed the Eastern Covenant of the Abrahamic faith traditions, known as Islam (Gianotti, 2011).

### **Modest Fashion**

Modest fashion “refer[s] to the many different ways which women clothe their bodies in keeping with their interpretations of what they understand to be the modesty requirements of their faith” (Lewis, 2018a, p. 115).

### **Niqab**

This is a term from the Arabic language and describes the face veil that covers the nose and mouth leaving only the eyes exposed. Some versions of the niqab also cover the eyebrows and forehead.

### **Salafi**

Salaf is the Arabic word used for the “first three generations of Muslims” (Ramadan, 2017, p. 282) and salafi are “those who follow the teachings of the first three generations” (p. 282) of Muslims who today are considered to be literalists or reformists.

### **Salwar Khameez**

A is a term from the Urdu language for an outfit typically worn in India and Pakistan that comprises of a bottom, or pant that is sewn in what Western eyes would consider a harem pant shape (the Salwar) and a long top or tunic (the Khameez).

### **South-Asian**

For the purpose of this paper South-Asian describes an ethnic heritage originating in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Bhutan, and Maldives (Sawe, 2018).

### **Wahhabi**

An Arabic language word synonymously used to describe Salafi, see Salafi.