

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

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Title: Her Choice: Identity Formation and Dress Among Iranian, Muslim Women Living in the United States.

Abstract approved: _____

Leslie Davis Burns

The Islamic faith is a growing global religion; the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2011) estimates that globally the Muslim population is 1.6 billion and will increase to 2.2 billion by 2030. As the population of Muslims grows the apparent misunderstandings of the faith among Western societies are glaring. The practice of veiling by Muslim women is often misunderstood by the general public in the United States and propagated as a synonym for oppression. What is often overlooked from a religious and secular viewpoint is that identity is formed and expressed through dress (Davis 1992; Kaiser, 1990). In apparel, textiles, and merchandising very little scholarship exists on the topic of Muslim women's dress practices as they impact identity formation. The present study focuses on identity formation and dress practices among first generation, Iranian Muslim immigrant women living in the United States.

The purpose of the present study was to explore how a first generation, female, Iranian, Muslim, immigrant to the United States forms an identity through dress. To investigate women's identity formation, I used macro and micro-sociological theory as well as feminist theory to guide my understanding of what influences the women's identity to form or reform after immigration to the United States. For each participant in the study, a symbolic meaning of veiling played a prominent role in understanding how individual and societal influences impact her dress on a daily basis.

Four research questions guided the data collection and analyses processes: (1) How do first-generation Iranian Muslim women form an identity through faith-based dress upon immigration to the United States? (2) How does the immediate religious and ethnic community of first-

generation Iranian Muslim women influence her appearance specifically in terms of faith-based dress? (3) To whom do first-generation Iranian Muslim women use as social referents or comparison groups to assist in identity formation? (4) To what extent, if any, does faith-based dress change for a first-generation Iranian Muslim woman as the length of time spent in the U.S. increases? The researcher employed qualitative data collection and analysis. Guided by McCracken's (1988) long interview approach, 10 in-depth interviews were completed over the course of 9 months and follow up conversations were completed with 5 of the 10 women interviewed. The sample (n = 10) included 7 non-veiling women and 3 veiling women. The interview protocols were semi-structured, completed in person, over the phone, and via Skype. The data analysis process occurred in a three-step process open, axial, and selective coding (Charmaz, 2006).

The primary result from this research study linked identity formation to intentional choice. The women in this study (n = 10) categorically expressed a need to make choices about their dress to better form identity. In the present study, "identity" was defined as the social and personal presentation of self in society (Fearon, 1999), and "intentional choice" was defined as a decision made by a woman by her own accord and generally free from direct coercion from others. This is not to say that the women in this study were not influenced by outside factions. It would be shortsighted to neglect the fact that socialization is in many ways the channel for outside influence. Intentional choices made by the women ranged from very simple choices such as color of dress, to very complex choices such as deciding whether or not to wear a veil while living in the United States. Additionally, the women were confident in the choices they made. None of the women expressed uncertainty or articulated any ineffectual feelings toward any choices they made about dress and veiling. Each woman interviewed was steadfast in her explanation of why she was or was not veiling. At no point during any interview did any of the women discuss wavering between veiling choices.

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Her Choice: Identity Formation and Dress Among Iranian, Muslim Women Living in the United States.

by
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A DISSERTATION

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Presented May 23, 2014
Commencement June 2015

Doctor of Philosophy dissertation of Alexandra L. Howell presented on May 23, 2014

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

Alexandra L. Howell, Author

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with great pleasure that I thank the following people for helping me successfully complete my doctoral dissertation. The women who participated in this study, without your wonderful voices this research could not be completed. I am forever grateful to have met and worked with all of you.

Dr. Leslie Burns, my advisor and mentor, your support and guidance throughout this process has been unwavering. I would not have the confidence to leap so fearlessly into academic life without your counsel and encouragement.

My committee members, Dr. Elaine Pedersen, Dr. Sally Gallagher, Dr. Brigitte Cluver, and Dr. Kate Mactavish, learning from all of you has shaped my philosophy on scholarship and teaching. I am thankful to work with such a powerful group of women.

My family, for listening so diligently to my many worries and giving me the emotional and financial support to embark on this academic endeavor.

My fellow classmates at Oregon State University, Karlie Moore, Stephanie Glick, and Kelly Reddy-Best, your patience with me as a colleague and a friend has been steadfast over the last four years.

Finally, to my wonderful mentor I have worked with throughout the past year, Dr. Julie Hillery it has been through your guidance that I am able to model the type of outstanding faculty member I hope to become.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

An astounding 1.6 billion Muslims currently live around the world with that number expected to increase to 2.2 billion by 2030. Currently, in the United States there are 2.6 million practicing Muslims, and that number is projected to increase to 6.2 million by 2030 (The Future of the Global Muslim Population, 2011). The Muslim religion continues to expand globally, a misunderstanding of the fundamental practices of the religion exists among the general population of the United States. The fact that the Muslim¹ faith is not static but ever evolving and changes within countries, regions, and cultures is often misunderstood or overlooked. September 11, 2001 catapulted the Islamic faith² into the media spotlight, and the media created a socially constructed image of what it means to be Muslim.

That is, they demonstrate how natural for so many Americans the image of Muslims as irrational aggressors and Americans as righteous innocents abroad and at home (and the mutual exclusion of these two groups) has become, so that any other perspective becomes not a counterargument but a challenge to an unquestionable world order. (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008, p. 10)

These ideas of the Islamic faith were highlighted by women's choice to engage in a form of conservative dress also known as veiling. Muslim women are showcased in Western media as subordinate objects dominated and controlled by a patriarchal religion. Through the media portraying a negative view of Islam and the United States government engaging in wars in the Middle East, the U.S. population was bombarded with idea that the Islamic religious ideology is akin to terrorism, and that this unknown "other" was to blame for all of the problems in the

¹ "Those who adhere to Islam" (Smith, 1994, p. 146).

² "The word Islam derives from salam which means primarily "peace" but in a secondary sense "surrender." Its full connotation, therefore, is the peace that comes from surrendering one's life to God" (Smith, 1994, p. 146).

United States. As some Muslim women demonstrate their faith by engaging in the practice of veiling, they became a targeted group in the United States. Liberals and conservatives alike condemned the practice of veiling as a form of oppression and targeted Muslim women for expressing their religion through dress (Abu-Lughod, 2002).

Problem

This misunderstanding by the general U.S. population of Muslim women and their use of the veil is not something that will be solved by a single study. The problem is that U.S. society is often presented with incorrect representations of Muslim women, especially with respect to the veil. Western depictions of Muslim women misrepresent “women in Islam.” Feminist scholars Narayan (1997) and Mohanty (2003) best describe these depictions of a “third world woman.” U.S. and Western media outlets highlight certain aspects of what it means to be a “third world woman,” with images of Muslim women (Narayan, 1997; Mohanty, 2003). She is often depicted as submissive to her male oppressor, illiterate, veiled, inanimate, and living in a world so different from the West that we have a patriotic duty to save her. Spivak’s (1988) original statement on subaltern identities summarizes the idea that white men are saving brown women from brown men. In the case of Islam, the West is the savior for Muslim women from Muslim men. The Western media in its quest to shed light on the subordination and oppression of Muslim women often incorrectly represent Muslim women to their viewers. Many scholars have written on the topic of Muslim women in the past including Abu-Lughod (2002), Ahmed (1992; 2011), Amer (2009), Bartkowski and Read (2003), Droogsma (2007), Gallagher (2012), Haddad and Lummis (1987), Hermansen (1991), McCloud (1991), Mernissi (1991), Read and Bartkowski (2000), Wadud (1999). Each scholar approached the question of Muslim women. The present study adds to this body of literature by exploring the identity formation or

reformation among first generation Iranian-Muslim immigrants in the United States. Because of the ongoing socio-political issues between the Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran) and the United States (Iran Chamber Society, 2001) and the presence of Iranian-Muslim immigrants in the U.S. is likely to continue to grow (The Future of the Global Muslim Population, 2011), a better understanding of issues for a this growing immigrant population from a social and cultural standpoint is needed.

The Veil

There are many different levels of veiling each unique and important, and how a Muslim woman decides to veil heavily depends on her choices but also her geographic country and region, her family, and personal beliefs. There are four main types of veiling used as a reference to this research study, hijab, niqab, chador, and burqa. A hijab is a scarf that covers the head only revealing the face, the niqab covers the entire head and body, revealing only a woman's eyes; the chador is a loose piece of fabric worn over the head, fully revealing the face and is held tightly at the chin by the woman wearing it; and finally the burqa is a full body covering (from head to toe) using a netting or mesh over the eyes ("A guide to," 2010). Each garment has its own unique features and is made more so by its wearer; different types of hijab are present in different areas of the world. For instance, Afghani-Muslim women wear the burqa more frequently whereas the chador is seen more often on women in rural Iran. There is no one prescription for the veil, just as the concept of veiling cannot be summed by one author or interpreted from one piece of Quranic scripture. A women's veil is as individualized as her smile.

A brief history of the veil. Numerous definitions exist of "the veil," with both historical and contemporary interpretations. At the basic level, veiling is a form of modesty that is prescribed in Islam. According to this prescription, men and women alike should practice modesty through

dress and appearance, one should not appear ostentatious, and one should always appear clean and well kempt (Clark, 2003). Fatima Mernissi (1991) wrote in *The Veil and the Male Elite* that the hijab³ has historical framing dating back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad (570 C.E – 632 C.E.). Mernissi introduces the hijab as a literal “curtain” that was to separate the Prophet Muhammad from his male guests during the consummation of marriage to his cousin Zaynab. In this interpretation Mernissi posited the hijab is a literal, tangible barrier between people. Long before modesty and Islam became a central social and political topic, groups of individuals were engaged in the practice of veiling. According to Keddie (1998) Assyrian legal text indicated a reference to veiling as early as the 13th century B.C. Active veiling and literal seclusion were first documented among elite classes in pre-Islamic empires (Greco-Roman, pre-Islamic Iran, and the Byzantine). Elite women of these empires were often veiled while in public, covering their head and face, and when possible, the women were secluded from public view. Arab and Persian Muslims adopted the practice of veiling through imperial efforts of conquering and colonization. In certain societies Keddie (1998) references that both Muslim and non-Muslim⁴ women were veiled and secluded; these practices are often seen as a class or status indication. The class and status distinction also set into motion a division between urban and rural women where urban women were often by default of a higher class and status distinction than their rural counterparts (Keddie, 1988). As Islam spread through the modern Middle East, North Africa, and Indonesia the faith shifted and changed to keep with the times.

The history of veiling would be remiss without the inclusion of the Quran, the sacred Islamic text that was told through a series of revelations to the Prophet Muhammad from Allah (God)

³ “Hijab is the principle of modesty in Islam and includes behaviour as well as dress for both males and females” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2009).

⁴ This was seen in early Mediterranean societies among both Christian and Muslim women (Keddie, 1998).

(Clark, 2003). The Quran was not compiled into a single book until 650 C.E. In the Quran many interpretations of veiling have been drawn. Keddie (1988) suggests several references from the Quran that were interpreted to mean women should veil with the exception of the hands and feet and arguably the face as well. She continues to say that because the Quran indicates that Muhammad's wives were veiled in his presence, all women should be veiled when in the presence of non-relative men. Notable feminist-Islamic scholar, Amina Wadud (1999), wrote *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, an interpretation of Quran from a women's perspective she posits while there is mention of veiling (for women to cover and be modest) in the Quran, there is no single interpretation of the Islamic sacred text. To other authors (Ahmed, 1992; 2011), the veil is a socio-political construct rooted in historical writings. Historically situated texts about the socio-political construct of the veil were chronicled in detail by Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti (Hathaway, 2009). The socio-political construct of the veil is oppression of women in non-Western, Islamic society. This construct is represented in Western society through media propagation and anti-Islamic, antagonistic rhetoric. Thus the veil becomes a socio-political representation for oppression, either for or against it. Ahmed (2011) details this in her writing.

From the start the treatment and status of women were intertwined with other issues that these intellectuals considered critically important to society, including nationalism, social, and cultural reform. (p. 128)

The veil in terms of the present study will represent the latter, a socio-political construct, paying homage to its historical roots but remain focused on its representation as a form of choice (in terms of identity) in Iranian-Muslim women's lives.

The veil in Iran. Throughout history the governing bodies in Iran have changed positions about requiring women to wear the veil in public. Popular social opinion about veiling has also

changed (Satrapi, 2003). As far back as the 16th century veiling was used as a social class distinction worn primarily by wealthy women (Hay, 2007). Throughout the 17th century veiling practices began to change and the veil was worn more prevalently by all Muslim women in Iran, an important change in class ideology and adoption of the veil. Major social and political changes began in the early 20th century, the Pahlavi dynasty began in 1925 with Reza Shah Pahlavi instituting a Westernized philosophy in social and political issues in Iran. He believed that religion was extraneous and immaterial to a modern society. He believed in the separate of church and state, but enforced of “modernity” into social institutions in Iran. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, Reza Shah’s son came into power, replacing his father, in 1941. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi had dreams of a secular state for Iran (Hay, 2007). The new shah instituted European practices in Iran, banning the veil, introducing, if not forcing Westernized standards of dress, and opening school and work places to women. In 1936 Pahlavi abolished the veil completely and with that abolition came yet another shift in social class identification, wealthy women were embracing the new European and Western fashions, and it was middle and lower class women who continued to veil. The juxtaposition of pre and post revolution in Iran are most ironic in this stage as the policing forces in the 1930s and 1940s would not allow women to wear the veil in public; a swift and uninvited shift came in the years leading up to and following the 1979 revolution. The second Pahlavi was less popular with working class people because of his broad changes especially his pronounced abdication of religion and its ties to veiling. By 1979 the political right or conservative religious groups overthrew the Pahlavi dynasty and the revolution ensued. This coup reinstated the veil as a requirement for women. For all women of all classes, the denunciation and subsequent enforcement of veiling leads to the question of identity and dress. This is uniquely represented in the work of Marjane Satrapi in her work *Persepolis* (2003)

an autobiographical graphic novel about her experiences growing up in Iran during and after the revolution of 1979. In the present study the researcher sought to explore the relationship of identity and dress specifically from the perspective of Iranian women living in the United States because of the ongoing identity crisis one may face.

Iran-U.S. relations

In 1979 the Islamic Revolutionary government known as the Islamic Republic overtook Iran and began to enforce strict Islamic law in the country (Iran Chamber Society, 2001). The impact this had on women was monumental because the government deemed it illegal for women to be unveiled in public. Women were targeted for not veiling by “morality police” officially known as the Basij forces⁵. If caught dressing or acting improperly, especially in a public place, women were severely punished. The following year, 1980, Iraq invaded Iran in what became known as the “eight year war” (U.S. Department of State, 2012). While Iraq and Iran struggled with one another, the U.S. and Saudi Arabian governments played key roles in puppeteering diplomatic relations between the two countries for control of oil fields and production. As panic ensued in Iran, the 1980 hostage crisis began when Iranian Islamic students took 66 people hostage at the U.S. embassy (Iran Chamber Society, 2001). In concession for release of the hostages the U.S. government gave Iran both monetary and military incentives. Historical perspective demonstrates that the U.S. government candidly meddled in Iranian and Iraqi relations for the benefit of their interests. Resolutions between Iran and Iraq were signed with the U.N. in 1988, ending a very costly war between the two nation-states. However, ongoing economic and political sanctions have plagued the country for nearly 30 years. The

⁵ “The Basij Resistance Force is a volunteer paramilitary organization operating under the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). It is an auxiliary force with many duties, especially internal security, law enforcement, special religious or political events and morals policing. The Basij have branches in virtually every city and town in Iran” (Alfoneh, n.d.).

spiritual leader of Islamic Republic government, Ayatollah Khomeini died in 1989 and was followed in leadership by Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani who stepped down in 1997. Mohammad Khatami took the presidential seat in 1997, he fell into the middle ground of Islamic Republic government, seeking to restore some level of modernization to the country and reestablish relations with the West. He was well received by a majority of the Iranian people but ultimately was ousted in 2005 when current president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected⁶. At the present time, relations between Iran and the U.S. are strained as the U.S. government, with support from much of the global community, wishes to monitor the Iranian nuclear program. Ahmadinejad was a controversial leader, well received by some and hated by some countrymen and women. The Arab Spring⁷ in 2011 inspired Iranian youth to rally for reform, but Ahmadinejad was reelected in what was considered a murky campaign for the incumbent president. Currently, the government mandates that the women wear hijab (the veil) in public in Iran and many schools and universities have strict dress codes for women. Additionally, distinct differences exist between Iranians living in urban and rural settings. In general one can distinguish urban areas such as Tehran, Mashhad, and Isfahan from rural areas in Iran. The dress practices in major metropolitan areas are more heavily influenced by Western cultures in comparison to those

⁶ While the present research study was conducted, a new president was elected in Iran. Hassan Rouhani was elected August 13, 2013. He is politically moderate and a supporter of Iran-West relations. He has worked diligently to move the country into the 21st century. Rouhani has lifted bans on public and social media. He has worked to dismantle the embattled nuclear program that was fiercely protected by the Ahmadinejad administration. At the current time, Rouhani is seeking a lift on many of the difficult economic and political sanctions that have forced Iran into a very long and costly recession.

⁷ “Since December 2010 the world has watched as demonstrations and protests spread across countries in North Africa and the Middle East. These pro-democracy movements rose up against the dictatorial regimes and corrupt leaders that had ruled for decades in some cases. Someone called these revolutionary events “Arab Spring,” and the phrase stuck. The specificity of these Arab revolutions is that they have been popular uprisings, leaderless and uncompromising in demanding total change” (A Research and Study Guide, 2014).

living in rural areas. Nearly 67% of Iran's population lives in urban or suburban locations (Hakimzadeh, 2006). However, the formation of identity through the veil is still present throughout the country, in the book, *Children of the Jihad* (2007) by Jared Cohen; he describes his encounters with two young Iranian females. Cohen spent time traveling through Iran and interacting with youth in rural and urban settings. He describes his reaction and understanding of how veiling can be integral to one's identity and personality. First he describes interactions with youth in the rural countryside and with two young women at a university, he then describes his interactions with the same young women at a café afterschool.

I hadn't thought much about the female attire at this point, but then again I had only met youth in the mountains and at the university. At the university, girls seemed to wear a black hijab, which is the headscarf, and a black chador, which is the long robe-like attire that women were forced to wear after the Islamic Revolution. It never occurred to me that this might simply be their school uniform.

Even more remarkable than the transformation I witnessed with Gita and Leila in their physical appearance was the change in their personalities that seemed to accompany the new attire. When they sat down on both sides of me wearing their bright pink and blue headscarves, they seemed more comfortable, playful, and frivolous than before. They sensed I was intrigued by the metamorphosis I had just witnessed. Their sense was right. (p. 38)

This transformative process as witnessed and described in the book is invaluable to the present research study as it describes a formation of identity through faith-based dress. Using the social and political change in Iran as a parallel I seek to find similar circumstances of Iranian-Muslim women living in the U.S. as first generation immigrants.

Immigration from Iran to U.S. 1950s – present. Immigrants came from Iran to the United States in two primary waves. The first wave began in the mid 1950s prior to the 1979 revolution; most were young college students who needed an increased skill set to succeed in the modernization of the oil industry in Iran (Hakimzadeh & Dixon, 2006). During this time an estimated 34,000 Iranians left the country to come to the United States. The second, much larger

wave, begin shortly before and during the Islamic revolution and continues through 2013. This wave is distinct in that it is made up of Iranian religious minorities who were targeted during the revolution and young men who would have otherwise been drafted to serve in the Iranian army during the eight-year war. Anecdotally, the researcher met a young man whose father sent him to the United States during the revolution. At that time, the young man was in college and came to the United States to study, he has never left the U.S. and is living in Southern California. During 1978 - 1980 approximately 330,000 Iranians immigrated to the United States (Hakimzadeh & Dixon, 2006). According to the Migration Policy Institute (2013), “Between 1980 and 1990, the number of foreign born from Iran in the United States increased by 74%” (Hakimzadeh & Dixon, 2006, p. 1).

Marketing and the Apparel Industry

Very little research exists on the topic of marketing and the apparel industry with regard to Islam. O’Cass, Lee, and Siahtiri (2013) presented findings that indicate young Muslims (18 – 35) are fashion conscious consumers, where a level of religiosity impacts their choices about brand and price. Gokanksel and Secor (2010) explored the relationship between the practice of fashion veiling and the level of Islamic-ness among women in Turkey. Based on the tenets of Islam it would be illogical that “fashion marketing” or “apparel marketing” and Islam would be in the same sentence. The practice of fashion veiling occurs regularly in Turkey despite cultural and political influence. Fashion and Islam have gained increase global presence globally. Conservative Islamic dress including the hijab was featured by designer Windri Widiesta Dhari during 2014 Tokyo fashion week (“Hijab design,” 2014). In Iran specifically change in political and culture influence have opened the country up to social media and Western fashion influence. With growing populations of Muslims and Iranian-Muslim immigrants specifically the apparel

market in the United States is now in a position to sell specifically to its Muslim customers. In areas of the United States with higher than average Muslim populations such as Dearborn, Michigan and Los Angeles, California the market for expansion is available.

Purpose

The purpose of the present study is to explore how a first generation, female, Iranian, Muslim, immigrant to the United States forms an identity through dress. This particular sample population was identified to bridge the gap in the literature for multiple reasons. There have been distinct waves of Iranian immigrants coming to the United States since the 1950s. In the process of conducting a broad review of literature no study focused primarily on dress and Iranian-Muslim women immigrants living in the United States. Furthermore according to literature in apparel merchandising (Davis, 1992 and Kaiser, 1990) identity and dress are not mutually exclusive, dress impacts identity and identity impacts dress.

To investigate women's identity formation, I used macro and micro-sociological theory as well as feminist theory to guide my understanding of what influences the women's identity to form or reform after immigration to the United States. The concept of veiling either concrete (a physical covering of one's head) or abstract (a socio-political construct) will play a prominent role in understanding how individual and societal influences impact her dress on a daily basis. For the population sampled in this study, female, first-generation Iranian-Muslim immigrants to the United States each piece of one's life plays an important role in her story. Being an immigrant to the United States is fraught with challenges on its own and for the women in this study they had the complication of being an Iranian-Muslim. The relevance in shaping one's life is that each piece (immigrant status, nationality, and religious identity) created events and circumstances for the women to live through.

As previously stated apparel merchandising scholarship indicates that identity and dress are linked and one cannot exist without the other. However, peripheral influences can also impact one's identity and dress practices, such as ethnicity and religion. The present study will explore how ethnicity and religion influence dress. Social referent groups are also explored to understand their influence on dress.

Research Questions

1. How do first-generation Iranian Muslim women form an identity through faith-based dress upon immigration to the United States?
2. How does the immediate religious and ethnic community of first-generation Iranian Muslim women influence her appearance specifically in terms of faith-based dress?
3. To whom do first-generation Iranian Muslim women use as social referents or comparison groups to assist in identity formation?
4. To what extent, if any, does faith-based dress change for a first-generation Iranian Muslim woman as the length of time spent in the U.S. increases?

Researcher Perspectives

In an attempt to address the problem of fulfilling a gap in understanding that is brought on by misrepresentations of Muslim women in the Western media and the general U.S. populous consuming that media, I will employ an interpretive social science paradigm. This research study is guided by the interpretative social science paradigm which Neuman (2006) defined as "One of three major approaches to social research that emphasizes meaningful social action, socially constructed meaning, and value relativism" (p. 87). This paradigm is important to this study because it is exploratory in nature and emphasizes understanding of culture and the construction of meaning. Keeping the paradigm central to the data collection and method is important as there

is no goal of broad generalizations, and the researcher is not seeking an absolute truth. The interpretive social science paradigm is salient in terms of understanding Iranian-Muslim women identity formation within the context of U.S. society.

Research Approach

I employed a qualitative data collection method and analyses process. Informed by McCracken (1988), the long-interview was used in the interviews conducted with first generation Iranian-Muslim immigrant women in the United States. The researcher contacted local mosques in Oregon, California, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Illinois. At each mosque the researcher was directed to women's groups to make connections. The researcher attended women's meetings in Oregon, California, and Illinois. Interviewees were assigned pseudonyms, and each interview was tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Follow-up conversations were conducted with a select number of participants to check for implication of meaning and clear understanding. This was especially true for participants that had a slower command of the English language. The researcher transcribed, coded, and analyzed data after every three interviews. Coding categories were developed using open, axial, and selective coding.

Researcher Assumptions

The researcher carried several assumptions with her when beginning this research study. These assumptions were informed by coursework completed in fashion merchandising, sociology, and women's studies. These assumptions were also informally informed by prior research completed specifically in the areas of popular culture and mass media. The first assumption was that all Western women are influenced by the fashion system. Clothing and apparel advertising that often preys on individual vulnerability and leads women to purchase goods services that strengthen the system. The second assumption was that immigrant Muslim

women were targets of negative stereotypes propagated by large Western media outlets. In turn, immigrant Muslim women feel the burdens of negative stereotypes at an individual and societal level. The third stereotype was that immigrant Muslim women often concede to a patriarchal society as a peacekeeping measure within family and community. The fourth and final assumption was that immigrant Muslim women, specifically from Iran, desire to make a choice about whether or not to wear the veil.

Rationale and Significance

The rationale for the present study emanates from the researcher's experience growing up in a religio-cultural intersection. The researcher's negative experience with patriarchy in making personal choices about work, family, and marriage was the catalyst of interest in this particular academic area. Casually conducting research on Muslim women in the context of an art history class taken during her master's program, the researcher discovered that for many Muslim women the veil is a social construct. The veil is more than a piece of cloth that covers one's head; it is representative of a woman's choice and her autonomy within a traditionally patriarchal society. The researcher felt a similar confusion about her lack of personal choice within her own patriarchal society. In broadening her research, she discovered that the construction of the veil is representative of not only a religio-cultural intersection but also about women's choices. The veil, by its very nature, is central to the dissertation research.

Definitions of Terms

Acculturation: "The dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (Berry, 2005, p. 698).

Black Feminist Theory: “As an historically oppressed group, U.S. Black women have produced social thought designed to oppose oppression. Not only does the form assumed by this thought diverge from standard academic theory – it can take form of poetry, music, essays, and the like – but the purpose of Black women’s collective thought is distinctly different” (Hill-Collins, 2000, p. 9).

First Generation Immigrant: A person who is the first member of his or her immediate family to immigrate from the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United States on a full time status.

Hijab: “Hijab is the principle of modesty in Islam and includes behaviour as well as dress for both males and females” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2009, para. 2)

Islam: One of the world’s largest monotheistic religions vested in the teachings of the prophet Muhammad.

Identity: The social and personal presentation of self in society (Fearon, 1999)

Islam: “The word Islam derives from salam which means primarily ‘peace’ but in a secondary sense ‘surrender.’ Its full connotation, therefore, is the peace that comes from surrendering one’s life to God” (Smith, 1994, p. 146).

Islamic Republic of Iran: A Persian country, known as Iran, is bordered by Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to the West, the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf to the South, Iraq to the West, and Turkey, Azerbaijan, and the Caspian Sea to the North.

Macro-Sociology: “Large scale social or symbolic structures determining all members of society, and the role of power and money” (Krause, 2013, p.143).

Matrix of Domination: The organization of intersecting systems of oppression (Hill-Hill-Collins, 2000).

Micro-sociology: “Focuses on everyday interactions, meanings negotiated between individuals relatively freely” (Krause, 2013, p. 142).

Modesty: “Behavior, manner, or appearance intended to avoid impropriety or indecency” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2014).

Muslim: a person who practices the teachings of the Islamic faith

Non-veiler: A women in this study who does not currently wear the Islamic veil or hijab.

Quran: The main text used in the practice of the Islamic faith.

Social Comparison Theory: The theory of social comparison presents the concept that people look to referent groups and individuals to assess their own abilities and opinions (Festinger, 1954).

Symbolic Interaction Theory: “The symbolic-interaction paradigm is “a framework for building theory that sees society as the product of the everyday interactions of individuals” (Macionis, 2004, p. 13).

Subcultural Religious Strength Theory: “In a pluralistic society, those religious groups will be relatively stronger which better possess and employ the cultural tools needed to create both clear distinction from and significant engagement and tension with other relevant outgroups short of becoming genuinely countercultural” (Smith, 1998, pp. 118-119).

Veil: (noun) The social, political, and physical embodiment of covering one’s head with a scarf; respecting to the rules of modesty outlined by the Islamic faith.

Veiling: (verb) The act of wearing a physical head covering in honor of one’s Islamic faith

Veiler: (noun) The person who wears a physical head covering in honor of one’s Islamic faith.

The West (Western): The countries of Western Europe and the United States that have traditionally defined Asia and the Middle East as “Other” (Said, 1978).

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Purpose

The purpose of this literature review is to introduce the practice of veiling from multiple perspectives. Four theories guiding this study are described: black feminist theory, subcultural religious strength theory, social comparison theory, and symbolic interaction theory. The theories are then synthesized with data and analyses from previously conducted studies. The theories range from macro-sociological to micro-sociological and a review of literature indicates that little research has been conducted on Iranian-American-Muslim women from a first person perspective. It is however, salient, from a sociological perspective to also consider an individual impact of community and individual community's impact on larger society and vice versa.

The Veil

There are multiple histories of the veil and its meaning. The introduction to this research study explored the heavily propagated meaning of the veil in contemporary Western society. The veil is quite literal a head, face, and body covering and very abstract, a socio-political construct. The Quran says, "We [God] have sent down clothes to cover your shame [nakedness] as well as be adornment to you" (Sura 7:26). The veil is historically situated throughout religions and ethnicities. According to Dashu (2006) the veil was seen in Indo-European cultures as early as 4000 BCE and as late as 2500 BCE. In these cultures the veil was multifunctional providing cover from the elements, ensuring modesty, and protection from men in public spaces. In this historic time period veiling was also heavily tied to class, wealthier women were veiling as a projection of status. Women in lower classes would adopt the veil as a means of upward social mobility. Veiling for social protection was seen in many different cultures such as Western

Europe, where married women covered everything, but their face and hands. The modesty affiliation with veiling (women must veil to prevent shame) was present in the Byzantine Empire and adopted in the Greek and Roman values system (Dashu, 2006). Christian faith also calls for women in veil in subordination to men. The use of the Islamic veil can be seen as a tool for patriarchy and gender ranking (Mernissi, 1991). Historically Judeo-Christian religion and cultures share roots with Islam (Smith, 1994). The practice of veiling is written as historically religions, but in fact it is equally if not more so rooted in cultural and ethnic identity. The ongoing culture clashes between the East and West contemporarily represent for society regressive versus progressive cultures and religions, but are a product of imperialist attitudes and white industrial savior complexes (Cole, 2012). The veil as a socio-political construct is one that is presented most frequently in society, Abu-Lughod (2002) pointed this out when exploring the West's misunderstanding of women continuing to wear burqa after the Taliban was ousted from power in Afghanistan. By Western standards the veil was not a symbol of religion, but a symbol of oppression (Cundy, 2011). There are many perspectives and interpretations of the veil stem from psychology (this researcher would argue social psychological) and acculturation.

The psychology of the veil. The psychology of the Islamic veil falls primarily into two distinct categories, the wearer and the perceiver. It is simple to surmise based on contemporary Western media that the wearer receives generally negative feedback from the perceiver and the perceiver gives negative feedback to the wearer. In this one-to-one ratio the psychology of the veil is easily understood and digestible. However, this ratio does not take into account the number of advertisements one is exposed to per day, which is approximately 3,000 (Kilbourne, 2010). This one-to-one ratio does not take into account legislation enacted to prevent or impose the wearing of the veil. A recent study completed in Belgium asked non-Arab Muslims about

their feelings and attitudes toward the veil. In a 163 responses to a randomly distributed survey, the majority expressed

Negative attitudes towards the Islamic veil are partially explained in terms of intergroup relations (subtle prejudice toward immigrants in general and anti-Arab Western ethnocentrism in particular), values (high importance attributed to security and power, what very likely reflects both an authoritarian and a social dominance patterns of prejudice), and anti-religious literal attitudes. (Saroglou, Lamkaddem, Patcherbeke, & Buxant, 2009, p. 426)

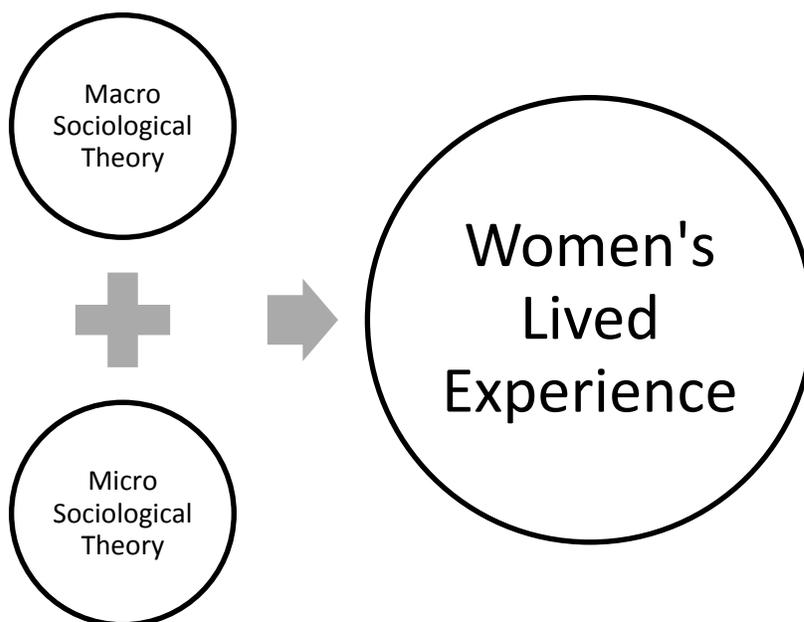
Several Western European countries (France, Belgium, Italy, Canada, and Turkey) currently have restrictions and laws in place that make wearing a veil, particularly a face veil in public, either difficult or illegal for a woman.(Associated Press, 2013). These laws psychologically impact both wearer and perceiver. An even greater number of countries do not have formal anti-veiling laws, but citizens of those countries publically accost veilers and protest against the Islamic veil. This distinct behavioral violence or blatant racism is rooted in ethnocentrism and xenophobia. In the U.S. in particular this type of violence hit a fever pitch immediately following 9/11/2001. Today we see more forms of micro aggression or structural violence (Galtung, 1969). This can also be categorized as subtle racism. There are a number of ongoing policies and procedures that enforce structural violence. For example, Stopera (2013) posted a picture of a young man in a turban at an airport using the social media tool “Snapchat” and the young man wrote the caption “bout to get randomly selected.” While this “news story” was underlined with humor, the reality of the situation is that because society has socially constructed the meaning of Islam and the veil a negative symbol of the faith. The psychology of the veil is juxtaposed against the background of the West primarily because this study took place in the United States.

Acculturation. Although the goal of the present research study is not specifically embedded in acculturation, understanding the psychology of adapting to a new culture is pertinent to the goal of exploring identity formation and dress while living in the United States.

Acculturation is defined as “The dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (Berry, 2005). The psychological process allows new comers to change and adapt to the behaviors of the new culture. In this definition of acculturation one could assume that all Muslim women who immigrate to the U.S. will remove the veil or hijab. As results will show, this is not the case. The psychological process of acculturation was interrupted by choices informed prior to coming to the United States. This interruption could be interpreted in a myriad of ways, Western imperialism, Western media, Western fashion, etc. The present study strongly supports that it is choice, not acculturation that is aiding in the process of identity formation and dress.

Figure one, as seen below, is the largest scale interpretation of theory for the present study. The figure represents macro-sociological theory working in conjunction with micro-sociological theory to bring the women’s lived experiences into primary focus. Each piece of the figure works independently; however, when viewed, as an entire functioning model each independent piece is operational in creating women’s lived experiences.

Figure 1.
Large Scale Theory Interpretation



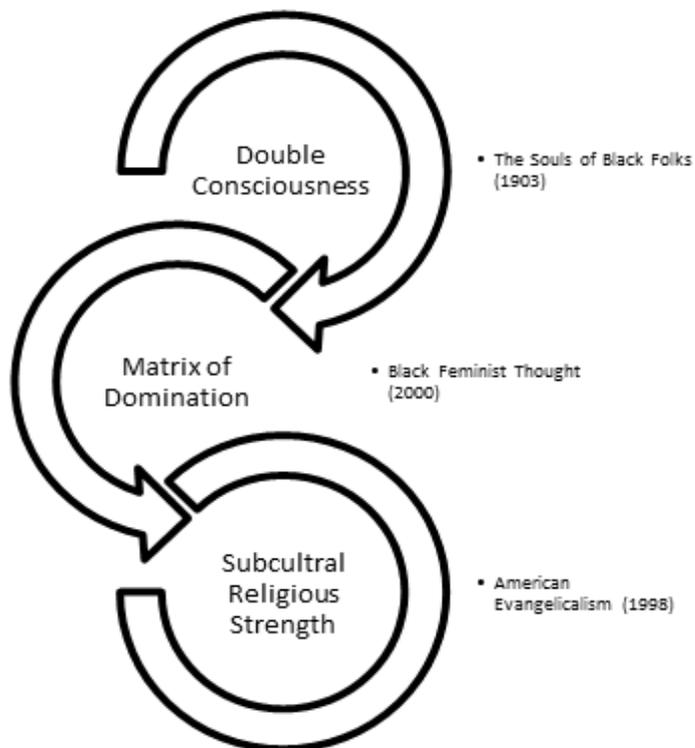
Macro-Sociological Perspective

In the first section of this literature review a macro-sociological perspective is taken. The seminal work of W.E.B. Du Bois and Patricia Hill-Collins is introduced and explored within the relationship of the veil. Du Bois presented the historically situated struggle of black men and women in the United States. The paradox of being both similar and different as an American citizen is a point of consideration and exploration in terms of Muslim-American women and the veil because it is often viewed as “un-American” to be a veiled Muslim woman (Hermansen, 1991). Difference is then explored in two facets of Hill-Collins work, first the matrix of domination followed by black feminist theory. The matrix of domination will introduce the intersectionality of race, class, and gender in U.S. society. Black feminist theory in turn centralizes the experiences of black women and highlights the socially constructed images society has placed on them. Hill-Collins’ work on black feminist theory, the socially constructed images in particular, is explored in their relationship to the veil. The researcher of the present study posits that based on works of previous scholars, similar constructs are created for Muslim women living in the United States.

Figure two below is a cycle of macro sociological theory beginning with Du Bois’ (1903) work in *The Souls of Black Folks* where he introduced the concept of “double consciousness.” The double conscious identity where Du Bois’ indicated that a black man living in the United States at the turn of the century could not be both black and an American at the same time. The black man was forced to shame his black identity in the hope of creating a better life for himself and in many cases his family as well. This fundamental concept of identity confusion, which Du Bois’ applied to masses of freed men are used in this study as a catalyst to understand a more contemporary feminist-sociological work by Hill-Collins (2000). In her book *Black Feminist*

Thought Hill-Collins introduced the “matrix of domination” in which a social hierarchy keeps black women at the bottom. Both Du Bois (1903) and Hill-Collins (2000) writings highlight the difficulty faced by non-white individuals in the United States. Hill-Collins introduced her audience to intersectionality and hierarchical schema, “matrix of domination,” which brought gender into the frame. Through her explanation of the matrix, Hill-Collins created socially constructed identities of black women. Using Hill-Collins work in the “matrix of domination,” a third, seemingly unconnected macro-sociological theory is introduced via the work the Smith (1998) *American Evangelicalism*. Smith (1998) introduced subcultural religious strength theory, which indicates that members of a particular religious group gain identity strength primarily from inside of their faith. Smith highlights Evangelical Christians in his work, but the goal of this study would focus on the religious identity of Muslims. Using double consciousness and the matrix of domination, subcultural religious strength theory is useful for understanding how Muslims and Muslim women in particular find identity in their faith with larger social barriers in contemporary U.S. society.

Figure 2.
Cycle of Macro Sociological Theory



W.E.B. Du Bois. Du Bois (1899) defined the social construction of race through empirical data collected in the city of Philadelphia. He also sought to define the manifestations of inequality through the research study, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study*. Du Bois knew the problem with race was not a function of biological makeup but an extension of a larger societal problem in which black men and women were being subjugated by the dominant white society. The empirical data was important to Du Bois' research; his aim was to develop foundational knowledge that clearly identified race as a social construct and not a biological one, which was a common belief at the time. In the Negro's mind, color prejudice in Philadelphia is that widespread feeling of dislike for his blood, which keeps him and his children out of decent

employment, from certain public conveniences and amusements, from hiring houses in many sections, and in general from being recognized as a man (Du Bois, 1899, p. 322).

Du Bois (1899) found it important to underline the social gap society created for black citizens (the biologically created inferiority of blacks) compared to the white citizens of Philadelphia and the United States. This social gap was omniscient in his reality and the reality of other black citizens as they were forced to measure their social standing against whites. Contemporarily, this is called the bootstrap myth in that every citizen of the United States has the ability to pull oneself up by his or her bootstraps but for many there are no boots or straps by which they can salvage their lives. Du Bois pointedly writes,

Thus, the young white man starts in life knowing that within some limits and barring accidents, talent, and application will tell. The young Negro starts knowing that on all sides his advance is made doubly difficult if not wholly shut off by his color. (Du Bois, 1899, p. 327)

This institutionalized idea was troublesome to Du Bois as blacks were unjustly punished based on public opinion, created by the dominant white male citizens.

As identity was broken, Du Bois (1903) pointed out, not even recognized as being a man, blacks were forced to construct two selves. Du Bois' writing sums this concept known as "double consciousness"; "He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American" (Du Bois, 1903, p. 13). Black citizens could not fully identify with their African roots forcibly removed from their homeland and brought to the United States. In the U.S. their ancestors were made slaves and once freed were made to be the lowest citizen in society – to find identity was difficult if not impossible.

Du Bois (1899; 1903) wrote in detail about the social gap that existed between blacks and whites in the United States around the turn of the century. He defined what he coined "double consciousness," to highlight the social existence of difference for blacks in the United States. In

specific context to the present study, double consciousness will be introduced as a possible lens for understanding Iranian-Muslim women's identity formation. The concept of double consciousness is binary in that you there is an expectation that one is either "American" or "Muslim," Hermansen (1991) wrote of first generation immigrant Muslim women, "Most immigrant women come as members of family groups and thus keep pace with their family's views of religious practice and the degree to which dress and life-style overtly reflect religious commitment" (p. 191). In juxtaposition to Hermansen, Haddad and Lummis (1987) argue that Muslims living in the United States try to conceal their religious identity, "They try to maintain a relatively low profile about their Islamicity by playing down anything that would make them appear distinctly Muslim. These Muslims perceive Islam as compatible with the basic tenets of American civil religion" (p. 258). These authors solidify what was meant in Du Bois' seminal writing on double consciousness the struggle to find and maintain identity between two is a difficult struggle. This struggle is further underlined by propagating Muslims as Islamic extremists in the media (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008).

Black Feminist Theory

Black feminist theory is the recognition that U.S. society acts on intersecting planes of oppression, specifically, race, gender, and class. Patricia Hill-Collins (2000) wrote insightfully in *Black Feminist Thought* about the role black women play in society with respect to the intersecting planes of oppression. Black women are historically and contemporarily subjugated to the lowest levels of society. They are seen in a defined role as "other" and fulfill archetypes that do not allow for social mobility.

The roles played by black women are that of "mammy," "matriarch," "welfare mother," and/or "jezebel" as stated by Hill-Collins (2000). Mammy is a domestic house employee raising

white children and leaving her own children at home. Mammy is kind and has the ability to build strong relationships with the white children she raises but will always be aware of her subordinate role in a white household. The role of black female domestic workers in the United States simultaneously allows for white women to leave the home while entrusting their children to mammy, and it contributes to the continuation of capitalism. Hill-Collins emphasized that black domestic workers would remain poor because they were seen as low-wage labor and their white employees could pay them an unlivable wage. In contrast to mammy, the “bad” black women is the matriarch, “Spending too much time away from home, these working mothers ostensibly could not properly supervise their children and thus were a major contributing factor to their children’s failure at school” (Hill-Collins, 2000, p. 75). The paradox faced by black women in the role of the matriarch is that their strength (usually) as single mothers is misconstrued for a reason as to why they are alone, raising children. A third stereotype faced by black women is “welfare mother;”⁸ in this construct black women are deemed as lazy, un-nurturing, who collect government aid and are satisfied to not have to work. Just as the case of the matriarch, the “welfare mother,” is seen as a failed “mammy,” unable or unwilling to be “good,” and to work in the white capitalist economy. The last construction or “controlling image,” as Hill-Collins (2000) wrote, is the construction of “jezebel.” She is a sexually seductive, deviant black woman, who is used for and uses her sexuality. Both black and white

⁸ A secondary or more perverse level of the “welfare mother,” is that of the “welfare queen,” a black woman who lavishes in government assistance. This construction of a black woman is one who is on welfare and uses it to purchase and consume material items (Hill-Collins, 2000). In contrast to “welfare mother,” or “welfare queen,” there is the construction of “black lady,” who is a working, middle class member of society who kept her nose to the grindstone and succeeded, but she notably worked twice as hard as everyone else. Similar to “matriarch” “black lady,” is seen as aggressive and powerful, too much so for her own good, and to that end, she is also single and possibly raising children without a husband, boyfriend, or partner (Hill-Collins, 2000).

men looking for an easy, carefree sexual escape exploit her sexuality, but she also uses her sexuality to make gains. This construction of “jezebel” has several other layers all tying back into the concept that “jezebel” is a sexual being and nothing else. Hill-Collins is explicit and verbose in her explanation of the “controlling images” or social constructs of black women in U.S. society. The above is a summation of the socially constructed images that will be used to compare and contrast similar constructs of Muslim-American women in U.S. society.

Matrix of domination. Hill-Collins (2000) defines the matrix of domination as the structured organization of the intersecting systems of oppression. Systems of oppression are generally categorized as race, gender, class, sexual identity, ability status, religion, and so forth. These systems of oppression are manifested as such through social institutions. Social institutions are large organizing bodies such as economy, education, family, healthcare, media, military, etc. Colloquially, the matrix acts as the embodiment of societal “rank and file,” where rank and file are defined by socially constructed concepts of who an individual is and what groups he or she belongs to. It is through the structured organization (matrix of domination) of social institutions that domination and power “over” occur. Many groups have socially constructed images that cause them to be placed on a plane of intersecting oppressions (Andersen & Hill-Collins, 1998). Traditionally, white males are at the top of the matrix followed by white women and then men and women of color will fall below in the matrix. Each system of oppression (or privilege in some cases) creates another layer in the matrix. In the manifestation of the matrix of domination, this study employs Hill-Collins’ black feminist theory and the social constructs of black women historically and contemporarily situated in U.S. society.

Hill-Collins was explicit, as shown above, in her description of socially constructed identities for black women in the United States. Similarly, previous researchers have indicated

social constructs for Muslims in general and female Muslims specifically. Gottschalk and Greenberg (2008) wrote extensively about the media portrayal and fear mongering of Muslims; this phenomenon is known as “Islamophobia.” Moreover, Muslim women are targeted explicitly as scholars across disciplines have identified these social constructs. For example Abu-Lughod (2002) wrote from an anthropological perspective that Americans were “surprised” (p. 785) that Afghani women did not renounce the burqa after the Taliban was overthrown. Amer (1991) wrote in exploration of veil, “In many cases, the hijab has also even come to mean terrorism, repressive attitudes towards women, lack of democracy, fear, fundamentalism, etc.” (p. 1). Cole and Ahmadi (2003) reported that some female Muslim students who veiled on college campuses felt a sense of alienation from their undergraduate peers. As scholars reported these social constructs, news media outlets reported parallel stories of anti-Muslim action, specifically targeting veiled women in the weeks and months immediately following September 11, 2001. Ahmed (2011) wrote that instances of anti-Islam hate crimes and other forms of discrimination increased 1,600 percent following 9/11/2001. The importance of the work of both scholars and news media outlets informs this study as Muslim women living in the United States face an excess amount of misunderstanding that manifests into real discrimination.

An aim of the present study is to identify feelings of misunderstanding through social constructs felt by Iranian-Muslim women living in the United States. These feelings can help the women more fully explain if and when identity forms and if it impacts formation after immigrating to the United States. Using social constructs made through systems of impression is best informed by the work of Frankenberg (1993),

Socialist feminism had also given me an analytical commitment to three axioms: first, that in “societies structured in dominance” we, as feminists, must always remember that we act from within the social relations and subject positions we seek to change; second, that experience constructs identity; and third, that there is a direct relationship between

“experience” and “worldview” or “standpoint” such that any system of domination can be seen most clearly from the subject positions of those oppressed by it (p. 5).

Frankenberg better articulates the goal of understanding how identity is formed through a subordinate group and how subordination impacts the formation of one’s identity.

Sociology of Religion

In this third section of the literature review a macro-sociological focus is again explored through the lens of subcultural religious strength theory. To begin, the evolution of religion in terms of sociological thought is explored by the classic work of Marx (1844/2004; 1848/2011; 1867/2011), Durkheim (1893/2008; 1897/2011; 1912/2011), and Weber (1904/2005; 1922/2011). Modern theories on the sociology of religion are introduced and Christian Smith’s work on subcultural religious strength is introduced and explored in terms of the veil.

Sociology of Religion: Classic Perspective

From a classic sociological perspective, religion has deep roots in the works of Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. Each perspective provided insight into how religion has played a role in transforming society.

Karl Marx. Marx (1848/2011) focused his writings on the transformative economic and social climate with religion. His work focused on a change from religion to scientific reason. In Marx’s time he witnessed the most important change of the nineteenth century, industrialization. In this change, Marx defined the mode of production (private property) as a point of contention between the classes. In his definition of the mode of production he did not mean to say that class conflict was non-existent before industrialization, but it changed the overall production of goods in society. In a feudal society, serfs worked for their lord and production and consumption was essentially kept, “in house,” as society modernized and industrialized, self-sufficiency was no

longer important to one's daily survival. In the 1848 publication of *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx and Engels wrote, "Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other – bourgeoisie and proletariat" (Marx & Engels, 2011, p. 32). This widening gap of the two classes, those who own private property and those who do not, created what Marx defined as alienation. Alienation is important to the private property owners because it kept laborers in their place. If a laborer is alienated he or she will work to survive as outlined in Marx's writing, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. The laborer is then only as valuable as the commodity, which he or she produces. Marx (2004) writes,

As a result, therefore man (the worker) no longer feels himself to be freely active in any but his animal functions – eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. (p. 40)

The meaning of Marx's writing is important because laborers must be efficient to keep production moving so that they more output of units equals more money for the private property owner (the baker can go hungry). Moreover, the punctilious drive Marx describes above, adds another element to the human condition, the desire to want more. As part of the industrialization of society, people began to work to accumulate wealth or accumulate more than they need for survival. It is in this desire to accumulate more wealth that Marx defined the concept of "surplus value." As society wanted to gain more through the exploitation of labor, alienating a laborer from his or her work, and his or her life, there was a loss of understanding of the human element to labor. In his 1867 work, *The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof*, Marx writes, "The measure of the expenditure of individual labour-power by its duration, appears here by its very nature as a social character of their labour" (Marx, 2011, p. 48). Laborers became one-in-the-same with their labor and nothing more.

Marx (1848/2011) questioned the way in which owners and laborers, bourgeoisie and proletariats produced and consumed goods. Although he did believe that a capitalist society would implode and make way for a communist society – the way we would get there was through the exploitation of labor in the mode of production. He rightly defined that everyone must labor, but the conditions under which the proletariats labored was questionable. In fact Marx's very belief about class conflict leads to the cycle of "dialectical materialism." Where, capitalism would become so effective that it would become ineffective. The point of departure from economic and social change to the emphasis on religion was deeply connected to the concept of "dialectical materialism," in that those who accumulated wealth were not promised eternal peace in heaven. This where the famous quote, "religion is the opiate of the masses," was born from. Indicating that those proletariat workers saw the divinity in struggling and their lifelong labor would be rewarded with eternal peace in heaven.

Émile Durkheim. Durkheim (1893/2008) was interested in what kept society together. He sought an answer to the question, how does an individual become pregnant with society? He used the analogy of the human body to demonstrate how different parts of society help others, as well as the society in its entirety; just as individual organs function to help other organs and the human body overall. Similarly, Marx had differentiated from the traditional society to the modern society with the mode of production; Durkheim also found definition between the two societies, in the division of labor. He begins to explore this concept in 1893 *The Division of Labor*, through which he defines society based on solidarity. Durkheim defines two types of society, modern and traditional and links them to types of labor division, mechanical solidarity, and organic solidarity. In mechanical solidarity the division of labor is low, society is based around similarities, and there are shared morals and values. Whereas in organic solidarity,

division of labor is high and there is an emphasis on individuality and interdependence, as Durkheim (2008) wrote,

This is not to say, however, that the common conscience is threatened with total disappearance. Only, it more and more comes to consist of very general and very indeterminate ways of thinking and feeling, which leave an open place for a growing multitude of individual differences. (p. 49)

The morals, values, and norms once shared by a society become more ambiguous and abstract. The individual, as indicated above, becomes centrally important and his or her actions can be indicative of morality and morality was, by Durkheim's standards an indication of one's redemption.

Durkheim's (1893/2008) interest in societal change is important because his belief was societies could remain morally intact as they transitioned from traditional to modern. In modern society, Durkheim feared there would be insufficient regulation of people in the modern society (organic solidarity) and therefore a lack of norms or "normlessness," a term which he coined, anomie. The term anomie or anomic is also associated with Durkheim's work in *Suicide* (1897/2011).⁹ Central to his work were types of suicide: altruistic, fatalistic, egoistic, and anomic. Durkheim believed that traditional society would see a higher rate of altruistic and fatalistic suicides because of high integration whereas in modern society there would be more cases of egoistic or anomic suicide because of the lower levels of integration and societal regulation. Durkheim believed a move from traditional to modern society was a positive step but feared an overly anomic society as well.

⁹ Durkheim posits in *Suicide* (1897/2011) that religious communities with lower levels of individual integration saw higher rates of egoistic suicide. He exemplified this by comparing suicide rates between Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Protestants have a reality low integration into the religious community and therefore more individual freedom, whereas Catholics have greater integration and Jews more than Catholics and therefore lower rates of suicide among members.

Durkheim (1912/2011) also published *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. In this writing he expressed that religion functions in its purest form in mechanical solidarity (traditional society) where society's members are highly regulated. Religion in its purest form would differentiate between the "sacred and the profane." What or who was seen to hold religious significance and not. There is also sanctity in objects, which he argues are socially constructed and given social meaning. Using an Australian aboriginal society he defines the "totems," which are representations of the larger society; he posits that this concept of totems is present in all societies.

Max Weber. Weber (1904/2005) believed in a transition from traditional society to modern society. In Weber's traditional society the modus operandi was both traditional capitalism and authority. The economy was small and informal, similar to Marx's idea that the mode of production was essentially kept "in house." The authority was also kept at home or in small communities, members would be berated or banished for not following rules and regulations. The modern economy would be a large scale, formal operation to serve the masses. The transition from traditional to modern society called for increased rationalization. This is what Weber described as rationalized capitalism and legal authority. Weber (1904) describes a type of rationalized capitalism in his writing, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The Protestant ethic is the spirit of capitalism, meaning after The Protestant Reformation (1517), Protestants were to focus all energies on economic gain through hard work for the glory of god. "The real moral objection is to relax in the security of possession, the enjoyment of wealth with the consequence of idleness and the temptations of the flesh, above all of distraction from the pursuit of a righteous life" (Weber, 2005, p. 154). This is known as "predetermination," the idea that your life was already planned out for you by god. This was the basis and the beginning for

modern capitalism. This was a “means-ends” calculation or as Ritzer (2011) coined the term, “McDonaldization,” of society the process by which society becomes increasingly efficient. The emphasis of modern capitalism is on efficiency, calculability, predictability, and control. Notably, the spirit of capitalism eventually lost its religious grounding in the modern capitalist society. This also meant that rationalized capitalism needed to be organized in a rational manner, through what Weber introduced as Bureaucracy (1922). For Weber, bureaucracy is the institutional embodiment of rationalization. The function of bureaucracy was important because it allowed for control. Bureaucracy has division of labor, hierarchy, laws, anonymity, and lack of ownership. This is important because bureaucracy lends itself to types of authority that keep the bureaucracy running and functioning. Weber defines three types of ideal authority, traditional, charismatic, and rational legal authority. Rational legal authority is present in modern capitalist society and is used in bureaucratic administration. Through increased rationalization in societal transition Weber identified the “iron cage.” Life would become so rationalized that there would be no function for self-motivated thinking and action; society’s members would face, “disenchantment.” Society would be trapped within the “iron cage.”

Sociology of Religion: Modern Perspective

Marx (1844/2004; 1848/2011; 1867/2011), Durkheim (1893/2008; 1897/2011; 1912/2011), and Weber (1904/2005; 1922/2011) wrote extensively on the topic of religion and how it functioned within society. The focus of this literature review will now pay homage to the modern perspective of the sociology of religion. Subcultural religious strength theory will be explored in depth and used to inform the research in this study. Smith argues that economic language used specifically in rational-choice theory undermines the level of influence society has on religion,

essentially moving the frame of reference for the study of religion away from an economic model to a sociological one.

Subcultural religious strength theory. Christian Smith (1998) posits in his work, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*, that meaning for religion is oriented in the collective identities. Symbolic boundaries create and sustain collective identity through which members are able to find meaning and create identity. Members of a religion can define who they are by stating who they are not, where the larger outside community will always be defined as “the other.” In subcultural religious strength theory Smith concludes there is little accommodation for modernity. However, members will experiment with the bounds of a pluralistic and modern society; this is known as identity flex. Identity flex is a way for members of a religion to solidify who they are within the faith. Members of the religion can be in but not of the world, meaning members will live in a modern, pluralistic society, but not succumb to the evils of modernity (i.e., drinking alcohol, taking drugs, engaging in premarital sex, etc.). Intergroup conflict strengthens both individual and group identity. Intergroup conflict by definition, allows members of a religious group to set levels of “religiousness,” where some members can fall into a low, medium, or high level of religiousness. Intergroup conflict then helps members sustain religious beliefs both individually and with the larger group as they compare and contrast themselves to one another.

Classic sociologists defined what the sociology of religion is and how it has transformed from the 19th century to the 20th century. Modern sociological theory has now moved from the 20th to the 21st century. Smith (1998) outlined several parameters, which he defined as “subcultural religious strength theory.” Four guiding parameters are framed within the context of Islam and

the veil using a number of Islamic feminists and sociology of religion scholars: collective identity, pluralism and modernity, identity flex, and intergroup conflict.

Collective identity. The collective identity of the Muslim faith is born out of the centrality of family (Bowen & Early, 1993; Joseph & Slyomovics, 2001; Gallagher, 2012). The individual family members can form identity but it will come from their family unit. In the U.S. a nuclear family is composed of the members only of the immediate family, typically living under one roof until the children have reached adulthood. Adulthood in the United States is of course circumstantial, but is often reached at age 18 or when the child moves away from the parents or immediate guardians. This is not the case in traditional Islamic societies; adult children often live at home with their parents until they marry and in certain circumstances until they live with either the bride or groom's family after marriage. Whereas, this model is changing, especially in more urban areas, extended family can live together under a single roof (Bowen & Early, 1993). Collectively, the family creates an identity and family members should work to contribute positively to that identity. Female children often carry the biggest burden in keeping a positive family identity or "family honor," in that they should not speak with or engage in contact with non-male relatives (Joseph & Slyomovics, 2001). The collective identity, seeded in family, extends then to the immediate larger community and then to the collective society. From the perspective of subcultural religious strength theory, collective group identity emphasizes that group members can say who they are by stating who they are not. Muslims can do this by defining who they are through Islamic law and practice; it is easier to then to define who you are not. In the U.S. society common ethnic and religious groups form enclaves that often shield members from the difficulties of facing modernity and pluralism. An ethnic enclave is a geographic location with strict parameters that defines where a particular group lives (i.e.,

Chinatown) (Lin, 1998). Ethnic enclaves can provide safety from the larger society. The difference provided by strict parameters allows members to say whom they are.

Pluralism, modernity, and identity flex. For members of the U.S. Islamic community the evils of a pluralistic and modern society are defined by some guiding principles such as: do not consume alcoholic beverages, do not gamble, do not engage in premarital intercourse, do not engage in homosexual activity, and for women wear the veil in public or when in the presence of non-relative males (Clark, 2003). This list is by no means comprehensive and individual group members will decide whether or not to engage in the “evils of society” as defined by the Islamic faith. The statement about not engaging in a proscribed list of activities is by theoretical definition the way to not be “of” the world. However, Smith (2009) wrote in his book *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* that young people, across many creeds, vary in their ability to be dedicated to the guiding principles of his or her faith. Gallagher (2012) cited in her work, *Making Do in Damascus: Navigating a Generation of Change in Family and Work*, incidents of young Syrian-Muslims who were also changing patterns of behavior. This behavior would have once been deemed “of” the world, for instance, non-familial men and women comingling in public. Identity flex can occur, as members of a religious community are able to gauge where they might fall on their religiousness spectrum. The concept of identity flex in a modern and plural society, such as the U.S., is salient in a discussion of women and the veil. Often understood from a Western perspective and in some Islamic communities that Muslim women who do not veil are not “good,” Muslim women (Read & Bartkowski, 2000). However, veiling practices are known to vary by country and region, but also individually based on personal experience (Clark, 2003; Roberts, 2006). Identity flex, however, often helps members solidify who they are within their particular Islamic community.

Intergroup conflict. In terms of intergroup conflict, members of Islamic communities will often judge one another's religiousness through informal means, such as "gossip." Gallagher (2012) wrote most insightfully about the nature of intergroup conflict among Islamic communities in Damascus, Syria. She wrote that peer groups, most often defined by class, would "gossip" about one another to one another on a range of topics. Findings by Read and Bartkowski (2000) were similar among a female, American-Muslim population in Austin, Texas. The intergroup conflict can be viewed as problematic; however, it also works to sustain one's beliefs (Smith, 1998).

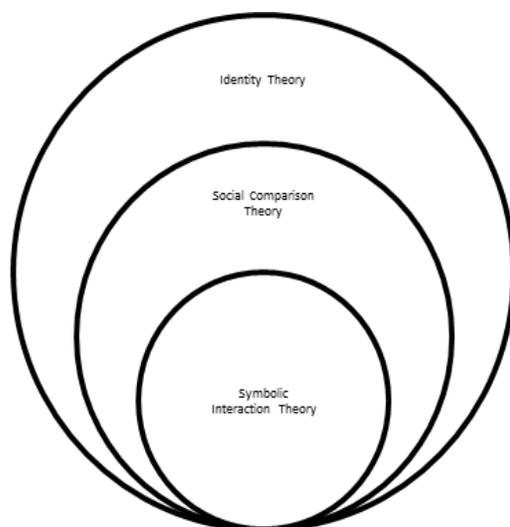
Micro-Sociological Perspective

The micro-sociological perspective is essential to this review of literature and to the overall purpose of the research study proposed. Next, I will explore the guiding theories that focus on micro-level social psychology and the connection to the veil. First, identity theory is introduced as the umbrella under which other social psychology theories will fall. Identity theory is also explored in terms of its relationship to the veil. Social comparison theory is the first theory under the umbrella and the seminal work of Festinger (1954) is introduced, concluded by its connection to the veil. This section of the literature review puts focus on the Muslim woman as central to society; her individual experiences are explored as aforementioned. The process of socialization is used to introduce the connection of individual identity and socialization to dress. Symbolic interaction theory is the last theory introduced under the umbrella. The work of three seminal scholars, Mead, Blumer, and Goffman guide the evolution of symbolic interaction theory. Each author's individual work is then analyzed in terms of its relationship to the veil.

Figure three below is a stacked Venn diagram with identity theory as the broadest theory of the micro-sociological perspective. Using identity theory as an "umbrella," social comparison

theory is then the second largest theory to fall under it. Social comparison theory relies heavily on the foundations of identity theory to allow individuals to create an identity by comparison to others. Symbolic interaction theory is then the smallest of three in the diagram and relies on both identity theory and social comparison theory. Where social comparison theory indicates a comparison between individuals, symbolic interaction theory will provide some individual autonomy. Individual interpretation of symbols can often be representative of the larger social group, but is also indicative of individual interpretation. This model represents the importance of micro-sociological theories impact on one another when applying the theories to individuals lived experience. This study will explore how the micro-sociological theory functions as part of a larger model that includes macro-sociological theory in terms of the women's lived experiences.

Figure 3.
Stacked Venn Diagram Micro of Sociological Theory



Identity theory. The theory of identity is a macro-level theory within the micro-sociological perspective and one of broad interpretation and its meaning and purpose applied to many different areas. The process of building identity to understand the theory involves several different areas. Three key areas are defined by Stets and Burke (2000) role, self-verification, and

self-efficacy; each of the aforementioned pieces contributes to the construction of identity and the theory thereof. A role is defined as who or what an individual is doing or performing, Stets and Burke (2000) phrased, “naming,” (p. 225) as the way of describing one’s role. Self-verification is the next key area and is a manifestation of the role, an individual will self-verify through role performance. The self-verification process is reliant on an individual’s identification that conduct in a particular role is appropriate and acceptable by the larger group. Finally, self-efficacy is gained through self-verification, continued verification grants an individual greater self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is translated into greater confidence and autonomy over an individual role.

The introduction of identity theory in this research study emphasizes the central importance of identity; however, the evolution of identity theory is more fully examined in the explanation of symbolic interaction theory and social comparison theory. Both aforementioned theories function as mid-level theories with tangible outcomes for this research. Identity theory in the scope of this research paper operates as a macro-level theory to better guide both symbolic interaction theory and social comparison theory. The purpose of using symbolic interaction theory and social comparison theory focuses specifically on a micro-sociological perspective of individual Iranian-Muslim American women. Referencing Stets and Burke (2000) aids in demonstrating a process through which an identity is formed and this process is then applicable to the sample population identified in chapter 3 of this study. Role performance is introduced as part of identity theory (i.e. self-verification) above and is expanded in Goffman’s (1959) exploration of the self and society focusing on role and role performance in the front stage and the backstage. Role performance is also expanded in Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical perspective in which performers will edit their performances for their audience; this is a concept

known as impression management.¹⁰ Finally, it is through role performance and self-verification that performers achieve self-efficacy. The social reference group provides efficacy to the performer; this is akin to the information presented in the social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954). In keeping with the goals of this research study, each of the steps outline above ebb and flow within identity theory at the macro-level and symbolic interaction and social comparison theory at the mid-level. The purpose of using three sociological theories is to provide a strong foundational knowledge on the intricacies of identity formation, specifically among Iranian-Muslim women living in the United States as first generation immigrants.

Socialization. Susan Kaiser (1990) wrote that socialization is the way in which people become accustomed to their lives, norms, and standards. Berger and Luckmann (1966) posit that this process of socialization can occur at different times in an individual's life. The process of socialization is not static, but fluid. In this socialization process individuals develop a self-concept, and this self-concept influences their appearance. Appearance and dress are terms sometimes used interchangeably to describe one's external look. Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992) define dress as anything worn on the body (e.g., styled hair, clothing, jewelry, religious adornment, tattoos, makeup, etc.). This is important in this research because appearance and dress weigh heavily on formation of identity.

Social comparison theory. Festinger's (1954) theory of social comparison presents the concept that people look to referent groups and individuals to assess their own abilities and opinions. Individuals tend to compare themselves to people with whom they interact in social situations. Festinger focused on assessment of skills and abilities in his initial work, suggesting that beginning chess players would not compare their abilities to those of exceptional

¹⁰ Impression management is defined as the "control (or lack of control) and communication of information through the performance" (Goffman, 1959, p. 208).

accomplishment and talent. Social comparison is particularly ambiguous when comparative traits are subjective rather than objective, thus applications of this theory have been hypothesized and tested for a variety of behaviors including level of aspiration, opinion (Hochbaum, 1953), and comparison of ability (Whittemore, 1925). Festinger's (1954) general observation regarding the way people use social reference groups to assess their own achievement levels were that uniformity of opinions leads to social order. According to Festinger, when people determine that their abilities or skills do not match prevailing social norms, their behaviors change to be more similar to the group or the performance of most others. Similarly, when people determine that their abilities match or exceed prevailing norms, feelings of self-satisfaction typically result. The pressure to achieve uniformity was observed by Festinger as he tested the hypothesis in a variety of contexts. Aspiration to achieve group status was addressed along with the concept of competition, and, although group compliance was desired in terms of general behavior, the ability to be slightly better (smarter, more athletically or artistically skilled) than other group members was desired.

Wood (1989) provided insight into how theories based on social comparison have developed from Festinger's original. She noted that Festinger's original theory lacks universal application in modern society. Because the social environment plays a key role in the way in which comparisons are made contemporary social environments and their related issues must be addressed in current research. Wood noted that when social comparisons are made, the comparers seek equality among all parties involved in active social situations; comparers may also focus on desired qualities, which they have not yet acquired.

The abovementioned research provides conclusive evidence that it is human nature for an individual to make comparisons to another individual, especially when gender (sex), age, or

socioeconomic status play a role. Based on the theory presented by Festinger (1954) the question of choice is raised within the context of this research study. Using what Festinger referred to as “social reference groups,” one must explore the nature of social reference groups for Muslim women living in the United States. Droogsma (2007) and Hermansen (1991) posit the nature of social comparison for American Muslim women,

American Muslim women’s unique position within American culture and the American Muslim community influences their choice of clothing, including the choice to veil. As women in America, they may feel pressured to conform to the fashion practices and beauty standards popularized by the media while, as members of the Muslim community in America, they may face pressure to wear conservative clothing and/or to veil. (Hermansen, 1991; as cited in Droogsma, 2007, p. 297)

This micro-sociological perspective is important to the overall outcome of the research as Muslim women hypothetically are faced with a “culture clash,” and their choice to veil or not to veil can have adverse effects by their immediate environment. From the perspective of this research study, the veil and its meaning represent a difference both culturally and religiously between Judeo-Christian American women and Muslim American women (Droogsma, 2007). The significance of social referent groups for Muslim women living in the United States is important to the outcome of this research because it could be part of the “if and when” identity is formed. The social referent groups will be demonstrative of a woman’s choice to veil or not.

Symbolic-interaction theory. The theory of symbolic-interaction was built from sociologists, George Mead (1934), Herbert Blumer (2011), and Erving Goffman (1959/2011). The theory itself it a primary focus on a micro-sociological perspective, John Macionis (2004) states the symbolic-interaction paradigm is “a framework for building theory that sees society as the product of the everyday interactions of individuals” (p. 13). In short, reality is how individuals in a society define it. That reality is constructed by symbols and a symbol can be anything from language to material objects, the importance lies in how a society interprets the

symbol. For example, a police officer will wear a uniform that uniform indicates that he or she is a member of the law enforcement and observers of the police officer will see the uniform as a symbol of his or her membership to the enforcement agency and react accordingly. The interpretation of symbols is important, as members of a society will share an understanding of the symbol in order to properly communicate. The evolution and importance of symbolic-interaction theory will be explored through the work of Weber, Mead, Blumer, and Goffman. This explanation of symbolic-interaction theory will be one fourth of the theoretical foundation structuring this research.

Each of the theories presented above falls under the larger umbrella of identity theory, all of which are valuable to the overall purpose of this research study. The theories will now be presented in conjunction with the veil. The veil, in this section of the review of literature, will be used as a hypothetical signifier for if and when Iranian-Muslim American women form identity while living in the United States. Each of the above theorists contributes to symbolic interaction theory overall.

George Mead. Mead (1934) believed the self was formed through social interaction; the self is only formed through social experience. Social experience and social interaction emphasizes the importance of symbols and the shared meaning between symbols. The shared meaning comes from the individual's ability to interpret and analyze symbols. Important to this ability is what Mead referred to as "taking the role of the other," (Macionis, 2004, p. 67), which is the ability to see from another's point of view. Individuals can predict how another will react. Taking the role of the other can also be referred to what Charles Horton Cooley coined as the "looking-glass self, to mean a self-image based on how we think others see us" (p. 67). Mead believed that because individuals could see from the perspective of another then there is self-

awareness. He posited that the self had two parts, “I” and “me,” subjective and objective, respectively. Social interaction is comprised of parts of the self, beginning with “I” and then adapting to “me” as individuals react to others. The evolution of symbolic interaction theory emphasizes Mead’s focus on the self and society as key to further development of the theory by Herbert Blumer and Erving Goffman.

Mead (1934) theorized, the self is a product of society and social interaction, how then would Mead interpret the veil as part of self? In Iran the law mandates that women must wear hijab while in public or in the presence of non-male relatives (Iran Human Rights Documentation Center, 2011). The veil is consequently an intimate part of an Iranian women’s immediate environment and will be interpreted by Iranian men and women that way. It has a shared meaning by men and women of Iran to symbolize a form of law, but more intimately a piece of a woman’s religio-cultural and personal identity (Ahmed, 1992, 2001; Gallagher, 2012). As previously discussed in this review of literature, there is no hard and fast rule Islamic stating whether Muslim women have to wear a veil. The choice and degree to which women choose to veil is a personal matter and thusly related to the discussion of symbolic interaction theory.

The veil takes on a very distinct form of symbolism and within Iranian society; a woman is likely to form a particular identity around the veil. Others reflect her self-image in society, also known as, “the looking glass self,” so if she were to not veil others would reflect (most likely) negatively to her choice not to veil because it is an enforced law. If a woman then immigrates to the United States, the symbolism of the veil will take on new meaning. The two parts of self, “I” and “me,” become of greater importance the “I” will seek confirmation and adapt the “me” accordingly. A woman’s reaction will be heavily dependent on reactions from individuals from the larger community.

Herbert Blumer. Blumer (2011), a student of George Mead, focused his research on symbolic interaction, a term which he coined. Blumer's research indicates that symbolic interaction is the unique function of communication between individuals and groups of individuals. This would include verbal communication, but also nonverbal cues as well, such as appearance, dress, props, accent, dialect, etc., "Thus human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by interpretation, or by ascertaining the meaning of one another's actions" (Blumer, 2011, p. 300). The individual must recognize and react to the meanings associated with different props or events. An individual will gain recognition and apply meaning learned from others. Finally, the meaning associated with the recognition drives individual analysis, not simply agreeing with what may be popular opinion, "Self-indication is a moving communicative process in which the individual notes things, assess them, gives them meaning and decides to act on the basis of meaning" (Blumer, 2011, pp. 301 – 302). Individuals apply meaning to symbols (i.e. words, appearance, clothing, body language, etc.) and it is through a collective interpretation or learned interpretation of that meaning that individual societies would then communicate with one another. This is difficult to think about even between different social groups, but in the spirit of macro-sociology individuals or individual groups are not of imminent importance. It is through another sociologist, Erving Goffman that the micro-level interpretation and understanding aids in exploring this further.

Blumer (2011) stated that individuals act and react to the meanings they apply to symbols – this concept is the basis for much of the contemporary rhetoric about symbolic interaction theory. How does that impact the veil and its importance as a symbol to Muslim women first in Iran and then after immigrating to the United States? In Iran the veil (most likely) has a shared meaning among the citizens whereas in the United States the meaning of the veil will be much

more varied. The reaction to the veil in the United States would of course be very different to a reaction in Iran. These reactions will become the basis for how a Muslim woman constructs her identity in the United States. This concept is directly connected to the exploration of identity theory and its application to Muslim women wearing the veil in the United States. Negative reactions from U.S. citizens will impact an Iranian-Muslim women's ability to form an identity with the veil in the United States.

Irving Goffman. Goffman (1959/2011) addresses the self in infinitely more detail than his scholarly predecessors. It was through the work of Mead and Blumer, that Goffman was able to truly define the role of the self in symbolic interaction. The self plays a role in either the front stage or the backstage this concept is known as dramaturgy and is analogous with traditional theatre. Goffman (1959) identified both a front stage and backstage for which individuals perform. In the front stage, an individual is his or her public self; when an individual is operating in his or her front stage they may be practicing impression management so that they appear to the audience in a particular manner. The backstage is when an individual may act or react in a manner that is unbecoming of the role he or she most publically presents and maintains. Role performance is important because it can be representative the individual self, but also a group or society of individuals. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman wrote,

Audiences tend to accept the self-projected by the individual performer during any current performance as a responsible representative of his colleague grouping, of his team, and of his social establishment. (Goffman, 2011, p. 309)

The presentation of self is important to one's individual identity, but also to the group he or she is associated with. Self-presentation and identity are important elements to any one person's selfhood. It is through self-presentation and identity that an individual will create a self-image. Goffman (1959) wrote,

If unacquainted with an individual, observers can glean clues from his conduct and appearance which allow them to apply their previous experience with individuals roughly to the one before them or, more important, to apply untested stereotypes to him. (p. 192)

How an individual decides what is important to their self-image comes from a socially constructed identity that is seen in peers and others who are “similar.”

As mentioned previously, Goffman (1959) explores the self in intimate detail and this is where the veil is most deeply explored in terms of identity formation. In Goffman’s front stage and backstage dramaturgy, an Iranian-Muslim woman may wear a veil to publically display her devotion to her faith, maintaining an image of a “good,” Iranian-Muslim woman, but she may have different opinions or feelings she is willing to share openly in her backstage role. This would most likely occur when she is with others who feel similarly or are willing to support her.

In keeping the “self,” central to the exploration of symbolic interaction theory and the veil, individuals are socialized by groups. A group then would be central to the formation of an Iranian-Muslim woman’s identity in the United States. Identity of course influences the socialization of the group and individual as well. In Muslim groups the dedication and perseverance to dress varies among women. According to Bartkowski and Read (2003) faith-based dress among Muslim women does not define their beliefs in Islamic faith. Some women choose to veil, but others do not – circumstances influence each woman individually. However, Huisman and Hondagneu (2005) believe that in groups that are heavily profiled and subordinated, dress takes on a hyper important role in both individual and collective identity. Therefore, if an individual comes from a subordinated group as Huisman and Hondagneu wrote dress takes on a capital role in the formation of an individual’s identity. Killian and Johnson (2006) underline the concept of identity in their work with female, Muslim immigrants to France find identity formation difficult in French society,

Muslim women suffer from particularly weighty historical representations. Westerns typically view them as the ultimate 'other' because they are different nationality, race, and religion and because they are female, 'As members of a low-status, visible ethnic minority, North African immigrant women in France are particularly likely to face problems with identity. (p. 61)

If ridicule or criticism is experienced one's selfhood will be damaged through identity, self-image, and self-esteem. Therefore, one could conclude, based on Goffman's scholarly work and that of his predecessors a focus the veil and identity is of the utmost importance to Muslim women in the United States.

Theoretical Summary

The purpose of the above review of literature was to explore veiling from multiple perspectives. The theoretical perspectives were created under two broad categories, macro-sociological theory and micro-sociological theory. Macro-sociological theory focuses primarily on society's impact on the individuals whereas micro-sociological theory focuses on individual relationships and interaction. Multiple theories were used to scaffold framework and bring together previously conducted research on the topic of Muslim women, dress, and identity. Each of the theories introduced, utilized multiple resources to support meaning and deeply explore the topic from a sociological and women and gender studies perspective. The utilization of these discipline specific theories is to contribute to the interdisciplinary knowledge gap in apparel merchandising.

Black feminist theory (Andersen and Hill-Collins, 1998; Hill-Collins, 2000) was framed by the use of Du Bois (1899; 1093) to understand the seminal scholarly work of race as an oppressed subject position within the United States. Hill-Collins' contemporary work was used as a frame to understand race and gender within the matrix of domination (2000). This

intersection of race and gender was applied to contemporary work to understand the socially constructed identity of Muslim women living in the United States.

Sociology of religion was separated chronologically into the classical perspective (Marx 1848/2011; Durkheim, 1893/2008; and Weber 1904/2004) and the modern perspective (Smith, 1998). The purpose of the chronological separation was to scaffold development and understanding of the sociology of religion. The seminal scholars Marx, Durkheim, and Weber had varied interest in how religion functioned in society. Each of the seminal scholars believed that religion would ultimately dissipate as society progressed. Theoretically this is juxtaposed against Smith's (1998) work, which demonstrates that religion has not dissolved, but has strengthened. It would be shortsighted to include only the modern perspective of the sociology of religion because one must build on the foundation before exploring the modern function of religion. Smith's work on evangelical Christianity and subcultural religious strength theory is akin to Islam through the four guiding concepts: collective identity, identity flex, pluralism and modernity, and intergroup conflict.

Identity theory is the broadest theory in the micro-sociological perspective. Identity theory focuses primarily on the creation and verification of identity in society (Stets and Burke, 2000). Identity in the scope of the current study is embedded in dress as Kaiser (1990) points out. The creation of identity through role, self-verification, and self-efficacy (Stets and Burke, 2000) can occur at different times during one's life (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). This theoretical frame lends itself to this study as the sample population emigrated from Iran to the United States and will negotiate new roles and engaged in self-verification and efficacy in a new culture.

Social comparison theory is the mid-level theory within the micro-sociological perspective. The seminal work of Festinger (1954) is used to frame the purpose of social referent

groups. Festinger posits that members of similar groups make comparisons and changes based upon the social referent group. Important to Festinger's work is that a social referent group is one of a similar background, such as a shared cultural or religious group.

Symbolic interaction theory is the final theory within the micro-sociological perspective. Symbolic interaction theory was developed from the work of seminal scholars Mead (1934), Blumer (2011), and Goffman (1959/2011). Similar to the sociology of religion, it was important to this review of literature to scaffold foundational knowledge to understand its function within the present study. Mead discussed the importance of the creation of identity through social interaction. We learn who we are through our interactions with others. Blumer carries this theory forward as we learn about who we are through the world around us by way of symbols. Symbols can be tangible items such as clothing or intangible items such as body language. Symbolic meaning can change from one culture to another the veil is an example of this. In Iran the veil carries one particular meaning and individuals interact and react to it based on its meaning. In the United States the veil carries a different meaning and therefore interactions and reactions change. Goffman brings the creation of self and the use of symbols together through role performance known as dramaturgy. Individuals will perform roles based on how they perceived their environment.¹¹

The use of multiple theories was purposeful to building a solid framework for which to begin this study. McCracken (1988) suggests this type of development in the "4-step method of inquiry" which is discussed in the next chapter. McCracken labels this inquiry as "analytical data" understanding and exploring logical categories before beginning the data collection. The

¹¹ It was discussed during the researcher's dissertation defense that the women who participated in this study were engaged in role performance. Individually each of the women was reacting to the researcher as they thought appropriate. This only further supports the use of symbolic interaction theory and the micro-sociological perspective in the present study. Individual role performance will vary based on the immediate environment.

researcher sought to build a solid foundation for an interdisciplinary approach to her field of study. The theoretical framework will build on the topic of Iranian Muslim women, dress, and identity.

Chapter 3: Methods

To appropriately address the exploratory nature of this study, McCracken's (1988) long interview approach was used. The "Four-Step Method of Inquiry," outlined by McCracken, guided the research so that rich data was generated. In McCracken's method of inquiry each stage purposefully assisted the researcher. The first stage was an analytic review, which was completed during the review of literature. The second stage, "review of cultural categories," required the researcher to reflect on personal experience, assumptions, and biases within the topic; this was addressed in the introduction. The third stage was the "discovery stage" where the interview was constructed and implemented with 10 participants. Using McCracken's long interview method, a semi-structured interview protocol was created. This style of inquiry limited intrusion on the interviewee allowing her to tell her story without undue influence. The final stage is analysis of data where the researcher transcribed the interviews and then analyzed using McCracken's five-step process. The iterative process allowed the researcher to move back and forth within the data. Women's identity formation within dress was analyzed in the context of a macro-sociological (black feminist theory and subcultural religious strength theory) and micro-sociological perspective (symbolic interaction theory and social comparison theory).

The use of qualitative data collection for this research project allowed for rich, descriptive results that could not be realized using another types of analysis. The interviewer created a positive atmosphere in which the rapport built between the investigator and the participants was important to setting a positive tone for data collection in each of the interviews.¹²

¹² The researcher discusses issues with "getting in" to the group of women in chapter 5.

Subjects and Recruitment

The targeted population for subjects was Iranian, Muslim, women aged 18 years of age and older who were first generation immigrants to the United States. In compliance with an approved Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol, initial participants were recruited by contacting four different mosques in California, Michigan, and Oregon. Each mosque provided varying levels of support, for instance in Oregon the mosque invited the researcher to a women's meeting and in California the researcher was invited to Friday evening prayer. At each mosque the researcher handed out fliers and made contacts with women in the mosque. As the study progressed and the researcher was having difficulty recruiting women to be in the study more concerted efforts were made to utilize existing relationship with friends and acquaintances. In Pennsylvania and Illinois the researcher contacted four additional mosques. In each initial phone call or email with a potential participant the researcher emphasized that the protocol required each participant to be at least 18 years old, female Iranian-Muslim, first generation immigrant to the United States. Seventeen women volunteered to be a part of the study, 12 women qualified,¹³ ultimately 10 women participated, two women did not show up for their interviews. The sample of women lived across the United States with representing major regions (i.e., West coast, Midwest, Southeast, and East coast).

The participation in this study was limited. Many women contacted did not return emails or phone calls, and it became clear that the difficulty of connecting with the women was embedded in a larger meaning; why did some Iranian-Muslim women living in the United States not want to participate? Some of the women were asked why they thought this was the case. The overwhelming response from the women who were interviewed was that veiling is a personal

¹³ In the original pool of 17 women that volunteered 5 were ineligible because they did not meet all of the qualifications (i.e., not born in Iran).

topic and likely the non-responsive women do not want to discuss it. When recruiting women using fliers hung in various locations a male employee at a Persian market said, “clothes are clothes and no wants to talk about that.” For the women who did participate there were an overwhelming amount of questions about why I was doing this research or why was I interested in this topic.

Interview Protocol

Single interviews were conducted with each subject, audio recorded,¹⁴ and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Each participant read and agreed to formal confidentiality statement, that the contents of the interview, both written and recorded, would be secure and viewed solely by the primary researcher and her dissertation committee chair. The interviews lasted between 45 – 75 minutes and the follow-up conversations lasted between 15 – 20 minutes. Follow up conversations were conducted with 6 participants for member checking.¹⁵ The interviews were conducted using a semi-structure protocol. The semi-structured interview allowed the researcher to ask questions like, “does your Islamic faith play a role in your choice to (or not to) veil? Can you discuss what the role is?” The breadth and depth of the question gave the participant room to respond fully and provided the researcher a buffer to not pepper the participant with immediate follow up questions.¹⁶ Probing questions were not necessarily built into the semi-structured protocol. For example, the researcher asked “Is veiling something that you talk about on regular

¹⁴ Four interviews were not recorded based on the wishes of the participants, but detailed notes were taken during the interview and transcribed exactly the same as the audio recorded interviews.

¹⁵ Member-checking is a process informed by Duneier (1999) where the researcher discusses what was said in the initial interview with the participant. The participant can provide further clarification of meaning and the researcher can gain further insight or rectify any misunderstandings or misinterpretations.

¹⁶ The researcher noted that significant improvements were made in her interview style and tempo throughout all 10 interviews.

basis with a group of close friends or even within your family?” Based on the interviewees' responses the researcher could ask follow up or probing questions to gain better insight. Using McCracken (1988) the researcher did not follow a hard-and-fast rule for asking probing questions. The interaction with the participant would signal to the researcher if a probing question was necessary. During the transcription and analysis process the researcher discovered that in some responses further clarification was needed. In certain cases member checking, as suggested by Duneier (1999), was conducted through a follow up conversation with a participant to verify meaning or implication. Follow up conversations were conducted with six participants for member checking. The six follow up conversations were conducted over the phone or via Skype (one over the phone and 5 over Skype). Participants' profiles remained anonymous through the use of pseudonyms.¹⁷

Data Analysis

The purpose of the data collection and analysis method was not to create broad generalizations but instead to link themes among participants and note individual differences based on key influential factors. The qualitative research process allows the researcher to look at humanity and the characteristics of that humanity. Humanity is discovered in the details of conversations and is not collected using a specific method of inquiry. Many social scientists look at humanity as the essence of having one-on-one conversations. A qualitative interview process was chosen because the sensitive subject matter, such as one's formation of identity, cannot be fully explored in a structured questionnaire, survey, or other standardized method. Each individual had a unique perspective and voice that cannot be properly harvested or understood in

¹⁷ When having a follow-up interview with Iman, she indicated that she did not like the name Iman. Given the length of time the researcher had to complete the formal writing of the dissertation the name was not changed. However, in any public dissemination of knowledge, the researcher will change Iman's name to something she likes and approves of.

a structured environment. Using a qualitative data analysis technique informed by McCracken's long interview process allowed the researcher to methodically code data using open, axial, and selective coding processes. The researcher employed McCracken's (1988) five-step analysis process, which occurred during step four of "the 4-step method of inquiry." The interviews were transcribed verbatim and the coding and analyses process occurred after every third interview. Therefore, after interview #3 and interview #6 the researcher transcribed the interviews and conducted open coding. The open coding process allowed the researcher to identify and understand themes emerging from the data. Additionally, this process helped the researcher better conduct interviews and reformulate questions. For example, after the first three interviews were transcribed, the researcher saw a pattern of "peppering" in which she was too vocal during the interview, quick to ask immediate follow up questions before the participant even finished speaking. Once the researcher recognized this problem she was able to reformat the questions and create a steady cadence for which she asked questions and took appropriate pauses providing the participant room to fully respond. In the coding process after interviews one through three and four through six, the researcher was able to rephrase questions that were misunderstood by participants, for example, the question, "Can you tell me a little bit about who is in your immediate circle of friends and family?" Was often met with the response "I do not know what you mean by this question." The researcher was able to give examples of what was meant by immediate circle of family and friends by providing this example,

Imagine you won the lottery, got engaged, or gained prestigious employment, tell me about the people whom you would immediately contact to share the good news, do you consider those people to be your immediate circle of friends and family?

By using this example the participants had a context to better understand who the researcher was interested in speaking about.

Open, axial, and selective coding are embedded in the five-step analysis process. As Charmaz (2006) indicated the open, axial, and selective coding process is designed to enable grounded theory development, but in the case of the present study a theoretical framework had already been structured prior to data collection. The five-step method of inquiry utilizes a three-tier coding process. This allowed the researcher to develop emergent themes and utilize the “bin” method wherein the researcher created broad categories or emergent themes and copied and pasted from interview transcriptions and field notes placing the quotations into the appropriate bin. The researcher began by listening to and reading through the transcriptions several times. To begin this process the researcher would make notes in the margins of the transcriptions about important themes, this is an open coding process. Second, the researcher would review her notes and draw connections to existing theoretical frameworks. This is the axial coding process, the researcher completed this step several times. When the researcher reached a point of exhaustion or the emergent themes were no longer occurring, an intentional break was made, and the axial coding process would begin again. Next, the researcher would continue to review emergent themes and identify consistent patterns and connections to frameworks. It was during step three that the “bins” were created, using broad headings, key quotes, and information from transcriptions. All of this information was inserted into an appropriate bin. During the fourth step, the researcher reviewed all data collected, including field notes. As a result of this review emergent themes that were originally placed into a specific “bin” could be moved or removed if they did not fit thematically. This step is defined as the selective coding process. Similar to axial coding, when the researcher reached a point of exhaustion or lost clarity, a break was made, and the process would begin again. Finally, the researcher began to identify dominant themes that answered the proposed research questions.

This analysis process is laid out in a very linear format, however qualitative research is not always linear. The researcher spent a majority of the data analysis process working in her office on campus or in her private home, however emergent themes do not always appear when one is working. The researcher began to get a sense of themes “rising from the ashes” that would dawn on her a odd times such as on run outside or while riding the bus to work. The researcher was consistent in making notes when themes emerged. Trustworthiness and dependability were embedded in this data analysis method because the researcher was constantly interacting with the data to understand and interpret meaning. Conducting several iterations of transcription, coding and analysis created space for the researcher to ask questions or her own protocol and reformat questions to capitalize on the time she had with each participant. Additionally, the varying levels of coding (open, axial, and selective coding) increased the validity of data analysis. The interpretation of meaning was not generated in a single read through of a transcript, but methodically organized in the bins and scrutinized over during the entire data analysis process. As discussed above the researcher utilized member checking (sometimes referred to as member validation) to ensure credibility of findings and interpretations. The results of the transcribed, coded, and analyzed data are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

Chapter 4 contains a description of the sample and the results and discussion. The sample by length of time spent in the United States, in what U.S. region the participant currently resides, what her occupation is, her marital status, whether she has children or not, if she is currently veiling or not, and her estimated age cohort as estimated by the researcher.¹⁸ This information has been organized in Table 1. The results and discussion are framed by each research question introducing the research question first, followed by the emergent themes¹⁹, and concluded with a discussion of results. The interviews focused primarily on identity formation and dress and a meaningful and important conversation about choice evolved. The overarching theme of identity and choice pertains to each of the research questions.

Description of the Sample

Seventeen women were recruited to be in this study, twelve women volunteered to be part of this study, and ten indicated that they met the requirements to participate (18 years old, born in Iran, currently living in the United States, Muslim, and female). The ten women who met the requirements were interviewed. The women represented a generally homogenous population. All ten women were born in the Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran) and immigrated to the United States with the intention of staying long-term (more than 12 consecutive months). Seven of the

¹⁸ The researcher defined two distinct and broad age categories, 18 – 30, which is the young adult category and 31 – 45, which is the middle-aged category. These categories are purposefully broad because the researcher did not ask the participants for the exact age or an age range these labels are based off the researcher's interactions with the women.

¹⁹ As suggested by Berg (2007) "In its simplest form, a theme is a simple sentence, a string of words with a subject and a predicate" (p. 312). In this study the researcher identified emergent themes using the "bin" method by analyzing all forms of research collected (transcribed interviews and field notes).

10 women do not currently wear a veil, hijab, or headscarf, of those seven women four self-defined as non-traditional Muslims.

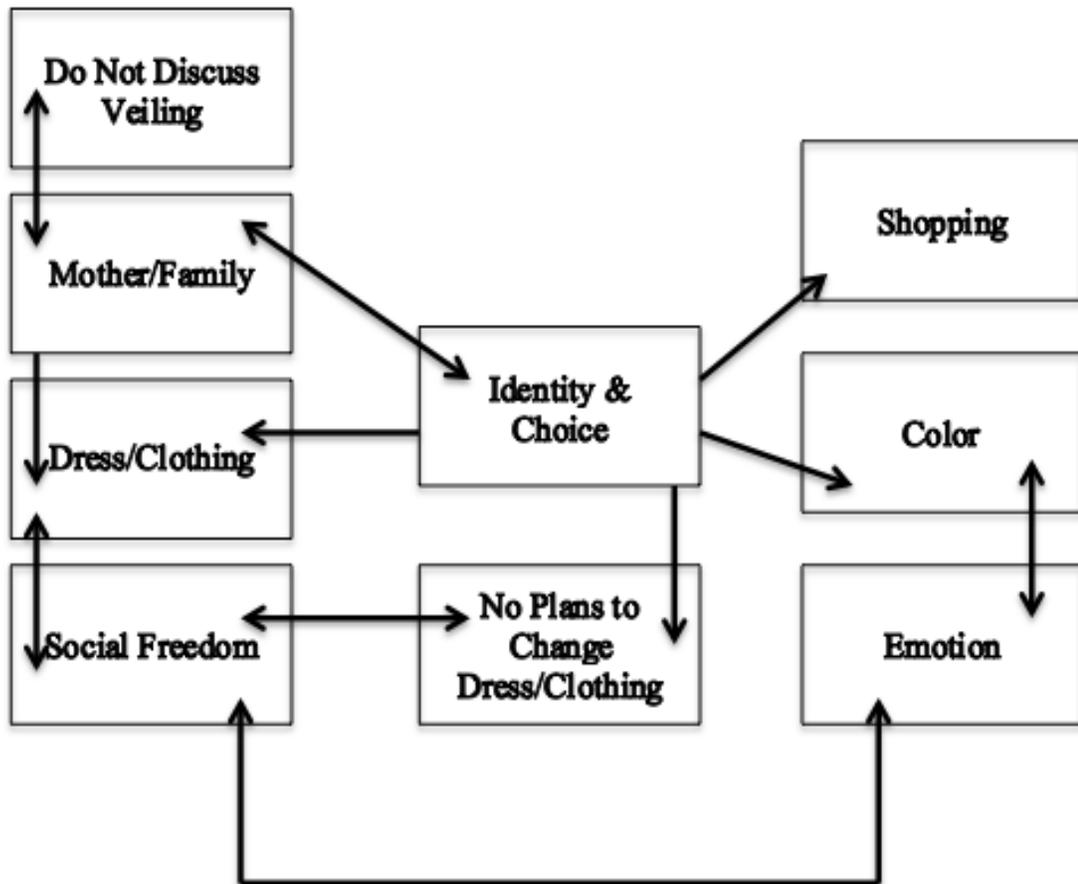
Table 1.
Participant Demographics

Participant Pseudonym	Years Lived in the U.S.	U.S Region	Occupation	Marital Status	Children	Currently Veiling	Estimated Age Cohort
Azar	3	South	Graduate Student	Married	No	No	18 – 30
Bousseh	2	West	Graduate Student	Not Married	No	No	18 – 30
Chalipa	7 months	Midwest	Graduate Student	Not Married	No	No	18 – 30
Delbar	16	East	Working Mother	Married	Yes	No	31 – 45
Elnaz	2	West	Undergraduate Student	Married	No	Yes	18 – 30
Farah	3	West	Graduate Student	Not Married	No	No	18 – 30
Goli	35	West	Working Mother	Married	Yes	No	31 – 45
Hoda	18	Midwest	Stay-at-Home Mother	Married	Yes	Yes	31 – 45
Iman	9	West	Graduate Student	Married	Yes	Yes	31 – 45
Jamileh	3	West	Working Woman	Not Married	No	No	18 – 30

Identity and Choice

The central focus of this study was to gain understanding and insight into the dress practices of Iranian Muslim women living in the United States. To better explore how dress was chosen and displayed, an understanding of how the women form identity through dress was crucial. Each of the research questions proposed reflected the importance of identity and dress. Central to identity was choice or the woman's right to choose. Throughout each of the ten conversations the women were emphatic about their identity formation being tied directly to their right to make choices about dress both in the United States and the Iran. Figure 4.1 is a visual depiction of how identity and choice are linked and have direct impact on how and why a woman chooses her clothing. The one-way arrows indicated that a woman described the relationship between identity and choice as having an impact on the reason. For example, identity and choice are directly linked to "no plans to change dress or clothing" the women were articulate in stating that identity and choice are the direct reason for plans to change. Conversely, two-way arrows indicate that identity and choice impact the reason and the reason impacts identity and choice. For example, "mother/family" impacts identity and choice and identity and choice impact "mother and family."

Figure 4.
Relationship and Reason from Identity and Choice



Research Question 1

The first research question asked *how do first-generation Iranian Muslim women form an identity through faith-based dress upon immigration to the United States?* The purpose of this question was to understand the woman's identity formation in its broadest sense. Women were asked to describe their immigration experience and reflect and compare social experiences in both the United States and Iran. Five broad themes were extracted from the women's responses, (1) Self-Defining Muslim, (2) Making Choices in

the United States, (3) Level of Faith and Its Role in Veiling, (4) Happiness and Social Freedom, (5) A Desire for Color.

Self-defining Muslim. Four women in this study indicated that although they were not “traditional” Muslims they still considered themselves Muslims by their own definition. The women who self-reported as Muslim, but provided examples of how their faith differed from a traditional Muslim could also be referred “selective.” For example, Azar said, “No, as I mentioned I do not practice Islam like regular Muslims.” Similar sentiments were attached to the concept that being a good person was more important than following arbitrary laws enforced by one’s government (this includes veiling in public). Bousseh stated,

Oh yeah, I believe that people have to do good, think good, and help each other, but there’s I don’t think...there’s just religions put too much [indicates she does not know the word in English] extra things that uh, sometimes, uh, I don’t know take your mind off those main important things, just like doing good and you know what I mean?

Nine of the 10 women interviewed described their Islamic faith in very selective terms.

Hoda was the anomaly; she described a very conservative prescription to Islam. She talked about holding the tenets of the Quran and the faith in high regard. These sentiments of being good and doing good are consistent with Smith’s (2009) findings among adolescents in the United States, ultimately if you are a good person you are following the right path. Additionally, many of the parents indicated that they wanted to pass on good values to their children; these concepts were similar to being good and doing good. Delbar indicated this by saying,

I like my children to be familiar with the teaching of Islam, but honestly mainly to the extent to encourage them to be good, kind, caring, respectful, generous people who have the ability to give thanks or pray to something/someone when things go well or don’t.

Delbar like the other women was consistent in her explanation of self that being a good person came first and being Muslim came after that.

The conversations that revolved around what it means to be Muslim and defining oneself as a non-traditional Muslim follows contemporary patterns of the changing ideology among younger Iranian-American Muslims (Basmenji, 2005). This change in attitude and belief system is the subject of a popular reality television show in the United States *Shahs of Sunset* (Bravo Media LLC, 2013). The show documents the lives of six Iranian-Americans living in Beverly Hills, California or as the characters on the show have dubbed it “Tehrangeles.” This pet name for the City of Los Angeles reflects the high concentration of Iranian-Americans who were displaced during the 1979 revolution in Iran and immigrated to the United States and settled in Southern California (Dixon & Hakimzadeh, 2006). The show documents six Iranian-Americans “everyday” lives that focus on lavish lifestyles filled with designer clothes and accessories, attending parties at exclusive clubs, and showing off their homes, cars, and significant others. This show represents Iranian-American youth culture embracing socially constructed ideas about Western culture. In the show we see the characters drinking alcohol, engaging in premarital sex and living arrangements, and same-sex relationships. Anecdotally, some Iranian-Americans living outside of Southern California, including one participant in this study, have expressed disdain and dislike for this television show. There are feelings that the show does not properly represent Iranian Americans or Persian Americans. There is an ongoing and complicated conversation about Bravo TV’s use of the term “Persian” versus Iranian with the characters of the show, many of whom also refer to themselves as Persian-Americans. The use of the term Persian-American reflects a larger conversation

about generational culture and the differences between pre and post-revolution Iranians. This manifestation of young versus old identity is seen in the dress practices of Iranian women. Notably, the women discussed the differing ways they chose to veil or not to veil while living in the United States.

Making choices in the United States. The transitional ideology of what it means to be Muslim has also been reflected in individual identity. The responses the women gave were indicative that choice was central to dress and identity. Three of the ten women who participated in this study indicated that they removed their headscarves immediately upon boarding the plane to the United States. Consistent among all three women was their age following into the observed 18 – 30 year old cohort. Azar stated, “I decided not to wear veil once I boarded on plane to USA.” Similar to Azar’s statements, Farah talked about travel before coming to the United States with similar sentiment, “as soon as I arrived in the airport I just took off my scarf and wore whatever I want that day.” Two of the ten women had more transformative experiences when deciding not to veil while living in the United States. Delbar and Jamileh were also in the same 18 – 30 year old age cohort when they decided not to veil. Delbar, a working mother has lived in the United States for 16 years. She explained her decision-making process, as such, a process wherein she did not decide to immediately take off her veil. Delbar stated,

No, I used to wear a scarf when I was in high school, but that was primarily because my parents wanted me to. When I was going to college I told them I did not want to wear the scarf anymore and after a few arguments the rest is history.

Delbar’s experience where family plays a role in the decision making process about dress is one that is shared among all ten women. Jamileh is living in the United States and is currently employed as an engineer in a large West Coast city. She initially came to the

United States for graduate studies, and like many of the other women, family played a role in process and ultimate choice not to veil. The process that Delbar and Jamileh took when deciding not to veil in the United States is comparable to the process that Elnaz, Hoda, and Iman took when deciding to veil. Hoda in particular went through two distinct stages of veiling; when she first arrived in the United States she self-described her veiling as “more lax” showing her bangs and a bit of hair. Hoda experimented with the veil when first arriving in the United States because she was unsure about what would make her feel comfortable in a new place. After spending time in the United States she has found herself becoming stricter with her veiling, covering all of her hair and wearing long loose-fitting clothes. She explained that she was studying the Quran and the rules of Allah and both indicated (to her) that Allah wanted “us” (Muslim women) to have hijab. Elnaz reflected on experiences of peers before ultimately deciding to continue veiling while she and her husband live in the United States. Elnaz spoke about a female friend, who was wearing the veil while living abroad in Germany and this impacted Elnaz deeply,

Actually, I cannot say, I cannot say [to] you exactly yes or no because for example one of my friends live for two years in Germany, that in those years she was not happy at all because I said to you, as she was really, she had very strict beliefs, you know, she likes to have veil even more than me, you know, and she covers all of her (shows me on a Skype video by tucking her exposed bangs into her hijab), but in that country, in Germany, she had decided not to [veil].

Elnaz’s tone of voice and emphasis on the experience of her friend made it clear that she took her friend’s experience into consideration when deciding whether or not she would veil while living in the United States. Elnaz, unlike many of the other participants, feels as though she interacts with Muslim people on a regular basis and is confident wearing

her veil. Iman also feels confident in wearing her veil and had distinct and purposeful language in describing her choice to veil.

When I first got here [United States] I was thinking should I remove [hijab] because I wasn't that really a religious person in Iran, I'm just a moderate person, but when I moved here, should I keep it or not? I struggled with myself or okay maybe I should just use a hat and remove my hijab. But again actually after 3 – 4 years, I'm in that empowering position as you had said. Okay, this is my belief, I'm going to keep it. So, I'm like I just got to know my God who, I don't have any problem thinking that is a symbol for Islam, other people should understand that.

Each woman talked about her immigration experience to the United States. In their explanations the women discussed the process of making a choice. For some of the women this process was logical, citing that it was not a law to veil in the United States and therefore they would not veil while living here. For others, who chose not to veil, the process was longer, before deciding not to veil. Similarly, those women who chose to veil engaged in a longer process whereby they reflected their choices in others. Important to this study is the underlying fact that each of the ten women made a choice. The women cited different reasons for how and why they made choices.

Level of faith and its role in veiling. Through each of the conversations, the women in this study talked about faith. It was clear from each of the conversations that one's level of faith or expressed connection to Islam was directly correlated to their choice to veil or not veil. The two women, who represented the most religious or faithful and the least, Hoda and Farrah, respectively, highlight this best. The women were not asked specifically to rate their level of faith, but rather asked how faith played a role in their choice to veil or not veil. Hoda said that her choice to veil “is personal and directly related to her relationship with Allah and Islam...my soul doesn't accept it (not veiling).” In stark contrast to Hoda's statements, Farrah talked about faith being separate from what

she called “Islamic rule.” I confirmed the explanation of the Islamic rule with her to, and she was speaking about Sharia Law.²⁰ In Farrah’s explanation of “Islamic rule” she sorted out the difference between being an Iranian woman and being a Muslim woman, “But being a Muslim woman, you are totally stuck by the rules, you have strict limits, you cannot be yourself.” The more moderate responses from the other women shallowly echoed what Hoda or Farrah said. For example, Azar defines herself as a Muslim, but undermined the idea of wearing a veil, stating “I stopped wearing hijab since I do not find it necessary to protect me and others.” Elnaz represents the opposing moderate definition citing faith as her reason for veiling but allowing hair to visibly show from her veil.

For six of the ten women (Azar, Chalipa, Elnaz, Farrah, Hoda, and Iman) the discussion of faith and veiling was an emotional topic. It was clear from their responses that they had been asked this before and took an adamant stance on their choices. This is not to say veiling is a subject they discuss regularly or enjoy talking about, but the women clearly have made conclusive decisions. This will bear further truth as the women talk about length of time in the United States and the possibility of change.

Happiness and social freedom. Nine of the ten women cited happiness when discussing clothing in the United States. For many of the women, this happiness was directly correlated to social freedom experienced in the United States. Social freedom was the belief that one could wear whatever she chooses. This theme is clearly stated by Bousseh,

Like everything now! I always loved fashion, so, I always go to like see what’s in fashion, what I like, I am always looking to things that are um, in right now, so here there are more choices, more freedoms, so you can wear whatever you and

²⁰ “Sharia law is Islam’s legal system. It is derived from both the Koran, as the word of God, the example of the like of the prophet Muhammad, and fatwas – the rulings of Islamic scholars” (Casciani, 2008, para1).

whatever you like. I always go, especially because I was unable to wear like dresses outside or skirts, so I always go for those things here (laughs).

Farah echoed this sentiment of happiness about clothing, but for her it extended beyond the choice of clothing, “But here I don’t have any problem at all. I feel free, mentally and spiritually, and there is no one here stopping me from wearing whatever I want.” When discussing this particular topic, Farah’s tone transcended happiness her expression was a feeling of security. The feelings of happiness and social freedom were not only expressed by non-veilers, Elnaz, a veiler, also talked about happiness, dress, and social freedom.

So right now with these clothes I’m happy here and actually I can say that is the positive. I’m happy here with these clothes and for example in Iran, because half of the people because of the belief of the people, I’m not so comfortable with my veiling.

Her suggestion was that in Iran she is criticized for letting some of her bangs hang from her hijab and in the United States, she feels pleased that she can expose her bangs without criticism. Similar to Elnaz’s feelings about exposing her bangs, Chalipa had a new experience in the United States that was unusual for her, but as she explained it became “usual” and now she is content. Upon immigrating to the United States just seven months prior to our interview, Chalipa went to a coed beach for the first time and after initial anxiety passed, she felt comfortable on the beach in her bikini.

Uh, I had the feeling that like everyone is looking at me, I don’t know...um, the first time was strange, at first I came here, the university pool was not separated and I wasn’t comfortable going there, but after I went to the beach now, something usual for me, not strange.

Similar to Farah, Chalipa’s description of her beach experience transcended happiness and echoed feelings of safety and security.

The conversations with the women in the study were evident that for veilers and non-veilers happiness is directly tied to feelings of social freedom as it pertains to dress.

Emotion was also connected to dress the women discussed a link between emotion and color.

A desire for color. Kaya and Epps (2004) research suggested that emotion is directly correlated to color, “In particular color preferences are associated with whether a color elicits positive or negative feelings” (p. 31). The women in this study were consistent with Kaya and Epps as they described different emotions to the color of their clothing and hijab. This was brought up among both veilers and non-veilers. Five of ten women in this study mentioned color as it played some level of importance in their choice of clothing and hijab. For three of those five women color was linked to a want and a choice because color choice was not available when living in Iran. Chalipa, Elnaz, and Farah, categorically stated they did not like dark colors. Chalipa linked her desire for a colored wardrobe to her life in Iran,

Um, I prefer bright colors because in Iran, most of the time, we had to wear...especially we had to, we had special, what's that called, outfits for school...[interviewer asks if she means uniforms]...they were always black or very dark blue, so um, I prefer to wear bright colors, red, yellow, green.

Elnaz emphasized the importance of color in her wardrobe, “Yeah is so important for me. The clothes that I buy be colorful, I don't like dark clothes.” Farah talked more about specific colors, but the emphasis was still on color and distaste for darks, “I guess, green, purple, and yellow, I love yellow...yeah bright colors. I hate black, darker [colors].” For Hoda, a veiler, color was related to the mood of a particular occasion, she wears lighter/brighter colors to positive or “happy” occasions and darker colors to more somber occasions. Jamileh talked about the abundance of blue in her wardrobe, she said “Oh I like all of the shades of blue. And, uh, but I mean some of the colors like blue and cream are a lot in my closet recently.”

For the women color was crucial to their overall happiness with their clothes and appearance. Based on the responses it was equally important that the women have choice in what color they wear. These two factors are directly linked to the broadest theme of the study, identity formation.

Creating identity through clothes was ingrained in all of the women's responses. It manifested best through the discussion of choice. Beginning with the choice of how to define oneself as Muslim and subsequently using that definition to make choices about dress and veiling while living in the United States. A woman's definition of her faith (how Muslim she views herself) was reflected in how each woman described her choice and reason for veiling or not. Based on those choices the women were able to describe tangible results, first in the form of social freedom and second by dressing in colors that elicit happiness.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked *how does the immediate religious and ethnic community of first-generation Iranian Muslim women influence her appearance specifically in terms of faith-based dress?* The purpose of this question was to explore dress practices with the women. The women were asked to talk about their veiling and dress practices in the United States and in Iran. Two broad themes emerged from this question (1) Dedication and Desire to Dress Modestly, and (2) Unwanted Attention and Staring

Dedication and desire to dress modestly. Each of the women interviewed, categorically stated if they are currently veiling or not and why. They made definitive arguments as to why the veil is necessary and why it is not. However, veil or no veil the

ten women who participated in this study consistently discussed the desire to dress modestly. Modesty for each woman took on a very particular definition and manifested itself into dress in many different ways. For example, Delbar talked about how she uses safety pins to keep low cut tops pinned together to avoid exposing cleavage, Chalipa does not wear v-neck tee shirts, and Elnaz wants to expose her bangs while wearing a hijab. In this study, modesty was defined as “Behavior, manner, or appearance intended to avoid impropriety or indecency” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2014). For each woman that impropriety or indecency shifted, but it does not lessen their emphasis to remain modest based on their own terms. Contrary to a conversation about modesty some women provided definitive commentary about the state of immodesty among youths in the United States today. In this situation these women were able to clearly and distinctly state what they felt was immodest.

The three veiled women, Elnaz, Hoda, and Iman who participated in this study had varying ideas of what modesty was to them. Consistent among the responses of these three women was the idea that they would not wear tight clothes. Individually, they described the desire for longer skirts and pants, loose fitting tops with long sleeves that were not cut low along the neckline. Hoda described this style of dress as “clothes that do not stick to her.” Among these three women there was one other distinction that split them as a group, style of headscarf. Elnaz and Iman believe in a less conservative style of headscarf, allowing hair and bangs to show in the front of the scarf. Elnaz in particular talked about her bangs being exposed from her scarf, “For example, if I have these hairs out you know (touches her exposed bangs), I like to leave my face, I like to be with scarf

but I don't like to cover all of my hairs." Iman expressed similar sentiments about the more relaxed style she prefers,

I feel like okay I am in the mood to not have like my hijab so I just show a little [hair], doesn't matter to myself. Because I don't believe that some men will see my hair or something, so I just want to have it as a symbol with me of myself.

Distinctly different from Elnaz and Iman, Hoda was emphatic about her desire to keep her headscarf covering her hair. She had gone through several phases of veiling, but is currently practicing a very strict form of veiling, being sure not to expose any hair or skin other than her face and hands. The three veiled women in this study were easily organized into two groups, Hoda as a strict, conservative veiler and Iman and Elnaz more relaxed. The seven remaining women had more varied definitions of what modesty was and how that manifested into each of their lives.

Among those women who were not currently veiling were Azar, Bousseh, Chalipa, Delbar, Farah, Goli, and Jamileh. They had varying definitions of modesty. Similar to the women who are currently veiling two distinct groups emerged, Azar, Bousseh, Farah and Goli did not explicitly express pragmatic ways in which they dress modestly whereas Chalipa, Delbar, and Jamileh had comprehensive explanations of how they dressed modestly; specifically, each of these three women cited exposed skin as a determination for something being modest or immodest. Chalipa stated this clearly, "Um, I don't wear any shorts, dresses, or pants something like that, not above the knee... I don't like, I don't know what's it called, weird clothes that reveals the chest area (pointed to my v-neck t-shirt)." Delbar had similar manifestations of dress, "For example as I mentioned, I never wear anything that is too short, however I do wear dresses without stockings at times." Jamileh also talked about exposed skin and confidence,

For example, if I want to choose a dress, especially these days, you see a lot of dress has a cuts on the back or something on the side, so still I am not confident wearing something like that because its some area I don't usually show off. Or, um, but or, for example I am kind of personally, I don't like to have a top that show too much of my cleavage and that's just a personal choice."

The importance placed on modesty²¹ is crucial this study because modesty is in the eye of the beholder. Six of ten women interviewed in this study had experienced situations where modesty was regulated by clothing. In some situations, the women discussed modesty and the dress code laws enforced in Iran. In other situations the women talked about their own self imposed modesty, such as deciding to dress modestly while living in the United States.

Modesty was also discussed in relation to others. Chalipa and Hoda both described situations in which they interacted with youth culture (ages 16 – 20) where they were shocked or uncomfortable with how young women dressed. Chalipa, who has spent the least amount of time in the United States (7 months at the time of interview) was introduced to a less than conservative youth culture on a large land-grant university campus in the Midwest. Her description of young women, "And here (in the United States) I saw, students, especially undergrad students wear small shorts or tops." Her tone of voice was less disdainful and more surprised that this type of dress in public is acceptable. Hoda more explicitly expressed distaste for immodest dress. Hoda's 17 year-old son attends a large public school in the suburbs of large Midwestern city, and Hoda found the lack of dress code to be shocking. She and her husband are very mindful of

²¹ Modesty is defined in this study as "Behavior, manner, or appearance intended to avoid impropriety or indecency" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2014). Each of the women in this study internalized this definition in a different way. In turn then, the women's internalization of the definition individually changed how the women expressed modesty. In general, for each of the women, modesty was related to a style of dress that was not overly revealing, especially low cut tops, short sleeve shirts, tank tops, or shorts.

telling their son not to look when he is sitting near a girl in his class that is dressed immodestly. She was emphatic that he should pay attention to the school lesson at hand. Hoda did not provide an explanation of what she considered to be immodest dress. Additionally, Hoda did not talk about any difficulty her son faced in the public school in relation to the dress code.

Tantamount to the discussion of modesty was family and father specifically. Jamileh, Iman, and Delbar in particular referenced the importance of modesty and their fathers. Each differed in the way in which they engaged with their fathers in terms of dress. For example, Jamileh is living in the United States without her family, and when her parents came for a visit a conversation took place between father and daughter.

And then this summer my parents came here and the first thing I did when I went to the airport to pick them up I had a dress on and I didn't have any tights or socks on. And my dad didn't act weird then when we get home after a couple of days, um, something came up and he said to me, your sister mentioned to me that about what you did, why you are dressing like that...he said that I [the father] totally understand that you are in a different place and I think that the way you're dressing up is totally appropriate for the situation.

Different from Jamileh, Iman focused on the influence her father's faith had on her choice to veil and the happiness it brought him to see her do the same.

Okay so it was my dad who was that um, probably conservative Muslim. So he was the one who wanted us to cover more and more...but for myself, I didn't need um, any pressure or anything it was my style. My dad was happy with that, I know that my dad is really happy right now. Here [in the U.S.] he is just so proud of me, but never it was like okay so my dad love that [hijab] so I will do that.

Delbar's focus on her father was different because she has lived in the United States five – to – six times longer than Jamileh and Iman and she is older. Her parents have been here just as long and that clearly has impacted the relationship between father and daughter in terms of dress. Delbar immigrated to the United States with her sister and her

parents currently live here as well. Originally, while in high school Delbar's parents wanted her to veil, but she refused. Today, many years later, she talked about the importance of modesty in terms of stockings when visiting her father, "But if I am seeing my dad I usually make sure I am wearing stockings." It was interesting that both women mentioned stockings or socks as a factor representing modesty with their father's. In popular culture and media the obsession with female Muslim modesty usually focuses on the head, neck, and face. However, Islamic definition of modesty addresses an overall modesty, one should not appear ostentatious, however one should always appear clean and well kept (Clark, 2003).

Unwanted attention and staring. Emerging from some of the conversations about dress in the United States were descriptions of staring. The women explained staring in three different ways, first in the United States people (both men and women, but men especially) are not allowed to stare at women. Secondly, in Iran staring and making judgments about others was anecdotally described as part of the culture. Third and finally, women who veil in the United States attract more attention to themselves than those who do not. In many of the conversations one or all of these instances of staring was discussed. None of the women addressed the contradiction that in the United States staring is socially unacceptable, but women who veil attract the unwanted stares.

Chalipa talked about not being "allowed" to stare at women in the United States, "Um, no, I just like it that you can wear anything you want, not anything, but most of the same ones [skin baring clothing] and nobody can judge you." Similarly Bousseh said, "People here [in the United States] are really nice, but they have different ways of interacting with you." Jamileh found similar freedom in the United States, "I can dress up

the way that I like and nobody will judge me, and there would be no authority that asks me, hey why are you dressing up like that?" All of the statements indicate a larger societal standard that in the United States staring is frowned upon. If someone in the United States were staring there would be minor social implications for the starrer and the focal person would be viewed as a victim. This is directly contradictory to legal and social implications in many Muslim countries including Iran. For instance, Chalipa said

If you um, wear stuff like this [skin baring clothing] in Iran, um, actually guys stare at you, you cannot wear stuff like that in the streets, but if you do in [a] party or somewhere like that guys will stare at you...it's your own fault that you wear clothes like that and guys can stay stuff.

This was echoed by Jamileh in similar statements about clothing in Iran, "I mean you always see people looking at you...so in the street it was possible that the police ask you why are you dressing like this?" The anxiety the women felt about unwanted stares in Iran was counteracted by freedoms felt in the United States. The conversations did not address similar social and legal issues faced by women in both Iran and the United States, such as slut shaming²² and victim blaming²³.

Interwoven in conversations about the social implications for staring in the United States were statements about staring at women who wear the veil in the United States. Chalipa implied that people in the United States do judge women who wear the veil, "I believe in the United States, even veiling is...more strange than not veiling because...it's [the Midwest] and it's strange for most of the people." The contradiction presented by

²² "(V;): to shame someone, male or female, for sleeping around indiscriminately with anyone and everyone they can, often without even knowing the persons name" (Urban Dictionary, 2014).

²³ "Victim-blaming attitudes marginalize the victim/survivor and make it harder to come forward and report the abuse. If the survivor knows that you or society blames her for the abuse, s/he will not feel safe or comfortable coming forward and talking to you" (Center for Relationship Abuse Awareness, 2013).

Bousseh, Chalipa, Delbar, and Jamileh is of note because these four women do not veil. Additionally, when Chalipa and Delbar described staring at women who do veil in the United States their tone was less sympathetic and more accusatory, meaning, the women who choose to veil in the U.S. warrant the stares they receive. Delbar echoed similar sentiments about drawing attention to one's self while wearing the veil in the United States,

I just always thought that if the point of hijab is for you to stay covered and attract less attention from men/society then it is definitely not serving that purpose in this country. Usually people who are wearing scarves or full hijab attract a lot more attention.

Chalipa and Delbar's statements, in particular are different than the three women who do veil. Hoda and Iman each described an incident when they felt they were singled out for their display of religious expression, but they did not express any deep anxiety or serious preoccupation with these events. Hoda for instance talked about discrimination she felt in the months following September 11, 2001. She had the unfortunate experience of being victim to verbal assaults when she was driving on a major interstate. Her experience is consistent with other Muslim Americans in the months and years following 9/11/2001. Ahmed (2011) reported that Islamic-related hate crimes and general Islamophobia increased "1600%." Furthermore, female Muslim Americans who wear a headscarf, veil, or hijab are more obvious targets because they are visually expressing their religious identity (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008). The visual expression aspect of wearing hijab is one of the main motivating factors for Iman. She explained, "Okay, why should I just give up my beliefs to blend in society." Although her experience with discrimination is limited, she felt more people stared at her when she was walking with her young son, speaking in Farsi then when she is walking alone.

Consistent among all the women veiled or not is that attention received for the way one dresses is undesirable. However, among the women who do not veil the social standards in the United States are different than in Iran. Congruently and conversely, the women who veil experience unsolicited attention in the United States. There was almost no emphasis placed on the contradiction between staring and dress when talking about the veil.

The women responded to research question two citing social reasons that impact both identity and choice. The women simultaneously celebrated social freedom and choice, in that they chose a level of modesty to create their identity through dress. As explained by their responses they found modesty to provide a level of freedom in the United States they do not feel in Iran. In Iran if a woman chose to dress immodestly, such as showing legs, arms, and a full head of hair, she could be subject to street harassment by others. In more severe circumstances, dressing immodestly in Iran could bring shame to her family. As explained by the women there are no laws regulating street harassment in Iran. However, in the United States the women can choose how modest they would like to dress and by practicing a moderate level of modesty they in turn experience social freedom. The clothing is a catalyst for the social freedom because the experiences are relative to one another, walking on a public sidewalk in the United States with your hair uncovered would not be perceived as a social freedom by the average Western woman, but to an Iranian-Muslim immigrant this is an extreme social freedom.

Research Question 3

The third research question asked *to whom do first-generation Iranian Muslim women use as social referents or comparison groups to assist in identity formation?* The

purpose of this research question was to best understand who was in the women's immediate social circle and how social interaction with those people influenced her identity and impacted her choices. Additionally, the third research question also asked about social influences beyond the immediate circle such as media. From the third research question three broad themes were created (1) Mothers Influence on Dress, (2) Do Not Talk About Veiling, and (3) A Place to Shop.

Mothers' influence on dress. Consistent with research on mother-daughter relationships and dress (Francis & Burns, 1990; Kestler, 2009) many of the women in this study discussed the influence their mothers had on not only their decision to veil or not, but their clothing style overall. Contemporary news media and other media outlets often emphasize the role of husband, father, or older male relative in relation to a Muslim women's veiling and dress practices. The women in this study discussed their father in particular, in relationship to a desire to dress modestly or respecting their father, but no women in this study directly stated that any male relative influenced their decisions to veil or not veil. At the start of this research project when the research IRB protocol was under review it was suggested that extended confidentiality agreements or other such agreements would need to be made in order for the women to gain approval from their father, husband, or older male relative. When women were asked to be a part of this study no one discussed asking permission during initial conversations. It was clear to the researcher that the women were making choices on their own accord.

When discussing their mother's influence on dress the women are divided into two categories, the first are mother's who influence the daughter and the second are daughter's who influence the mother. The largest number of participants fell into the first

category (n = 5). Bousseh discussed the religious and fashion divide that occurs in her family, her father's family is more religiously conservative compared to her mother's family. She shared that her mother in particular is very into fashion, "Um, actually my mom had the same like idea of the religion and hijab so she was also really into fashion stuff, we were on the same thing, we never had a problem in these areas." Conversely to Bousseh, Elnaz discussed her mother's influence and dress in terms of religion and veiling,

It was for example when I was a child it was so important to her that she always said to me oh it's important to need to wear it like this, like this, these kind of stuff. Yeah, I think the most important reason for me can be my mother that right now I am in the U.S. and I am free, not veiling, but I choose to have veil you know and I think that all the most important reason for me is just my mother.

Differing from both Bousseh and Elnaz, Iman talked about her mother's influence to be more liberal while wearing hijab,

My mom is like okay why don't you just loose it a little bit. She is like okay you don't need to do that, don't put a hat under your shawl, just making fun, but just having that back and forth talking like no, I like it, but you tell me this, kind of humoring, but none of that.

Hoda's mother influenced her in a similar way as Iman's mother. Interestingly, Hoda's mother was present at the time of the interview she was at the mosque engaged in deep meditative prayer. Hoda explained that her mom never pushed her to veil while they were living in Iran. In contrast to that statement, both women were wearing hijab, full abaya or manteau. Moreover Hoda's mother was also wearing chador at the time of the interview. Differing from the other women in this category, Farah talked about the similar experiences she and her mother had with the morality police. Farah identified the morality police as the Basij forces²⁴.

“No, she totally supported me and stood up for me because she would like the other places, other than Iran because there’s no...you cannot improve yourself in Iran. Specifically what I’m talking about with you [veiling]. She totally supported me.”

The tone of love, support, exploration, and choice was consistent among all five women in this category. It was evident from their tones of voice that they all found comfort and security with their mothers.

The second category daughters influencing mothers was smaller ($n = 2$) indicating there were three women (Azar, Chalipa, and Goli) who did not directly discuss their mother’s influence on dress during the interview. Delbar explained that after she decided not to veil in college (citing social influence) that her mother and sister also stopped veiling slowly. Interestingly, Delbar said she does want to influence her daughter,

The only thing that I’d like to emphasize is that I do want to be a good example to my daughter and son too of course, but boys don’t need to worry as much about their choice of clothing in this society. However, I don’t feel that I could do that via telling her that she should dress modestly or cover up because it is what our religion says we should do.

This is in contrast to Delbar explaining that she dresses modestly and does so out of respect for herself, family, and religion. Jamileh influenced her mother by asking or suggesting that she not wear her veil while on vacation in the United States. Jamileh discussed this at length expressing a desire for her mother to have an enjoyable vacation in the United States and not elicit unwanted stares from others,

Um, personally, I think, um, most of the people here [in the United States] doesn’t have veil and didn’t want, I think that sometimes I see people looking funny to you when you have veil and I didn’t want her to have that experience. Especially because she was going to be here for only one month and a half and I didn’t want her to be uncomfortable in a way that people react to her.

Evident from the majority of women discussing their mothers, they play an important role in the decision making process and ultimately identity formation.

Do not talk about veiling. Contrary to the discussions I had with the women in this study about veiling, many of them shared that they do not talk about veiling with their family and friends. The reasons for not talking about veiling were consistent and they made it clear that it was a socially taboo topic. Some of the women also indicated that if a member of their family or friend groups changed from veiler to non-veiler or vice versa it could impact the group dynamic. This was especially true among the women's friend groups. When I asked the women why some Iranian-Muslim women did not want to participate in this study the general consensus was that veiling is a very personal topic. Bousseh was explicit in the way she talked about not talking about veiling "Um, no, it's not really something people discuss always, yeah people have figured out that it is something that you do not discuss." Farah however gave the most detailed explanation of her interaction with other Iranians in the United States, highlighting the socially taboo topic is not to be broached.

I try not to talk about this stuff because we are friends here in Orville²⁵ sometimes they wear scarf or sometimes they wear manteau²⁶, cover their hairs and so I refuse to talk about it because it can be awkward.

Not discussing veiling in conversation is analogous to many socially taboo topics avoided among conversations (e.g., politics, same-sex marriage, or abortion rights) in the United States. Delbar was by far the most judicious in her explanation of not talking about veiling.

²⁵ Pseudonym used for the West Coast community she currently resides in.

²⁶ A loose gown or cloak worn by women (Oxford English Dictionary, 2014).

I do have some friends from college that wear scarves and I met a very sweet lady at a job who also wore hijab, but none of these amazing women are in my immediate circle of friends and whenever we speak wearing the scarf is never a topic of conversation.

She rationalized her reason for not broaching the topic of veiling, empowering the women she was discussing with adjectives such as “sweet ” and “amazing,” but her bottom line was ultimately the same as the other women, it’s socially proscribed.

Jamileh talked a bit about social media and its role in communicating with her family and her sister and father in particular,

So with my family, um, when I came here I really wanted to dress my own way, but my sister is a really conservative person in that way and she’s always concerned about [what] other people think and I don’t blame her because she is still living there [Iran] and she always concerned that if I, if people see me dressing in a way or something, in Facebook, I put a photo of me in a special dress or something, she’s always concerned about that so forever she keep mentioning to me that hey this dress that you use or this one that you use it’s really open or you should not wear like that, but I always say to her hey this is my personal choice and I’m living here is different from Iran and I want to do it like that and you cannot have control over it. And she always say to me on Dad will probably not be happy about blah blah blah and sometimes because I always, um, send photos to my sister and then she share it with my family and she said to me that oh I am not going to show this photo to Dad he is not going to be happy and then I always say to her that hey this is me right now and you cannot hide it from Dad, it’s me and he’s gonna realize it.

Clearly Jamileh had reservations about her father seeing her less conservative style of dress she adorns in the United States. Her statements lead the researcher to believe she was okay with her father seeing her more Westernized style of dress despite her sister’s reservations.

The women also discussed how a group member changing from non-veiler to veiler or vice versa could impact the group dynamic. This was true for both veilers and non-veilers. Hoda was the most frank in her explanation. She explained that if a woman in her friend group decided not to veil they would have “nothing to talk about.” Hoda

indicated that a majority of the women she is closest with are veilers, she was adamant that they were likeminded in terms of religion and dress, and this is important factor for her when engaging socially. She did continue to explain that if a friend became a non-veiler they would have “continued communication,” but have to find something (aside from religion) in common. Goli had similar feelings about a change to group dynamic if one of her non-veiling friends decided to start veiling.

I guess if a friend started wearing a veil all of the sudden it would change the dynamic (eventually). If we decide to go to a restaurant by the beach or attend special events in public it could change the dynamic. It wouldn't change how I feel about the friend if she was a long time friend, but I would probably want to know why there was a change. I also respect my friend's choice (as long as it's not a safety issue).

The women's beliefs about a change in group dynamic parallels the dramaturgical perspective (Blumer, 2011; Goffman, 1959) as we are constantly performing in both a front and backstage. Even among friends where one could consider them in the backstage, the performance of “friend” as a group member comes with social requirements as outlined by the group. Hoda for instance was clear that she chose her friends based on similar religious ideology and it would cause strain if one of her friends decided not to veil.

The participation in this study was limited. Many women contacted did not return emails or phone calls, and it became clear that the difficulty of connecting with the women was embedded in a larger meaning; why did some Iranian-Muslim women living in the United States not want to participate? Some of the women were asked why they thought this was the case. The overwhelming response from the women who were interviewed was that veiling is a personal topic and likely the non-responsive women do not want to discuss it. When recruiting women using fliers hung in various locations a

male employee at a Persian market said, “clothes are clothes and no wants to talk about that.” For the women who did participate there were an overwhelming amount of questions about why I was doing this research or why was I interested in this topic.

A Place to Shop. As previously stated in this chapter, the women in this study expressed a desire and dedication to dress modestly, even if they are not wearing a veil. Their dedication to dress modestly is met with some obstruction. Clothing for women in the United States and a cultural emphasis for women in the United States stray far from modesty, as the participants defined modesty. The women in this study have adopted a method of mixing garments, matching garments, and layering garments to achieve a stylish yet modest look. While the definition of modesty varied among the women, Chalipa pointed out that I was wearing a v-neck t-shirt during our interview, something she indicated she would not wear. The women listed a number of different places they like to shop and a number of different ways they found out what is in fashion and what they might like to purchase and wear.

Many of the women described a process by which they buy different items and modify them to create a modest look. Elnaz talked about the difficulty in finding items that worked and how she remedied the problem.

For example, I buy the clothes that are long sleeves that are so simple and use under the other clothes that are modern and better you know, look better, I do like that too. I have to do that because otherwise too I can't find any clothes.

Delbar talked specifically about how she has to layer clothes to make them more modest to her standards specifically so that her chest is not over exposed, “...and don't have a low (neck) cut. If they do I usually wear a tank top under or pin the top.” Iman discussed the importance of layering so that it does not expose her upper body or waistline,

Like okay today I don't care about anything, but usually I just prefer having loose, what do you call the top [interviewer asks if she means a long-sleeved tunic]...exactly, so something that is not too long and it's just a little under [interviewee indicates a location mid-thigh] the hip and my hijab.

For Elnaz, Delbar, and Iman they consciously considered the process they engage in to create the modest look they desire. Elnaz and Hoda both expressed an interest in stores that catered specifically to Muslim women. For instance, Hoda discussed a hair salon in her town that has a separate area for Muslim women to go and have their hair cut with the privacy of just other women. Similarly, when the idea of a clothing store dedicated to only Muslim clothing, Elnaz's response was elated, "Yeah sure, that would be best place for me. It would really make happy Muslim women!"

Many of the women in the study, both veilers and non-veilers, were able to identify the consumer clothing stores at which they liked to shop and the way they received and retrieved information about what is in style. Eight of the 10 women described their style as "functional" citing work and school as the reason for functionality. For a majority of the women, particularly the students and parents, cost was a big factor in where they choose to shop, for instance Bousseh said "But since I am a college student, I am not very wealthy, I will go to Forever 21 because it's like cheap, but you can get like different type of dress and skirt." Iman had similar sentiments bridging both categories as both a student and a parent, "We are students so we have to, and we have a kid here, so we just try to stay on budget as much as we can." Jamileh and Elnaz were the only participants who described themselves as fashionable (Bousseh said she was both). Jamileh in comparison to Elnaz dedicates much more time to seeking out fashionable clothing and even shared that her boyfriend helps her find the type of fashionable clothing she desires. Consistent with contemporary consumer behavior

patterns the women of this study as consumers, sought out product information using the Internet. However, the interviews with all ten women indicated that much more time was spent in store deciding what matched their expectations (style, price, modesty, etc.) than was spent conducting product research.

The third research question introduced social interaction as an important piece of identity formation and choice. Immediate social circles, mother's in particular, played a critical role in the choices made by the women. Conversely, many of the women were adamant that there was no discussion about veiling among immediate social circles because it is taboo. Evidenced by the women's responses both mother and society play a role in where the women choose to shop. Many of the women indicated that they seek out information from primarily from media sources such as consumer websites and social media. The impact of choice on identity went beyond their personal choices but also the choices of their mothers'. The women's responses clearly indicated that identity was again impacted by choice extending beyond their personal choices, but also the choices of their mother's.

Table 2.
Participant Consumer Behavior

Participant Pseudonym	Outside Influences	Style	Desired Shopping Location	Described Price Point	Currently Veiling
Azar	Websites, magazines, and popular film characters	Functional	No response	No response	No
Bousseh	Websites, peers	Functional, fashionable	Forever 21	Mass, budget	No
Chalipa	Mannequins at the mall/shopping center	Functional	Prefers Iranian stores	No response	No
Delbar	No response	Functional	Loft	Moderate, mass	No
Elnaz	Mannequins at the mall/shopping center	Fashionable	Fred Meyer, Ross, T.J. Maxx, & Dress Barn	Mass, budget	Yes
Farah	Magazines	Functional	Nordstrom	Better, moderate	No
Goli	No response	Functional	No response	No response	No
Hoda	Fashion media specific to Iran	Functional	Target, Kohls, Carsons, & Macy's	Mass, budget	Yes
Iman	None	Functional	Fred Meyer, Target, & Sears	Mass, budget	Yes
Jamileh	Social media, websites	Fashionable	Banana Republic, Bebe	Better, moderate	No

Research Question 4

The fourth research question asked, *to what extent, if any, does faith-based dress change for a first-generation Iranian Muslim woman as the length of time spent in the U.S. increases?*

The purpose of this question was to explore changes in attitudes and behaviors while the women lived in the United States. A singular, but dominant theme emerged from the women's responses and that was (1) Length of Time Does not Impact Dress Choices.

Length of Time Does not Impact Dress Choices. Each of the ten women interviewed was asked if they could ever foresee a change in dress (i.e., veilers becoming non-veilers or vice versa). Unanimously, each woman indicated that she would not change her veiling status while living in the United States²⁷. For the veilers, Elnaz, Hoda, and Iman there was a natural break between the group, Elnaz and Iman had a more liberal concept of keeping their veils. Hoda, however was much more unwavering, she said, "God's rules don't change" and that would alone would keep her veil on her head and on her heart. Elnaz and Iman were able to negotiate a reality where perhaps they would not veil, but both indicated a desire to continue to veil. For example, Iman said,

I don't know, it's hard to say, it depends on many different things. I don't know, I would love to keep it as a symbol of my religion, but one day if I found something else to keep that symbolic thing, like some Christian people they wear necklace [with a cross] as a symbol, and it depends on our religious leaders too. So like after September 11, there was religious leaders who said Muslim women should not wear hijab because their life is in danger. So there are all these different things that can happen, maybe one day, but I would love to have that symbolic thing of Islam with me. I can't say what will happen in the future.

Elnaz directly echoed what Iman said in response a question about changing veiling practices the longer you've lived in the United States.

²⁷ Some of the women did indicate that if they went back to Iran to visit they would wear a veil in public because law requires it, but this does not change their internal desire not to wear a veil.

Yeah, right now, my decision is like that [wearing a veil]. I like to have veil always, unless something important changes in my life, like something that happened to my friend in Germany. Right now my decision is to have veil all the time that I am here or any other place.

The responses from the veilers is similar to their reflection on religiosity, Hoda self-described as a very strict Muslim and Iman and Elnaz both self-described as followers of Islam, but in a much more relaxed way.

The responses of the non-veilers in the study (n = 7) state that there will be no change, and they cannot negotiate a reality where they would wear a veil in the United States. All seven women had similar outlooks about a desire not to change, to not wear a veil. Their responses can be categorized into two general groupings, the first are socially motivated responses, meaning they are looking beyond themselves to explain their answer. For example, Farah said, “I would like one day for women to decide to not wear scarf or not to wear it at all. And you know break the rules all together if they want to change. Otherwise, it will never change.” Goli echoed a similar sentiment,

I think that in 2013 in the USA [Western world] it is strange to fully veil. The length of time hasn't been the influence, my experience and maturity has...However, I think it's unnatural to wear a veil everyday in a workplace of 500 people where nobody wears a veil and then force everyone around you to treat to equally.

Farah and Goli were by far the most opinionated about not veiling and self-explained as the most non-traditional Muslims of the 10 women. The women who responded on a more personal level had responses that were reflective, for example, when asked about length of time in the United States and veiling Bousseh said, “I don't think that has anything to do with that because like before [coming to the U.S.] I had those things figured out for myself.” Azar had a very similar response, “I do not because it was not something that I believe in the first place, and there is no point on doing it [veiling] here.” Finally, Delbar reflected back to her teenage years but still

echoed self-reflection, “At 14 you don’t really have too much opinion on these things, but I do remember not being a fan of hijab and not really understanding it even when I was young.” As evidenced by the responses, both veilers and non-veilers had very specific expectations for their futures that were informed by the past. Unique to all ten women was that not one mentioned acculturation or explained a colloquial meaning of acculturation in their reasoning for veiling or not veiling.

The responses to research question four again placed emphasis on identity and choice, as they are central to this study. For the women being able to plan or see the future requires them to have autonomy over their choices at some level.

Summary

The primary aim of this study was to gain understanding and insight into the dress practices of first-generation, Iranian Muslim women living in the United States. The results indicated that choice is directly linked to identity. The capacity to make choices for oneself directly influences how identity is formed. The research questions guided the conversations the researchers had with the women.

The results revealed that individual creation of identity could not happen without choice. The women were able to discuss identity formation and choice in a number of different ways. First, that religion and dress were clearly linked together, the level of faith impacted their choice to veil and to what level they would veil. The women also explained that dress practices came with choices as well and influenced many of their decisions on style (i.e. modesty) and color. Those choices impacted how they felt emotionally. The women did not experience total autonomy in making choices, family also influenced them and those opinions impacted the choices they made. Finally, the women explained choice and identity in the future, stating

categorically that they would not likely ever veil (if non-veiling) or take off the veil (if currently a veiler). The conclusion is clearly drawn linking identity and choice as a central result to this research study. Substantiated by the women's responses you cannot have one without the other, a woman cannot form an identity without the power to make choices.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore how a first generation, female, Iranian, Muslim, immigrant to the United States forms an identity through dress. Four research questions guided the data collection and analyses processes. The researcher employed qualitative data collection and analysis. Guided by McCracken's (1988) long interview approach, the data collection was completed in "Four Step Method of Inquiry." This process allowed the research to fluidly move back and forth between the interview and the transcription. The interview protocols were semi-structured, completed in person, over the phone, and via Skype. The data analysis process occurred in a three-step process open, axial, and selective coding (Charmaz, 2006). This chapter will summarize the findings, offer conclusions drawn from the findings, present the implications of the results, and identify questions and strategies for future research.

Summary of Findings

The primary result from this research study linked identity formation to intentional choice. The women in this study (n = 10) categorically expressed a need to make choices about their dress to better form identity. In the present study, "identity" was defined as the social and personal presentation of self in society (Fearon, 1999) and "intentional choice" was defined as a decision made by a woman by her own accord and generally free from direct coercion from others. This is not to say that the women in this study were not influenced by outside factions. It would be shortsighted to neglect the fact that socialization is in many ways the channel for outside influence. Intentional choices made by the women ranged from very simple choices such as color of dress, to very complex choices such as deciding whether or not to wear a veil while living in the United States. Additionally, the women were confident in the choices they made.

None of the women expressed uncertainty or articulated any ineffectual feelings toward any choices they made about dress and veiling. Each woman interviewed was steadfast in her explanation of why she was or was not veiling. At no point during any interview did any of the women discuss wavering between veiling choices.

The first research question asked how do first-generation Iranian Muslim women form an identity through faith-based dress upon immigration to the United States? This research question was purposefully broad in order to understand the process of identity formation as socialization. Individuals are affected by both self and others to form identity. The results are consistent with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) notion that socialization is not a static process. As defined for this study, socialization is the process by which we learn about our self and others such as a child learning to wave by mimicking a parent waving. Socialization occurs at many times during an individual's life and under many different circumstances. Responses from the participants further support Berger and Luckmann's (1966) ideas that individuals form self-concept as part of identity formation. A self-concept is reinforced by appearance. Appearance is the total composite image of the body, including dress (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). The women in this study ardently voiced their participation in the socialization process of forming an identity through intentionally choosing their clothes.

The second research question asked how does the immediate religious and ethnic community of the first-generation Iranian Muslim woman influence her appearance specifically in terms of faith-based dress? This question sought to explore how dress affected her roles in Western society. Goffman (1959) introduced the dramaturgical perspective, where individuals are believed to perform particular roles on a front stage (public sphere) or backstage (private sphere). The front stage is often the place where individuals fulfill expected role characteristics

such as proper dress. The backstage is where individuals can have a perceived sense of privacy and perform in ways that are deemed more informal. For the women in this study, role performances in family, school, and work prescribed how they would dress. This is consistent with Bartkowski and Read's (2003) findings that dress, veiling in particular, does not define a woman's belief in Islam. For the women in this study, role performances in family, school, and work prescribed how they would dress. The public performance of self is linked to the women's concept of functional dress, 8 of 10 women described their dress style as functional with respect to their performed roles (i.e., mother, employee, student, etc.) Overwhelmingly, the women consistently responded that modesty was important to their daily clothing choices.

The third research question asked whom first-generation Iranian Muslim women used as social referents or comparison groups to assist in identity formation? Festinger (1954) theorized that individuals used social comparison groups to measure self-efficacy. The results from this study indicated that the women who participated sought approval from those in their immediate social circles, most notably mothers and fathers. This is consistent with Wood's (1989) expansion on Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory because for the Iranian Muslim women in this study are living, working, and studying in a Western society, in many ways very new and different from Iran. Hermansen (1991) had similar findings when exploring the topic of dress among Muslim women, writing that Muslim-American women face two standards, one from Western female fashion standards and a second from conservative members of the Muslim community. As the results of the present study demonstrated, the women in this study faced similar standards, finding ways to strike a balance between Western fashion and their desire to remain conservative. The women used what the researcher has called the "mix, match, and layer" method to provide a balance between modesty and modernity. This method allows the women to

shop in Western clothing stores such as Forever 21, Banana Republic, and T.J. Maxx, purchase clothing that has a modern detail and layer them to create a modest look. For example, a woman could purchase a sleeveless maxi dress and purchase a long sleeve t-shirt to wear underneath or a long sleeve cardigan sweater to wear over top.

The fourth research question asked, to what extent, if any, does faith-based dress change for a first-generation Iranian Muslim woman as the length of time spent in the United States increases? Categorically, the women in this study said that they could not negotiate a reality where they saw a change in veiling or not veiling. This particular phenomenon within the larger study is reflective of identity flex (Smith, 1998). The women who are not veiling and cannot envision themselves veiling in the future may be experimenting with the parameters of a modern society. For the women who were not veiling, they may be able to solidify their faith by differentiating themselves from the larger society, both secularly and other religions. Some of the women experienced a level of intergroup conflict when discussing family members and friends who veil or do not (Smith, 1998). In the present study intergroup conflict occurred more frequently among groups of friends. For each group, veilers and non-veilers it highlighted (for them) their choice and they were able to use the conflict to cite reasons for the choice they made. Intergroup conflict strengthens connection to religion because it reinforces beliefs for individuals and groups.

Conclusions

At the beginning of this research project the researcher had an altruistic sense of hopefulness about what the study would mean. The researcher assumed that every woman in the study would be informed and passionate about the topic of dress and veiling among Iranian Muslim women. However, the women in this study represented a variety of lived experiences

and varying degrees of fervor toward the socio-political conversation about dress and veiling. On the one hand the women provided some pragmatic reasons for why they dressed a particular way (e.g., finances, work, or school). On the other hand some of the women were deeply tied to religious, social, and political ideologies that predicated why they chose to veil or not veil. The results indicated that choice and identity are not mutually exclusive. Although the importance of choice was central to identity and socialization (lived experience) the present study furthered our understanding of how these choices were informed and how they affect the identities of women. Identity and choice were linked to a variety of emergent themes that created dynamic connections between one another (see figure 4.1). The primary focus in this research study was on dress and clothing and its role in identity formation for the participants. Even as a central tenant to the purpose of the study, dress and clothing became a vehicle for discussing and relating a variety of topics: family, conversation, social freedom, and change.

Family. Identity and choice are inextricably linked to the family. The women in this study cited mother, father, and other family members as influencers on their clothing choices. Results indicated that the women in this study felt their mothers played an important role in how they dressed. The role of the mother in particular was most crucial when deciding to veil or not to veil. This is inconsistent with the popular belief that fathers, or male elders are the one's making decisions about a woman's choice to veil or not. Father and other family members played a role in the degree of modesty that the women chose. Family is a central tenant to the Islamic faith (Bowen & Early, 1993; Gallagher, 2012); Joseph & Slyomovics, 2001 and therefore family, voicing opinions about dress is a logical scenario for the women in this study. The importance of the family unit is supported by the concept of collective identity (Smith, 1998). Mother and family played a crucial role and conflicting role in this study. The women expressed

how they made intentional choices, but those choices were informed by the collective identity. As mentioned above, the collective identity of Muslims is heavily influenced by the collective identity of family. Additionally, the women's desire to remain modest and to be "good" is a reflection of what Smith (1998) described as pluralism and modernity. A majority of the women described a desire to participate in contemporary U.S. culture while keeping the central tenant of Islam in their lives (i.e., being a good person and passing on those good values to their children).

Conversation. Unique to this research study, the women were adamant that, in general, veiling is not a subject that is discussed in social situations. Contrary to the explanation that mother and family played a role in dress choices, discussing veiling is a taboo subject because of varying beliefs and opinions. This idea is particularly true when discussed among friends. Unlike family, friendship played a different role than family when it came to veiling. Among the women in this study a variety of veiling practices could be harmoniously present with a family unit. However, in a friendship circle having a member who opposes the majority group viewpoint was deemed problematic; described by Smith (1998) as intergroup conflict. Gallagher (2012) described the action of intergroup conflict as "gossip." The women described concern for a friend who was different than the majority of the group. They cited alienation as a possible outcome for friends who chose to differentiate from the group. None of the women in this study provided tangible solutions for keeping a friend who decided to change. Read and Bartkowski (2000) had similar findings about intergroup conflict in their study of Muslim women living in Austin, Texas. Unique to the present study was that the members of the friendship circle claimed to remain relatively inactive toward a member with an opposing viewpoint, resulting ultimately in the dissolution of a friendship.

Social freedom. Veiling or not, the women emphasized that the clothes they wore were their choice, and they were nonverbally communicating to the world. This is a declaration about social freedom. The women in this study presented two conflicting ideas: first, the women felt social freedom living in the United States, and second there was a double standard for social freedom in the United States. The conversation around social freedom allowed the women to talk about choice of dress in a way that they reasoned to be appropriate. The emphasis was on the intentional choice they had in deciding what to wear. Specifically, for non-veilers, the choice was to not wear a hijab or headscarf in public. This is a manifestation of “double consciousness” (Du Bois, 1903) where the women were making a choice to be either Muslim or American, but not at the same time. Haddad and Lummis (1987) argued that Muslims living in the United States try to conceal their religious identity. The way the women in this study expressed social freedom in the lens of double consciousness was to exercise freedom of choice with clothing and to remain true to their definition of faith. The women in this study experienced unique social freedoms with regard to dress and those perceived freedoms varied from deciding not to veil, expose bangs, or deciding to veil conservatively. In this light all of the women discussed the risk of being stared at if you are wearing a veil. Even at the risk of being stared at three women still chose to wear a veil and framed those choices within the context of social freedom.

Many of the women in the study expressed the difficulty of veiling in the United States and how it is socially constructed as different. Similar to Hill-Collins’ (2000) writings about black female archetypes, the women in this study believed in their own Muslim archetypes. Through the matrix of domination, black women faced intersecting oppression through both gender and race, the women in this study believed veiling Muslim women face intersecting oppression through gender and religion. The outward expression of religion through the veil has

been propagated into Islamic akin to terrorist (Gottschalk & Greenberg, 2008). This is presented widely in Western news media outlets. Flashes of images of a mysterious desert compound where men in turbans angrily wave weapons above their heads and condemn the United States. The women are featured as a follow up story: suffering third-world women who are oppressed by a patriarchal religion and the attire that comes with it (Mohanty, 2003; Narayan, 1993). For the women in the present study, veiling or not, they talked about how wearing the veil brings staring and unwanted attention. Conversely, the women in this study talked about American men not being allowed to stare at women. The women described specific parameters for men not to stare, focusing primarily on the ability to wear immodest, skin baring clothing. However, the statements about not staring are contradictory because they also described the unwanted attention and staring associated with wearing the veil in public. The lens of the matrix of domination is emphasized by Hill-Collins (2000) as “controlling images.” The women in the study are subject to the same negative propaganda and puffery about Islam as U.S. citizens, and their ideas have been informed if not reinforced by controlling images.

Change. The length of time each of the women in the study has been in the United States varied from less than one year to nearly four decades. However, as results showed, the length of time in the U.S. did not impact a change in the women’s choices about veiling or not veiling. For each woman in the present study their social experience formed their identity and therefore their opinion about appropriate dress. Symbolic interaction theory is how individuals in society interpret meaning and react to it (Blumer, 2011; Charmaz, 1980). The women in the present study were reacting to their experiences with veiling or not veiling. Reactions and emotions did not appear to be mutually exclusive, but in general for the non-veiling women their immediate and extended community reinforced positive feelings toward non-veiling and therefore they

planned to continue not wearing the veil. The opposite was generally true for the veiling women, although each of them had heard of or personally experienced negative reaction to the veil; it reinforced their desire to visually display their faith.

As time moves on and society evolves, the meaning of the Muslim veil may change, and if so, the women in the present study will interact and react again and again. For example, for women's dress in particular, the meaning of the body has changed over time. Throughout the 20th century Western women slowly began to adopt pants or bifurcated garments into their wardrobe. There was a time when this was inconceivable, but as society evolved pants became an essential part of the wardrobe for women. In religious dress in particular, Hawley (2008) introduces the impact of change in Amish communities. In *The Amish Veil: Symbol of Separation and Community*, Hawley discussed the younger generations that impact change within the Amish culture. Generally, this change occurs when Amish youth leave for rumspringa, a time away from their family and community. A similar phenomenon has happened in Iran (Amir-Ebrahimi, 2008; Basmenji, 2005; Pourdad, 2012; Varzi, 2006) in many aspects of culture including culture, dress, social media, and consumption. Iranian youth culture has looked to the West for inspiration, especially with the use of social media like Twitter and Facebook, but a grassroots effort to inspire change is happening throughout the country. Young Iranians are pushing cultural boundaries with dress and consumption of cultural standards. For example, according to Hamedani (2014) at the end of March, during the Persian New Year, a group of young Iranians posted a video of themselves dancing to Pharrell's hit song "Happy." The video featured young Iranian women in public without their hijab or headscarf. The video went viral and the Iranians were arrested. The young culture of Iran is changing the country and its cultural standards.

Limitations to this Study

The limitations to this study are a result of the very narrow population and a small sample size. The parameters of the population (Iranian, first-generation immigrant, Muslim, female, and at least 18 years of age) made it difficult to recruit women to participate. 17 women volunteered to be part of this study, but 10 ultimately participated in interviews. This study had a limited representation of women living across the United States. A more inclusive population would have provided a broader age range and fewer graduate students²⁸. Only first-generation immigrants were sought for this study when in fact there is a growing population of second-generation immigrants living in the United States²⁹. There were a disproportionate number of non-veilers (n = 7) to veilers (n = 3). Targeting Muslim women from other modern theocratic-democracies might also balance the number of non-veilers to veilers. There was no emphasis placed on other subject positions such as sexual identity, social class, size, or ability.

Implications for the Apparel Market

The Islamic faith is going to continue to grow domestically and internationally (“The Future,” 2011). The results from this study evidence the need for lines of clothing specifically for women who dress modestly. Anecdotally, the researcher knows that privately owned, boutique, clothing stores in ethnic enclaves in Los Angeles, California and Dearborn, Michigan have done very well. These small boutiques are not, however, equipped to serve the growing populations of

²⁸ The number of graduate student participants was due to a non-purposive convenience sample. Graduate students are more willing to help other graduate students complete research by participating in studies.

²⁹ During the Iranian Revolution of 1979 there was a mass exodus of Iranians to Western countries such as Europe and the United States. Those Iranians who left in 1979 have settled in the United States and grew families have second-generation children who have been raised in Iranian-Muslim households, but were not born in Iran.

Muslim immigrants coming to the United States. Historically we know there have been missed opportunities to market and sell to growing populations. Evidence of failure to adapt to a burgeoning market is seen in the rapid growth of the Hispanic and Latino populations in North America. Companies who failed to market and serve this population lost out of hundreds of millions of dollars and are now scrambling to catch up ("Finding Gold," 2011). Additional research indicates that other religious groups have tried to widen the modest apparel market. For example, in Kansas City, Missouri a group of young women petitioned Nordstrom to carry a more modest prom dress (The Goodworks Network, 2000) Two primary implications emerged from the data collected for the present study in relationship to emerging apparel markets: location of stores and in-store education.

Location, while obvious, is crucial because the potential retail locations need to be situated in cities and towns with large Muslim populations such as areas of Los Angeles, California. Larger populations of Muslims reside in major metropolitan areas across the United States, such as New York, Detroit, Chicago, Dallas, San Francisco, and Los Angeles ("Muslim Journeys," 2010). Within each of those cities there are distinct neighborhoods or suburbs that have high Muslim populations. For example, in Detroit, Michigan Wayne County has a very high Arab Muslim population (Jacobs, 2002). Marketing and selling clothes in these areas would make practical sense.

Many clothing retail companies have competing ideologies when it comes to profiling customers (Selden & Colvin, 2003). Typically, companies will have a statement in an employee handbook about treating customers equally and striving for the best customer service possible, however this does not always translate to the sales floor. In an apparel store catering to Muslim women the sales representative and in-store management staff will need to be particularly

sensitive to their needs. For example, some Muslim women will not interact with men who are not part of their family or men they are not acquainted with. Having a mix of men and women on the sales floor would be beneficial to meet the needs of the women shopping in the store and their families. Consistent with the current retail employee demographics women make up 50% of the current retail sales force (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013) and an even larger proportion in clothing stores specifically. An understanding of the different types of veiling practices (see: chapter one) and sensitivity to a woman's choice to veil would also be vital. Additionally, the fitting rooms should provide privacy for women to try on clothes without the presence of an employee.

There is an obvious gap in the market for this type of clothing retailer. A number of e-commerce stores have emerged in the United States catering to both modest women and Muslim women specifically. For instance Sexy Modest Boutique (sexymodest, n.d.) sells clothing that are updated and trendy but still leave arms and legs exposed or are very form fitting. This style of dress would not translate for Muslim women. Similarly, Sorella Bella (Sorella Bella, n.d.) caters specifically to women of the Church of Latter Day Saints (LDS); this e-tailer would not translate for Muslim women. A number of e-commerce retailers sell specifically to Muslim women. For example Al-Mujalababa (al-mujalababa,, n.d.) sells a wide range of Islamic women's clothing at a low-price point. This type of shopping venue could translate into a brick-and-mortar location. Al-Mujalababa has items that are updated and trendy, but are not reflective of Western culture. Based on findings from the present study an ideal store for Muslim women would find a balance between Sexy Modest Boutique and Al-Mujalababa.

Implications for Scholarship and Teaching in Apparel Business and Design

Very little emphasis has been placed on religion as a central topic in the social psychology of appearance³⁰ in both scholarship and pedagogy within apparel business and design. Furthermore, even less emphasis placed on non-Judeo-Christian religions in the context of social psychology of appearance. In the *Clothing and Textile Research Journal*, one of the foremost journals in the field, only seven articles that have a primary focus on the Islamic faith are available on the online database. Moreover, only three of the seven articles focus on the Islamic faith in terms of the social psychology of appearance. It is worrisome that there are not more scholars in the field of apparel, textiles, design, and merchandising exploring the Islamic faith in terms of the social psychology of appearance.

The appearance of Muslim women is a topic that has resounding presence within global media, this includes news media, popular culture, and social media. In 2011 the world was introduced to Malala Yousafzai, a young Pakistani girl who was shot by Taliban for attending school and actively promoting education for women. She has since recovered, written a book, and won a Nobel Peace Prize and is a shining example of the ideological shift among Muslim women. In 2012, *Wadjda* the first feature film completed in Saudi Arabia was directed by a woman. In 2014 the popular culture social media site *Buzzfeed* posted six articles from January – March featuring the life, work, dress, and/or culture of Muslim women. Some fashion designers have attempted to gentrify or Westernize the Muslim women’s dress, specifically the veil. In 2011 Maison Martin Margiela unveiled a series of face netting attached to headband (Blumenthal, 2011). In 2013 Margiela’s eponymous fashion label featured even more severe

³⁰ Social psychology of appearance also refers to social psychology of dress and clothing.

face coverings such as a mask-like structure that completely concealed the face. One was even worn by the infamous Kanye West ("Face It," 2013). This is not the only popular culture instance of the Westernization of the Islamic veil. In 2013 Lady Gaga was featured in a number of different photos wearing a burqa in various styles and colors. Her followers quickly caught on and started an online trend hashtag (#) "#burqaswag" where they would take selfies³¹ wearing a burqa and tag the photo with the aforementioned hashtag.

Research endeavors have taken place focusing on Islam, but the outcome is not always clear. For example, in the social psychology text, *Meanings of Dress* (3rd ed.) Herrington (2011) wrote an article about her experience "undercover" where as an undergraduate at the University of Kentucky (UK) she spent two weeks wearing hijab around campus. This article was originally written for *The Kentucky Kernel*, a daily student publication at UK. Herrington narrates her experiences wearing her hijab around campus, the praise she received from Muslim students, and the blind anti-Muslim rhetoric she received from some American students. I personally disagree with this article, however I think an undergraduate student at a large Southern university with a homogenous population, 75.2% White (University of Kentucky Fact Booklet, 2013), is to be commended for her inclusive thought process. What is troubling about this type of article is the concept that one must experience oppression to understand it. The present research study suggests that one need not wear hijab to understand the experiences of a Muslim woman living in the United States. In fact, as Frankenburg (1993) points out, "Any system of domination can be seen most clearly from the subject positions of those oppressed by it" (p. 5). As a scholarly field

³¹ "A picture taken of yourself that is planned to be uploaded to Facebook, Myspace or any other sort of social networking website. You can usually see the person's arm holding out the camera in which case you can clearly tell that this person does not have any friends to take pictures of them so they resort to Myspace to find Internet friends and post pictures of themselves, taken by themselves. A selfie is usually accompanied by a kissy face or the individual looking in a direction that is not towards the camera" (Urban Dictionary, 2009).

we are best served to expand out research interests and train future students to be better researchers to gain an understanding of cultures and religions different than our own. This can expand into preparing undergraduate students for a diverse and global economy where leadership, understanding, and awareness replace the 1990s rhetoric of “cultural sensitivity.”

Suggestions for Future Research

In future iterations of this research a more inclusive population sample, particularly those women who immigrated from the Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Asia will be vital. Additionally, accounting for varying subject positions such as social class, sexual identity, ability status, and size will be crucial. Further studies should focus on men and children from the etic and emic viewpoints of women’s clothing. Mirroring Smith’s (2009) work in *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* a longitudinal study where Muslim men and women are surveyed and interviewed at various times throughout their lives about their attitudes toward dress and change in behaviors, first as young adolescents and then as young adults. A researcher conducting this type of study might track change in behavior and attitude toward identity and dress within the bounds of religion. Additionally, a comparative study of Muslims living in religious majority countries and Muslims living in religious minority countries would round out contemporary scholarship on dress, identity, and Islam. Currently, I have received grant funding to complete a cross-sectional study of mother-daughter influences on fashion among Iranian immigrants to the United States. There is limited research on non-Western cultures with regard to mother-daughter relationships and clothing. This was an emergent theme from this study and will contribute to the gap in knowledge.

Narrative on Cultural/Religious Outsider

As mentioned above, when beginning this research in 2010, I had a very noble sense of what I was going to do. My attitude was cavalier, and I was viewing Muslim women and dress from a white, industrial savior paradigm. I believed that the results would shift the view of Muslim women from mere survivors to thrivers. Frankly, like Lady Gaga's followers, I was on a mission to make the burqa chic. At the time it did not occur to me that I was not Muslim or even that I was not religious at all; in fact, I viewed religion as a crutch for the underdeveloped, non-scientific mind. When I told people about my research, I would always say, "I'm agnostic, I believe in science," often to people who were offended at my inconsiderate attitude. However, my staunch viewpoints and opinions left me on the outside of a community of women who did not want to let me in. In April of 2013 I was confronted with my social location, possibly for the first time in my life, I was white, I was a middle class, female and had not really suffered a day in my life, I was straight, heteronormative conforming, I was mentally and physically mobile, tall, thin, and vocally non-religious. I knew why I wanted to do this research, I was raised in an Orthodox Catholic home, and for a long time, I only knew other Catholic people and a majority of those people shared my Italian background, my value system, including the way I dressed, was influenced heavily by that Italian-Catholic upbringing. I attended a Catholic school and wore a uniform five days a week for 14 years, for the record that is 2,800 days of plaid skirts and penny-loafers. When I shared this story, this connection (I thought), with the Muslim women of my community they did not understand. I cold-called mosques and Islamic education centers in Pennsylvania, Illinois, Oregon, and California and often those calls were left unreturned. When I did get a call back, the caller would say "Hi, I am looking for Ali (pronounced All-Lee) a common male name in Arab cultures. When they discovered who I really was, interest was

quickly dissolved. I went to the Islamic Education Center of Orange County (ICOC) in Costa Mesa, California to recruit participants. The collective and curious stares I received while waiting in the lobby were unnerving. When I was walking back to my car after speaking to the Imam at ICOC, who reluctantly took my fliers, that it dawned on me, I am different, I am an outsider. It was in that moment that my approach changed, and I embraced my outsider status. I reached out to acquaintances to help build relationships, I asked for introductions and although I was never truly accepted into the group, I got to know a lot of fantastic women. In each conversation I found myself learning why I was an outsider and why I would always be an outsider. Scholars would want me to say because I could remain objective. Yes, I could remain objective, but I was an outsider for a completely different reason, I was born in a country with the freedom to attend a school with a uniform or not. I could participate in swimming, a coed sport and wear a swimming suit that exposed 85% of my body. I could, without the risk of shaming my family, walk with my girlfriends to a party in a miniskirt or a crop top. I could wear my hair long or short, in a ponytail or bun without having to cover it in front of my non-male relatives. I had a bevy of choices that had been in front of me my entire life.

The women who participated in this study gave me more than data to analyze, they provided me the realization that my voice is privileged, and it is essential through this work that their voices be heard. I am not their white, industrial savior; I am merely a carefully positioned scaffold to elevate the importance of scholarship in the area of dress and identity among the female Muslim population. I am humbled by their stories and empowered by their perseverance to live in a foreign country, away from their families. The collective personal and professional achievement of these women is inspiring. I am proud to stand on the outside of this group with 10 women I can now call friends.

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APPENDIX A: *INTERVIEW PROTOCOL*

Interview Question 1: Hello, today I want to talk with you about the role that dress plays in your life. By dress, I meanthe clothes you wear on a daily basis and more specifically your choice to veil or not to veil. You are a part of this study because you are a female first generation immigrant to the United States and a practicing Muslim. To begin, I want to get a sense of your immigration experience into the United States.

- a. What year did you emigrate from Iran?
- b. What year did you immigrate to the United States?
- c. Why did you immigrate to the U.S.?
- d. Did you emigrate from Iran alone or with other people you know? If so, who?
- e. What places have you lived since you arrived in the United States (in chronological order)?
- f. When you compare your life in the United States to your life in Iran, did you experience any positive difference in the United States? Did you experience any negative differences in the United States?

Interview Question 2: now I want to talk about dress, specifically faith-based dress or hijab and what role that plays in your life. I notice that today you (are/are not) wearing hijab.

- a. Does your Islamic faith play a role in your choice to (or not to) veil? Can you discuss what the role is?
- b. For each country they immigrated to, ask the following question: When you first left Iran and immigrated to (name of country), did you continue to wear hijab? (If not) Why? (If so) Did you change when and how you wore hijab in any way? (If so) How?

- c. When do you wear your hijab? When do you not wear your hijab? Has this always been the case? If not, what has changed and why?
- d. Do you wear certain veils to particular places (i.e. a dressier veil versus a more casual veil)?
- e. If you were to shop for a hijab right now, what criteria would you use when deciding which hijab to purchase? Has this always been the case? If not, what has changed and why?

Interview Question 3 – I want to keep talking about dress, but I want to discuss your experiences with wearing hijab or not in terms of your immediate community.

- a. Can you tell me a little bit about who is in your immediate circle of friends and family?
- b. Is veiling something that you talk about on a regular basis with a group of close friends or even within your family?
- c. Do other women in that group also veil/not veil?
- d. Are there many differing opinions?
- e. If a woman in the group decides to not to veil does that change the group dynamic?
Similarly, if a woman in the group decides to veil does that change the group dynamic?
- f. Have any of your friends influenced your decision to veil (or when/how to veil)? Who and why?
- g. Have any of your family members influenced your decision to veil (or when/how to veil)?
Who and why?

Interview Question 4: I want to continue discussing how others influence a woman's decision to veil or not, now I want to talk a bit more about your decision making process.

- a. Does that immediate community we discussed influence you to veil or not (or when/how you veil)?
- b. Other than that community of people, who influences your choice to veil (or when/how you veil)?
- c. Other than your veil, where do you look for inspiration/advice in terms of fashion or what you wear on a regular basis?
- d. In terms of the veil specifically, are there certain patterns/colors/styles that you like to wear? Where do you look for inspiration/advice in terms of the patterns/colors/styles
- e. Where do you purchase those kinds of veils?
- f. Overall, in terms of the veil and clothing, do you seek out options that are more functional or fashionable? Does that change based on the situation? Can you give me an example of a functional or fashionable clothing choice and when you wore it?

Interview questions 5: Again, I want to continue talking about veiling, but now let's discuss the veil in terms of change over time.

- a. You've been out of Iran for x number of years and in the U.S for x number of years. Do you think you will always veil or not? Why/why not?
- b. How do you think that length of time outside of Iran has influenced your views on veiling?

- c. Do you feel like the more time you spend in the United States influences your position on veiling? Can you tell me about some of those influences?

- d. Has your veiling style (fashion/function; color/style/pattern) changed since you've been here? Why? Do you see it changing again in the future? Why?

- e. Can you talk about how your immediate community has impacted your choice to veil? Has the level of impact increased or decreased over time? Why do you think that is?

- f. With regards to veiling, do you feel like there are influences outside of your immediate environment (family, friends, or religious group) that can impact your desire to change or not?

Interview Question 6: those are all of the questions I had for you today, is there anything you want to add or anything else you feel is important for me to know about what we discussed?

Thank you very much for taking the time to meet with me and to talk about your experiences with veiling.

STUDY ID
5612

Notification Type	APPROVED		
Date of Notification	5/1/2014		
Study Title	Who is Behind the Veil? Exploring Identity Formation and Dress among First Generation Iranian Women in the United States		
Principal Investigator	Dr. Leslie Burns		
Study Team Members	Alexandra Howell		
Submission Type	Continuing Review Application		
Level	Expedited	Category(ies)	6, 7
Number of Participants	30 <i>Do not exceed this number without prior IRB approval</i>		
Waiver(s)	Documentation of Informed Consent		
Risk Level for Children	N/A		
Funding Source	None	Proposal #	N/A
PI on Grant or Contract	N/A		

The above referenced study was reviewed and approved by the OSU Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Approval Date: 4/30/2014

Annual continuing review applications are due at least 30 days prior to expiration date

Expiration Date: 4/29/2015

Documents included in this review:

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol | <input type="checkbox"/> Recruiting tools | <input type="checkbox"/> External IRB approvals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consent forms | <input type="checkbox"/> Test instruments | <input type="checkbox"/> Translated documents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assent forms | <input type="checkbox"/> Attachment A: Radiation | <input type="checkbox"/> Attachment B: Human materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative consent | <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative assent | <input type="checkbox"/> Grant/contract |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letters of support | <input type="checkbox"/> Project revision(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: CRA |

Comments: Closed to enrollment; data analysis only

Principal Investigator responsibilities for fulfilling the requirements of approval:

- All study team members should be kept informed of the status of the research.
- Any changes to the research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to the activation of the changes. **This includes, but is not limited to, increasing the number of subjects to be enrolled.**
- Reports of unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others must be submitted to the IRB within three calendar days.
- Only consent forms with a valid approval stamp may be presented to participants.
- Submit a continuing review application or final report to the IRB for review at least four weeks prior to the expiration date. Failure to submit a continuing review application prior to the expiration date will result in termination of the research, discontinuation of enrolled participants, and the submission of a new application to the IRB.

STUDY ID
5612

Notification Type	APPROVED		
Date of Notification	6/17/2013		
Study Title	Who is Behind the Veil? Exploring Identity Formation and Dress among First Generation Iranian Immigrant Women in the United States		
Principal Investigator	Dr. Leslie Burns		
Study Team Members	Alexandra Howell		
Submission Type	Project Revision		
Level	Expedited	Category(ies)	6, 7
Number of Participants	30 <i>Do not exceed this number without prior IRB approval</i>		
Waiver(s)	Documentation of Consent		
Risk Level for Children	N/A		
Funding Source	None	Proposal #	N/A
PI on Grant or Contract	N/A		

The above referenced study was reviewed and approved by the OSU Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Approval Date: 6/14/2013

Annual continuing review applications are due at least 30 days prior to expiration date

Expiration Date: 3/19/2014

Documents included in this review:

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol | <input type="checkbox"/> Recruiting tools | <input type="checkbox"/> External IRB approvals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Consent forms | <input type="checkbox"/> Test instruments | <input type="checkbox"/> Translated documents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assent forms | <input type="checkbox"/> Attachment A: Radiation | <input type="checkbox"/> Attachment B: Human materials |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative consent | <input type="checkbox"/> Alternative assent | <input type="checkbox"/> Grant/contract |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Letters of support | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Project revision(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

Comments: Included new recruitment sites

Principal Investigator responsibilities for fulfilling the requirements of approval:

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