

Surveillance of Female Muslims

A Study of the Ideologies that Target Female Muslims' Dress and Behavior

By

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Abstract:

This paper examines how female Muslims are surveilled within Western and Muslim societies. Surveillance is known as the close observation of an individual (Merriam-Webster, 1847). While it is difficult to generalize the beliefs within a certain region, there have been a great number of research articles that show how female Muslims who wear the hijab have been criticised. These judgements reflect a dominant ideology within those specific areas in Western and Muslim societies. To examine more ways that female Muslims are surveilled, I followed eight Muslim Instagram accounts for thirty days recording each post. I examined the ideologies within their posts, and relate this to previous research that discusses female Muslims' beauty and modesty. Some posts actually discuss the issue of surveillance/judging each other, which shows how the surveillance of outward appearance does not accurately represent a female Muslim's character or religiosity.

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Introduction:

Female Muslims wear the hijab to express their faith in Islam. The hijab is typically recognized as a scarf that wraps around the head, covering the hair and neck. The reason for wearing the hijab is mainly for protection and to appear modest. Current research finds different meanings of the hijab for female Muslims through in-depth interviews. The reasons to wear the hijab vary depending on the individual but usually female Muslims wear the hijab in order to protect their beauty and hide their bodies from being sexualized and judged by the public. Although not every female Muslim wears the hijab, those who do wear it are more likely to experience harsh criticisms because of their visibility. Hijabi Muslims can face criticisms and discrimination in the West because of the negative stereotypes associated with Islam after 9/11. Arshad et al., (2015) conducted a study which found that in over 25 years of headlines and coverage, the New York Times portrayed Islam and Muslims more negative than cancer, alcohol and cocaine (foreignpolicy.com). The negative perception of Islam impacts how those who

physically appear Muslim get treated. Not only do female Muslims who wear the hijab face criticisms in Western societies, they also experience criticisms in Muslim communities.

As a female Muslim, I have experienced first hand how female Muslims get judged for how they behave and dress. I first became aware of this when I would visit Jordan as a young child because I do not wear the hijab. Muslim communities tend to have a more strict guideline for what is considered modest and what is not. In Jordan, or even Muslim communities near me in NY, I do not feel comfortable wearing tight clothing or clothing that shows a lot of skin because I know that it contrasts the ideal modest dress, the hijab. If I dressed immodestly in those areas, I would face negative criticisms about my iman (faith). The ideology that faith is directly correlated to dress and outer appearance is very flawed because it is not an accurate way of judging someone. It's like the saying "don't judge a book by it's cover" you should also not judge a person by their appearance.

In Islam there is a hadith (story) about how a prostitute was granted forgiveness and entry to heaven because she saved a dog from dehydration by giving it water (Sahih al-Bukhari 3143, Sahih Muslim 2245). Although society probably deemed her as immodest and having no iman because of how she dressed or behaved, her faith was shown by her actions. Faith is expressed in many ways, it is not always physically shown. As a Muslim I understand that God does not judge me for how I look but for what is in my heart. So it never made sense to me how Muslim people could validate their judgements about other Muslims simply based on their appearance. I also saw how girls who wear the hijab behaved immodestly behind their family's back. Even though they behaved immodestly, it was done in private so they were deemed modest by others because they physically conformed to the standards of modesty. Those examples showed me that the way

Muslim societies judge female Muslims based on their outer appearance is deeply flawed because it is not always accurate. I became interested in examining how female Muslims are surveilled in Western societies, and more interestingly, how are they surveilled in Muslim societies? I find that female Muslims are surveilled in terms of their dress and behavior and those judgements reflect the dominant ideologies within those areas. There are deeper meanings tied to the surveillance of female Muslims' modesty and beauty based on the ideologies that exist within certain areas. I begin discussing this research with some sociological theories.

Literature Review:

Theory

According to Dubois' theory of the veil, minorities feel separated from the dominant society and develop a sense of who they are and what they are not. For most American Muslims living in the West, they are viewed as different. Female Muslims are viewed as oppressed. Islam is synonymous with terrorism for some Americans. In this case, female Muslims who wear the hijab are the minority in America because they stand out. They physically appear different than women who do not wear the hijab, and because they are physically identifiable as Muslim, they face criticisms from islamophobes. DuBois explained this separation between the two groups as the veil, "Then it dawned upon me with a certain suddenness that I was different from the others; or like, mayhap, in heart and life and longing, but shut out from their world by a vast veil" (Lemert, 2018, p 131). DuBois' metaphoric veil represents the difference between the two groups, and for female Muslims, their physical veil represents the difference between them and other females in their society.

Additionally, female Muslims who do not wear the veil/hijab, can feel like they do not fit in within their own Muslim community because they do not conform to the dominant standards of modesty. Female Muslims face criticism via surveillance by their Muslim counterparts about their appearance and behavior. If they do not fit in with standards of beauty or modesty, they may be perceived as less than, and feel different or left out. And within non-Muslim societies, female Muslims who wear the hijab feel different or left out because of the negative stereotypes or criticisms about Islam, specifically the hijab, and this reflects a dominant islamophobic ideology.

Dubois' theory of the veil is an important lens to use when trying to understand the ways that female Muslims' dress and behavior are perceived in Western societies because as I discuss below, female Muslims wear the hijab or niqab in an attempt to be modest and protect their body from the public's gaze. This is a concept that is common among females who are not Muslim, but the physical veil/hijab is what makes female Muslims different than the rest of society because it symbolizes faith in Islam, and Islam is not displayed very positively in Western media.

In Muslim societies, the standards of beauty and modesty can be sociologically perceived as a method of categorizing women based on their value. According to Gandy's panoptic sort,

“I see the panoptic sort as a... triage through which individuals and groups of people are being sorted according to their presumed economic or political value. The poor, especially poor people of color, are increasingly being treated as broken material or damaged goods to be discarded...” (Gandy, year, p 10).

Current research shows how in some Muslim societies, some men will categorize women based on their preferred physical attributes. In my own data collection, I find that female Muslims of

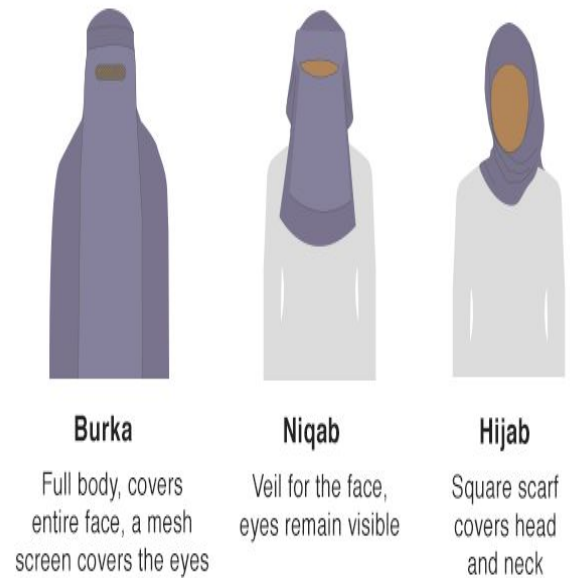
color also face criticisms because of their darker skin color. This shows how European beauty standards are used to categorize Muslim women based on unrealistic standards of beauty. The women who fit in with these dominant standards will be categorized as valuable and those who do not fit in are perceived as less than. In Western societies, Islamic clothing is considered a threat, categorizing all Muslims that wear it as a potential threat.

How Female Muslims Are Perceived in Western Societies

Figure 1

Foreign and oppressed

We can see how Islamic clothing is perceived negatively in Western countries. France implemented a ban on burqas (see figure 1) in 2011 which is still in place today. Any female Muslim wearing the burqa would be fined up to €150. This makes it difficult for female Muslims to express their faith with their preferred clothing of choice, because they are unable to wear certain Islamic clothing. The United States has also shown their fear of Islam and Muslims when they implemented numerous surveillance programs to spy on American Muslims (Lyon 2003, 2015; Kamali, 2017; Sadequee, 2018). Even if an individual has no ties to criminal activity, they can still be surveilled (Bechrouri, 2018, p 476). More importantly, Sadequee (2018) showed that in 2007, the New York Police Department (NYPD) was taught that Islamic clothing is a sign of radicalism (p 477). This ideology leads people to believe that anyone who wears Islamic clothing is a threat. This negative stereotyped further legitimizes islamophobia. And according to Gandy's



panoptic sort, this can be seen as a method of social control because individuals who dress in Islamic clothing are perceived as a threat and potentially could be surveilled. This makes it difficult for some Muslims to express their religion with their clothing and this has been shown in research (Bechrouri, 2018, p 466).

The fear of Islam can create a negative emotional response towards females that wear the hijab. A study conducted by Everett et al., (2015), showed how 42 non-Muslim British women responded negatively to pictures of women wearing the hijab. Full-face veils were associated with more negative responses compared to no veil, and greater levels of veil coverage were associated with more negative perceptions (p 102). Their study found that the non-Muslim women participants were not comfortable with pictures of women wearing the hijab. The more conservative the hijab was, the more negative responses they had. This reveals how a fear of Islam is present because they were scared just from looking at these women, they did not even know them. Furthermore, this can impact the way that female Muslims are treated within Western societies which I explain more in my “impacts of surveillance” section.

In a study by Sirin and Fine (2007) a female participant who wore the hijab explained: “people think that if you’re wearing a hijab...you don’t know English or you just don’t know how to talk. And it’s like once you respond to them, they’re so amazed” (p 30). She described how she felt like a foreign object to others because of her hijab. This opens the discussion to why female Muslims, specifically those who wear the hijab, are perceived negatively within Western societies. Zimmerman (2014) states that the hijab is observed by the West as foreign, oppressive, and a sign of domestic terrorism (p 308). Similarly, Aziz (2012) states that the West perceives the hijab as disloyal and according to Western feminist ideals, the hijab is “a byproduct of

patriarchy, coerced domestication, and oppression” (p 10). This implies that female Muslims wear the hijab because they are forced to, although this is not always the case. This is not to argue that there are not any oppressed female Muslims who are forced to wear the hijab. I am emphasizing how the negative stereotypes about the hijab (foreign, anti-feminist and oppressive) generalize all female Muslims who wear it and this creates negative stereotypes about female Muslims. These stereotypes also disregard the fact that some female Muslims wear the hijab because they want to and it provides benefits to them. As a result, female Muslims that wear the hijab who live in Western societies can be treated differently because of negative perceptions about Islam.

In general, the hijab is used as a way to achieve modesty but this is not a concept that is only exclusive to female Muslims. For example, in 2019, Billie Eilish, who is a popular, young, American, white, female music artist, was featured in a Calvin Klein commercial. In this commercial, Eilish stated that the reason why she wears baggy and loose clothing is so that no one can see what her body looks like and the public cannot sexualize or judge her body type. While Eilish remains a trendsetter and influencer for many young girls across the world, female Muslims wear the hijab for the same reasons (Mussap, 2009; Litchmore and Safdar, 2016; Siraj, 2011; Zimmerman, 2014; Meeto & Mirza, 2014) but are perceived as oppressed and foreign. This shows that it is not the concept of modesty that is oppressive, it is the hijab that is perceived as oppressive, which reflects a dominant islamophobic ideology. Female Muslims who wear the hijab are not all oppressed, but because of these stereotypes, they can be viewed and treated negatively which I discuss further below.

The Impacts of Surveillance on Female Muslims in Western Societies

Islamophobic stereotypes justify the implementation of surveillance programs. Even if an American Muslim is not linked to any criminal activity, they can still be surveilled because they are Muslim (Bechrouri, 2018, p 476; Lyon, 2015, p 91). Some of these negative impacts are discussed by Bechrouri (2018) who stated that in order to avoid unreasonable surveillance, female Muslims abandoned their hijab or niqab and avoided going to the mosque (p 466). Another participant named Dandia explained that her Muslim charity “Muslims Giving Back” was spied on by an informant and as a result, people stopped associating with her charity (p 467). These impacts can be considered as a method of social control because out of fear of unreasonable suspicion, people avoided Islamic practices such as wearing the hijab, going to the mosque, and charity. By stigmatizing those Islamic practices, those Muslim individuals avoided practicing Islam and as a result this negatively impacted their faith.

The negative effects of surveillance impact how female Muslims are treated by their non-Muslim counterparts. Research by Meeto & Mirza (2014) showed how the Western ideology that “Muslim girls are oppressed” affected the way teachers in an East London school treated their female Muslim students. Because of their hijab, these students reported that their teachers would treat them differently and made islamophobic comments to them (p 203). One student reported that her teacher tried to convince her to take her hijab off and another teacher told a student to clean the doodles off her desk with her hijab (p 211). As a result of islamophobia, these girls received rude comments from their teachers, people who should be helping them instead of hurting them. In another study by Litchmore & Safdar (2016) a participant said that during a class discussion about exotic dancers, she felt inclined to say that she did not agree with it, but she decided to stay quiet out of fear that her classmates would call

her a “crazy religious Muslim girl” (p 205). Because of her hijab, she felt like her classmates would dismiss her opinion as based in her religion instead of acknowledging that it is her own opinion. This shows how wearing the hijab can result in feeling left out or being treated differently as a result of islamophobic ideologies.

Kwan (2008) supports this argument by illustrating how a female American Muslim named Nada experienced drastic changes to her daily routine as a result of islamophobia and surveillance after 9/11. She reported that she didn't leave her house for the first three days after the attack because she wore the hijab and this made her an easy target for islamophobic hate crimes. Islamophobic hate crimes are still prevalent today. On November 20th, 2019 a pregnant hijab wearing female Muslim was brutally attacked by a random man at a cafe in Sydney, Australia. He punched her in the head multiple times and stomped on her, for no reason. More recently on January 6th, 2020, a female Muslim student in Portland, Oregon, was attacked by a female stranger while waiting for the bus. The attacker tried to choke the female Muslim with her hijab before the victim shoved the attacker away. At that point the attacker had ripped off her hijab and started dancing with it, taunting her and making fun of her religion (Washingtonpost.com, 2020). In both situations, contrary to islamophobic stereotypes, these hijabi women were not engaging in terrorist or criminal activity. But because they wore the hijab, they were still seen as a threat which is why they were attacked. These hate crimes are recent so this shows that islamophobia is still prevalent within Western societies. This also makes it difficult for some female Muslims to wear their hijab in public without the fear of being attacked by an islamophobic person.

Dubois' theory of the veil shows how female Muslims are viewed as different and potentially threatening because of their hijab. The impacts of surveillance of Muslim women who wear the hijab is illustrated by the ways that these women were afraid to practice their religion, leave their house, or speak their opinions because of the stigma attached to the hijab and the persona associated with it tied to negative stereotypes of terrorism and danger. According to Gandy's panoptic sort, you can see how female Muslims avoided looking Muslim or practicing Islam in order to fit in with the dominant Western society.

How Female Muslims Are Surveilled in Muslim Societies

Beauty

The surveillance of female Muslim's beauty can be linked back to pre-modern Muslim societies. Hirsch (2011) discussed the ideal stereotypical feminine beauty within the Arabian peninsula which included: large black eyes, long black hair, a wide smooth forehead, separate arched eyebrows, long dark lashes, a straight nose, rosy cheeks, rose-red lips, matching teeth, average-length neck, fair skin, delicate hands and painted nails (p 109). Although black hair and eyes is a common physical trait for most Arab women, the other ideal beauty standards (especially fair skin) is a reflection of Western beauty standards (Carneiro et al., 2013). Despite this fact, this unrealistic beauty standard is still used to categorize Muslim women today.

This can be seen in the research of Thomas et al., (2014), who studied the changing physical appearance preferences in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which is a Muslim society. By conducting interviews with five Emirati khatabaat (marriage brokers) they found that in the past, most Muslim men looking for a wife requested a woman who has high morals, wisdom, judiciousness, is not employed or seeking to be employed, and possesses the ability to cook. 81%

of the attributes requested in the past were non-physical. Compared to the present, 68% of the attributes requested now are physical. Men are now asking for a woman who is slim, tall (but not taller than him), has long smooth hair, light/white skin, and beautiful eyes (p 598). The most common non-physical attributes were for high morals and employment. This research shows that Muslim men looked for specific attributes, mostly physical, to categorize women in an attempt to find an ideal wife. The surveillance of female Muslim's beauty exists in both past and present Muslim societies, also revealing the dominant ideology that Western beauty standards, although unrealistic, are ideal for some Muslims. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and modern descriptions of beauty are not expanded upon very much within present literature. There is not a great deal of research that discusses the various beauty standards that Muslims have, and so this needs to be researched more.

The Hijab and Modesty

When you research the proper way to wear the hijab, many different opinions are revealed. Some believe that the hair, chest, arms, legs, and body should all be covered (Harkness 2019; musliminc.com), and others argue that the hijab is not even necessary for female Muslims (Siraj, 2011, p 717). The different opinions of the hijab are a result of different interpretations of the Quranic verse describing the hijab but more

Figure 2



importantly, these differences are influenced by cultural context. For example, in America, wearing the headscarf can be considered modest clothing because it contrasts Western fashion. Similarly, in South Asian countries, specifically Pakistan, the dupatta (see figure 2) is known as a form of modest dress (Siraj, 2011; Kamal and Fayyaz, 2015). But because the dupatta leaves the hair exposed, it does not meet the requirements of modest dress in some Muslim communities (Siraj, 2011, p 724). This shows you that cultural context influences how modesty is displayed and surveilled differently depending on the geographic location because each location consists of a different interpretation of modest clothing and behavior.

In order to understand the dominant definition of modesty within Muslim communities, Siraj (2011) conducted interviews with thirty female Muslims living in Glasgow, Scotland. Fifteen of them wore the hijab and fifteen did not. Litchmore & Safdar (2016) also conducted interviews with ten Muslim women who resided in the Greater Torona Area (GTA), five who wore the hijab and five who did not. Both Siraj (2011) and Litchmore & Safdar (2016) revealed the deeper meanings that these Muslim women attached to the hijab and what their interpretation of modesty is.

The female Muslim participants described the hijab as a means to protect their modesty, respect, and honor (Siraj, 2011, p 724). For some people the hijab might be known as just the headscarf, but all participants in both studies noted that the hijab included overall modesty, clothing, and behavior, not just the headscarf. This means that in their communities, when you wear the hijab, there are additional expectations that you must live up to. Just because you wear the hijab, it does not automatically make you a proper and modest woman, modesty is something that comes from within (Siraj, 2011, p 726). Modesty encompasses a female's entire presence:

how she behaves, speaks, and dresses is all surveilled and reflects the dominant ideology of what modesty means within these Muslim communities.

In terms of speech, one participant from research by Siraj (2011) mentioned that when you speak with a non-mahram man (a man that you are not related to, a man you could potentially get married to), you should be abrupt because speaking politely might give them the impression that you are interested in them “and that’s where the problem starts” (p 725). So her interpretation of modesty includes the surveillance of how you speak, not just how you dress. Her statement also reveals that socializing with non-mahram men is considered immodest, which was later noted by all participants in the study (Siraj, 2011, p 728). Socializing with non-mahram men was known as immodest behavior within this community and the way you speak to them should be surveilled.

Additionally, modesty could be measured in terms of how much attention you attract. A participant said that she used to wear the hijab, but because a lot of people stared at her, she took it off. In an attempt to be modest, she began dressing in loose clothing and walked fast so that people would not look at her (Siraj, 2011, p 726). Being stared at, or attracting attention, is considered an immodest behavior within this community. Similarly, a participant in another study quoted a Sheikh as saying “what’s the point of wearing a hijab if you’re attracting so much attention to you? You’re sparkling and your heels are clicking on the ground...” (Litchmore and Safdar, 2016, p 205). This quote reflects the ideology that if female Muslims attract attention, they are immodest. It also stigmatizes certain actions like wearing jewelry or high heels, which was also mentioned in literature by Meeto & Mirza (2014).

Modesty and beauty are both used to categorize female Muslims through surveillance of outer appearance. This surveillance causes women to behave and dress in a way that reflects a dominant standard of modesty. For example, if a female Muslim wears the hijab, she may appear modest, but if she behaves in a way that is deemed immodest, that could contradict her modest appearance. If she wears high heels, sparkly clothing or attracts attention, she could also be considered immodest. This causes female Muslims to adjust their behavior, which according to Gandy's panoptic sort, can be an example of social control. The impacts of surveillance are further discussed below.

The Impacts of Surveillance on Female Muslims in Muslim societies

As mentioned earlier, a female Muslim's outer appearance is often tied to her level of religiosity. Modesty is surveilled through speech, behavior, and dress. The impacts of this ideology are shown in the interviews with female Muslim participants. One participant mentioned that she switched her dupatta to a hijab because she felt like it did not cover enough (Siraj, 2011, p 724). In order to fit in with the standards of modesty within her Muslim community, she stopped wearing the dupatta and wore the hijab instead.

Dominant ideologies about modesty can negatively affect how female Muslims are treated by other Muslims. One participant believed that her moral values were higher because of her modest dress (Siraj, 2011, p 725), implying that immodest women do not have an equal level of moral value and are less than. This is seen in another example when a participant explained that whenever she talked about her faith and beliefs, people would just disregard it because she did not wear the hijab (Litchmore and Safdar, 2016, p 201) and therefore her opinions were

considered invalid. This shows how the ideology that “appearance and religiosity are correlated” negatively affects the ways that some female Muslims are perceived and interacted with.

As mentioned earlier, socializing with non-mahram men can be considered immodest. Those who engage in this behavior are then perceived as immodest. A participant in Siraj’s study described how she knew a girl that wore the hijab but would talk to guys and drive around at night with loud music. Because this behavior was considered immodest, she discredited that girl’s modesty, essentially calling her a hypocrite for wearing the hijab because she behaved immodestly (Siraj, 2011, p 726). Another participant explained that if she was seen speaking with a boy, or wearing clothes that were considered immodest, someone in her neighborhood would call her parents complaining (Siraj, 2011, p 727). This also happened to another participant in research by Meeto & Mirza (2014). She explained that a boy lied to her father telling him that she was hanging out with boys in an attempt to get her in trouble (p 216). Because socializing with non-mahram men is a stigmatized behavior that is considered immodest, girls who are seen doing this could get in trouble by receiving phone calls to their parents.

The surveillance of female Muslims in both Western and Muslim societies reflects dominant ideologies that are present within those areas. Modesty is interpreted differently depending on geographic location, and this impacts how female Muslims dress and behave. It is understandable why Western societies surveil Muslims because of the islamophobic ideology. But within Muslim societies, the ideology that a female’s dress is tied to her religiosity is deeply flawed. Not only is it an inaccurate way to judge someone’s faith, but it is haram in Islam. It is mentioned in the Quran that Muslims cannot call another Muslim a non-believer (4:94) and in

the Quran it also says “O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is a sin. And do not spy or backbite each other” (49:12). Knowing that spying on another person or dis-crediting their faith is haram in Islam, it is still being done within certain Muslim communities. There is not a lot of information reflecting on this within Muslim societies. In order to understand more about this, I conduct my own research which I explain below.

Methodology

Online social interaction has become integral to contemporary social life, adding new dimensions to how people learn, interact, and perceive themselves and others (MacIsaac et al., 2018). Since Instagram is known to be one of the most popular social networking sites (Hiram et al., 2015), it would be useful to look at how Muslim Instagram accounts are portraying themselves and their beliefs online. By conducting a content analysis, the study of underlying messages in texts, images, symbols, audios, or videos (Gheyle and Jacobs, 2017), I looked at the videos, photos and captions that eight Muslim Instagram profiles posted. Although Muslim Instagram accounts do not represent all Muslim people, these accounts had a lot of followers and so they are influencing a lot of people. Surveilling these accounts was a good way to understand the types of messages they were sending to their followers and the rest of the people on Instagram. To relate my findings to previous literature, I analyzed mostly female accounts so that I would get a better understanding of the dominant ideologies targeting female Muslims online.

To find the accounts, I went onto Instagram and searched the hashtag “#Muslimah” (Arabic word for female Muslim) and chose eight accounts that: had over one thousand followers, posted daily and posted mostly photos with captions. These accounts used the hashtag

“Muslimah” but only five specified that they are female Muslims in their bio, profile picture, or in their username. Those accounts were:

1. Deenmuslimah._: Had 1,286 followers. Described themselves as a “public figure”. Posted only photos with inspirational/Islamic quotes. Although they had a lower number of followers compared to the rest of the accounts I chose, I liked the way that this account posted only photos with quotes that targeted Muslim females.
2. Modestyaroundtheworld: Had 104,000 followers. Described themselves as a “personal blog”. They only posted photos of female Muslims displaying their modest fashion and beauty.
3. Elegant_muslimah: Had 33,5000 followers. Described themselves as a “personal blog”.
4. Amuslimmamacomics: Had 92,3000 followers. Described themselves as an “artist”. Posted their own drawings about motherhood, Islam and uplifting messages.
5. Learn_islaam: Had 65,5000 followers. Described themselves as an “author”. In their profile picture they had a hijabi female cartoon drawing. This account posted photos with captions trying to teach people about Islam.
6. Muslimgirl: Had 181,000 followers. Described themselves as “society and culture website”. They posted photos and videos about female Muslims and feminist messages.

The other two accounts did not specify their gender in their profile picture, bio, or username but they were popular and had a large following. Those two were:

1. Muslimproapp: Had 82,400 followers. This account is created after the “muslimpro” application that you can download on your phone. This profile posted photos with Islamic, inspirational messages.

2. Muslimsoftheworld1: Had 362,000 followers. Described themselves as “nonprofit organization”. They shared photos and videos all about Islam and Muslims around the world.

These eight profiles were chosen because they posted mostly photos with captions, making it easier to code and categorize based on their themes. I followed these eight profiles for one month, and kept track of each post on a google document. I created a document for each account, so that I could record the date of the post, a description of the post, and if they wrote a caption then I would copy and paste their caption onto the document. I then printed out the documents, cut them up (so that each post was on its own little piece of paper) and then I organized those papers into categories based on the theme.

Findings

Between December 13th, 2019 and January 13th, 2020, these eight Instagram accounts put up 299 posts in total. Out of these 299 posts, three main themes emerged. Those themes are beauty, modesty, and judging/surveilling others. These profiles discussed beauty and modesty in relation to each other. According to their ideology, the more covered you are, the more modest you are and therefore the more beautiful you are. It is also important to mention that these profiles discussed and presented Islam in a positive light. In many cases, Islam is used as a way to achieve beauty, happiness, and modesty.

In the chart below, I organized the Instagram accounts' posts by the themes: beauty, modesty, and surveillance. I organized what profile's posted according to the themes. Some profiles posted about the themes more than others. For example, the profile [deenmuslimsh._](#) actually did not post anything related to modesty, beauty or surveillance. The profile

modestyaroundtheworld posted pictures of female Muslims without captions or anything further explaining what modesty or beauty means. But because modesty is in their username, and considering the fact that they did not post any females not wearing the hijab, I made the inference that they posted what they considered is modest. I counted all their posts during the 30 day surveillance period as both a display of modesty and beauty. They did not post anything regarding surveillance. Learn_islaam posted a lot about beauty and modesty. Muslimoftheworld1 also posted a lot about surveillance and judging others.

	deenmuslimah._	modestyaroundtheworld	elegant_muslimah_	amuslimmamacomics	learn_islaam	muslimgirl	muslimproapp	muslimsoftworld1
Beauty	0	32	1	0	4	0	1	0
Modesty	0	32	0	0	6	1	0	0
Surveillance	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	6

Analysis

Beauty and Modesty

Beauty and modesty are in the same section because these profiles discussed beauty in relation to modesty. Previous literature by Hirsch (2011) and Thomas et al., (2014) discussed the standard of female beauty within pre-modern Muslim societies and in the UAE. Those beauty standards are being slim, tall, having long hair, fair skin, and big eyes (Thomas et al., 2014, p 598). While this might still be the beauty standard for female Muslims today, learn_islaam, muslimproapp

and elegant_muslimah_ described female beauty in a different way. Not once did any of these accounts discuss beauty in terms of physical qualities.

Beauty

Unlike previous literature, learn_islaam brought to light the details of how racism exists within the Muslim community, especially in the Arab community. On December 29th, 2019, they posted a picture that said:

“She is a dark skinned girl. She is a dark skinned girl who got told as children to not play outside too much or she’d get darker. She is a dark skinned girl who was mocked for wearing pink, red or black by saying it suits on bright skin more. She is a dark skinned girl who had been loved less by her parents and kins in compare to her fair skinned siblings. She is a dark skinned girl whose aunties often blurt out that she won’t find a man if she doesn’t bleach her skin. She is a dark skinned girl who get tips to use tomato juice, potato paste or skin whitening creams when she doesn’t even ask for it. She is a dark skinned girl who grew up listening fairy tails but never heard a fairy to be dark skinned. And a prince charming from far away to ask her hand in marriage. She is a dark skinned pregnant woman who was forced to eat bananas, milk or this and that so that her baby may not look brown like her. She is a dark skinned girl who never feels comfortable to take photos because ‘she doesn’t look pretty. She is that dark skinned girl who grew up thinking why god made her so ugly. Yes, she’s that beautiful girl who was robbed of the opportunity to love herself because of some cheap people’s cheap mentality.”

Their post added onto previous literature that discussed the beauty standards for women in Muslim societies which included fair/light skin. Learn_islaam talked about the impacts of racism that are present in some communities. They also discuss certain beauty practices that some people engage in to make their skin lighter, and they conclude that this ideology causes girls to lose their confidence. They are “robbed” of the opportunity to love themselves because of this European standard of beauty that is present within Muslim societies. This post adds to new research by showing how some Muslim communities have racism and this impacts the way

female Muslims feel and perceived. Based on this post, one can imagine how female Muslims are also categorized based on their skin color, discarding those who have dark skin.

On December 13th, 2019, the account *elegant_muslimah_* posted a picture that had the quote: “True beauty doesn’t come from appearance, but rather it comes from within. Beautiful is an open mind, a kind heart and loving soul”. According to this post, beauty is not an outer physical quality. It is an inner quality that includes having an open mind, a kind heart and loving soul. On December 24th, 2019, the account *muslimproapp* posted a picture with a quote that said: “your good manners are your beauty”. They also described beauty as an internal quality that includes being kind and having good manners. Similarly, *learn_islaam* posted an image with the words “how to look more beautiful” on December 20th, 2019. In this post, they said:

“What gives the face its glow is Allah's grace. It is a purified inner-reality, a simple reflection of our deeds and clean faith, intentions, thoughts, motives, everything we do for the real pleasure of Allah. No amount of makeup can be a substitute for it. The real beauty is not in the face, it’s probably the light of the heart.”

This post talks about how being beautiful is not something you achieve with makeup or adjustments of the outerself, rather, it is something you achieve by adjusting your character; being more pious. Having pious thoughts and behaviors give the face its “glow”.

These Muslim instagram accounts emphasize how beauty is an internal quality that includes practicing Islam and having a strong faith. Having a faithful character makes you beautiful. Unlike beauty standards discussed in previous literature, all of these posts described beauty as a non-physical quality. This shows that there is a different ideology about what it means to be beautiful. So based on this ideology, as a female Muslim, wearing the hijab and

behaving piously makes you beautiful. This is mentioned on December 27th, 2019, the account learn_islaam posted a picture that said:

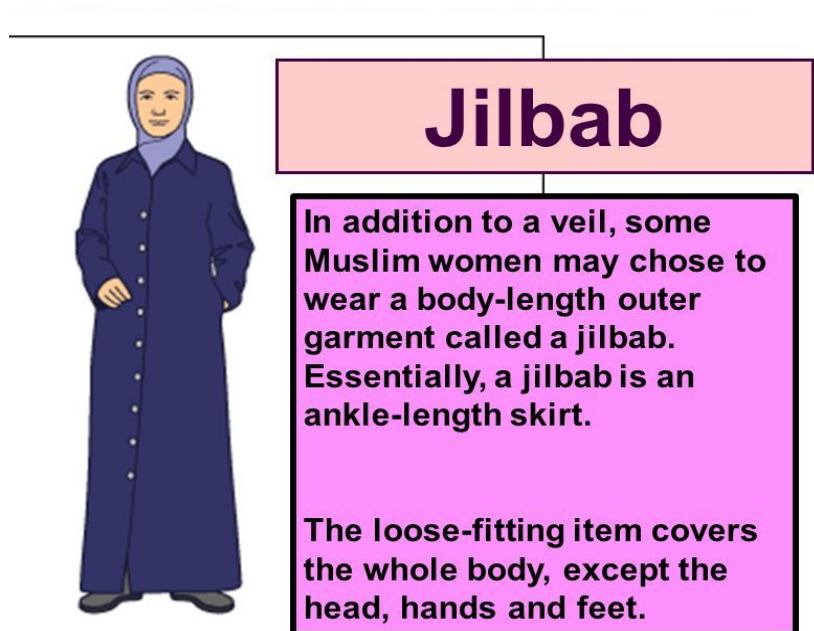
“Dear sisters, you look great in hijab but it will be awesome if you replace it with niqab or jilbaab. Your pink flowing abaya is lovely but it will be excellent if it is black and not transparent. Sparkling abaya with stones is gorgeous but if you wear a simple one with ilm [Arabic word for knowledge] and ikhlas [Arabic word for sincerity] you’ll look like a moon among the stars. Those enchanted eyes from the niqab are beautiful but it will be perfect if you stop plucking your eyebrows and stop using fake eyelashes and eyeshadows. Your hands are cute but don’t you think if you cover those hands with gloves, it will be superb? Your legs are pretty and you walk so nicely but it will be wonderful if you wear socks and stop wearing high heels. It’s amazing that you hide your long hair with a hijab but it will be absolute if you also cover your fringe hair and keep that high bun plain. You don’t require any jewelry or makeup because you’re always beautiful without beautifying your hijab with accessories or face with makeup. Oh my darling sisters, you are really pretty but you look prettier when you cover up more.”

By saying this, learn_islaam adds new information about what it means to be pretty and modest.

They believe that the traditional headscarf/hijab does not cover enough, instead, a more covered version of the hijab like the niqab or jilbab (see figure 3) would be better because it is a loose outer garment and would cover more. They also believe that your hands should be covered and that certain beauty practices, like makeup and plucking your eyebrows, are immodest. The more covered you are, the more beautiful you are.

Figure 3

Comparing this post to previous literature, learn_islaam repeats two ideologies present within Muslim societies. In research by Litchmore & Safdar (2016), a



female Muslim participant, Zarifa, quoted a Sheikh saying “what’s the point of wearing a hijab when you’re attracting so much attention to you? You’re sparkling, and your heels are clicking on the ground...” (Litchmore and Safar, 2016, p 205). Similarly, learn_islaam states that you should not wear high heels and that a plain black colored abaya would be more sincere. They validate the belief that sparkly/eye-catching clothing and high heels are immodest. Also similar to research by Siraj (2011), learn_islaam would consider the dupatta immodest because in their post they said that your hair should not be shown when you wear the hijab, and the dupatta shows some hair. Learn_islaam validated some common ideologies that have been discussed in previous literature and they also added a new definition of beauty and modesty.

Modesty

Compared to previous literature that discussed modesty (Meetoo & Mirza, 2014; Siraj, 2011; Litchmore & Safdar, 2016), jewelry, makeup, showing your hair, and high heels was considered immodest. The profile modestyaroundtheworld posted photos of Muslim women, displaying their modest fashion and beauty. Out of the 32 posts during one month, 3 posts showed women showing their hair, 5 posts showed women wearing jewelry, 15 posts showed women wearing makeup (both dramatic and natural makeup), and 2 posts showed women wearing high heels. Every single woman in their posts was wearing a hijab. Compared to previous literature, this profile posted what they believed was a modest appearance. Even though past literature described showing hair, high heels, jewelry and makeup as immodest, modestyaroundtheworld did not feel the same way. They still posted women who wore those items but according to their posts, the hijab is the main symbol of modesty because every woman in their posts wore a hijab.

Hirsch (2011) explained that past Muslim societies have placed an importance on outward appearance. They also explained that according to Islam, one must not marry a woman only due to her outward appearance because beauty passes while character remains (Hirsch, 2011, p 108). A similar point was made on December 18th, 2019, the profile learn_islaam posted a picture that said:

“Men desire beauty in women but they admire modesty. Beauty fades but character stays. After a while the most beautiful woman looks average. But the piety increases beauty each day!”

This post reiterated that ideology. Beauty is important but not as important as level of faith. This is interesting because despite this belief, research by Thomas et al., (2014) showed that some Muslim men in the UAE asked for more physical qualities than non-physical qualities when looking for a wife. According to these Muslim accounts, piety is more important than appearance, but perhaps not all Muslim men feel the same way.

Modesty is also discussed as a way to hide your beauty. On December 24th, 2019, the profile learn_islaam posted a picture that stated:

“Dear sisters, you know just by exposing your beauty you aren’t just becoming a sinner but, you’re calling many guys towards sin, a lady can take many guys to hell fire”

This post is trying to tell female Muslims that it is their responsibility if a man lusts over them, so they should not expose their beauty. They place the responsibility of modesty on the women, even though in Islam men are supposed to lower their gaze. Learn_islaam does acknowledge this in another post 19 days later. On January 11th, 2020, they posted a picture that said:

“She has not properly dressed, no hijab, no scarf, instead of lowering your gaze you are shouting ‘Wow! You look sexy!’ brother you are part of the problem. You look [at] girls like you are so hungry... and see food in front of you that you wanna bite. You appear good in front of your friends and say ‘astakhfurallah [Arabic/Islamic word for I seek forgiveness from Allah] whose untrained

daughter is this? How badly she's dressed up' yet gazing at those girls...how disgusting. While girls are posting their photos then you boys are watching them head to toe by scrolling up and down, zooming in and out. Lower your gaze brothers...lower your gaze. Girl squeezing lips, outing tongue, twinkling eyes, revealing chest and you passing bad comments and saying 'ohhh gosh heaven', some even saying 'mashallah [Arabic word to express appreciation in Islam]' shame on you. You are encouraging girls to post their awww sexy photos by giving your cheap likes, vulgar comments and storm of dirty, filthy and indecent direct messages. If a girl is posting her halfnaked photos, instead of you preaching her to stop posting or should delete her photos, you are demanding her in direct messages 'hey babe, show me a bit more' 'send me your unclad pics, only my eyes' and what not....Young boys, teenagers even old men, married and unmarried, just shame on you all. You are a stigma in the name of a son, brother, husband and father. Yes because the person who cannot respect a girl that might be someone's daughter, sister, wife, mother then what else can be expected of him. Brothers...have you ever wondered how badly you are leading a person to the hellfire along with yourself too? She would have [felt] discouraged and stopped posting if you would not have liked her photos and encouraged her in a wrong way. Remember that on the day of qiyamah [judgement day] people will be naked but the fear of judgement will not allow you to look, have that fear now and stop asking, uploading, or downloading nude pics, start lowering your gaze..."

Learn_islaam lectures male Muslims about the ways that they encourage Muslim women to post immodest photos online. Learn_islaam believes that instead of liking and commenting on those photos, men should remind themselves about judgement day (the belief in Islam that all human beings will be judged by Allah for their actions). In an attempt to remind male Muslims about the consequences of their actions, they try to show the men that they are encouraging immodest behavior. In research by Litchmore & Safdar (2016), the female participants explained that it is not just the responsibility of the female to be modest, men should also lower their gaze in order to maintain the standards of modesty and respect between men and women in their religion (p 205). Although learn_islaam does blame women for "calling guys to sin" by exposing their beauty, they reiterate the belief that women should hide their beauty, and that Muslim men are

just as responsible for behaving modestly by lowering their gaze and not encouraging immodest behavior.

On December 29th, 2019, the profile learn_islaam posted:

“Hijab vs. part time hijab. Can you be a part time muslim? Can you say that you believe Allah as your god for 10 hours and the remaining 14 you don't believe in him? No right? The fact is, you can't be a part time Muslim, either you're Muslim or you are not. But there's no option to be a part time Muslim in between full time Muslim and a non-Muslim. So similarly, there is nothing called part time hijab. It's either doing a complete hijab or doing nothing. There is nothing in between. But currently many of the sisters are practicing hijab in that way. They cover themselves up whenever or wherever they wish too or else they roam around by doing tabarruj (displaying their beauty to non mahrams/men that are not related to them) especially school, college or university going girls. Usually they'll wear hijab or niqab but suddenly come up with a different get up. They remove hijab whenever they wish too and appear half naked in the name of presentation, freshers ceremony or hot weather. Some wear hijab when they attend someone's funeral but remove hijab when they go to wedding functions. It is because they feel embarrassed to wear hijab in some certain places because they'll look different than the others. It is because people's eyes, especially the eyes of handsome boys won't be looking at them, no matter how bad their gaze or intention is. It is because they feel ashamed of being a princess of Islam but they've no problem to be a slave of their nafs [ego], iblis [satan] or to be the slave of the so called society. Those who are like this, know that hijab is not made for part time but it is obligatory upon all of you even if the weather is as hot as fire, even when you attend wedding functions, even if you are being forced to be uncovered by your family or society. It is compulsory all the time. So don't you dare think it is an option. You better take your hijab seriously. Don't make it a matter of laughter. Don't take your deen so lightly. Don't try to make your own religion but follow the religion Allah bestowed upon you. For God sake be serious, it's not something funny or not a toy that when your likeness will finish it, you'll throw it away. May Allah help our sisters to achieve the level of haya [life] that pleases Him...aameen”

Part-time hijab is actually something that has been shown in research by Litchmore & Safdar (2016). Amaal, one of their female Muslim participants, reported that she would take off her hijab when going to weddings or vacations (p 203). According to learn_islaam, if you wear the hijab you should not take it off even if the weather is as hot as fire. They are trying to remind

their female Muslim followers that the hijab is a serious matter and if you remove it you are doing something that will hurt your deen (faith).

Litchmore & Safdar (2016) included similar beliefs regarding the hijab in their research. A few participants hesitated to wear the hijab because they were afraid they would not be able to wear it respectfully, and they were afraid of being perceived differently by others (p 205). To this, learn_islaam would say that instead of “feeling ashamed of being a princess of Islam, they are being slaves to society” which means that in this scenario those participants are more focused on what society thinks rather than following Islam and worrying about what Allah thinks. Litchmore & Safdar (2016) show that for some female Muslims, wearing the hijab is a big decision and requires a lot of courage. And when learn_islaam lectures female Muslims about the seriousness of the hijab, it can create a discouraging vibe, making females feel like they can’t wear it if they are not going to take it seriously.

On December 25th, 2019, the profile learn_islaam posted a picture slideshow discussing “the advantages of wearing niqab” which stated the following:

“You please Allah plus you get reward[ed] for it. Wearing niqab is the physical proof of Islamic identity. When wearing niqab, people will not treat you from your skin color nor will they see you as an exploitable object. People will only listen to what you are saying instead of busy judging how you look. Niqab covers the entire parts of the body except the eyes. On this condition, no one knows the color of the skin, hair, or body size. Sexual assaults start from men’s attention to women’s body. Covering the entire lovely parts grants women the aura of respect and forces the society to see her in high esteem. Niqaab promotes modesty, piety, and chastity. Men are jealous in nature. They mostly do not want other people looking at their wife. Niqab is a way to preserve a wife’s beauty from other gaze and only share it with husband”

This post talks about their belief in the niqab. They say that the niqab protects you from negative forms of surveillance. Instead of focusing on things like your skin color or your body, people

will focus on what you say. They also believe that sexual assaults happen because a man is attracted to a woman, so their argument is that the niqab protects your beauty and therefore protects you from unwanted sexual assaults.

This is a new ideology that has not been mentioned in previous literature. Here learn_islaam is saying that sexual assaults happen because a man is attracted to you, so in order to avoid being in that situation, you should cover yourself. This is a controversial statement because it puts the consequence of the male's urges on the woman's shoulder. It excuses other possible reasons why a man would sexually assault a woman. It also ignores the fact that women who wear the hijab or niqab can still get sexually assaulted. It further ignores the fact that modesty is a concept for both men and women in Islam. Their post also draws attention to the fact that a woman's body should only be looked at by her husband, because men are jealous naturally. They are normalizing certain behaviors and establishing gender norms (behavior/attitude assigned to a person's gender). The ideology that women are supposed to dress modestly in order to protect themselves from unwanted judgements and assaults is legitimized by this post.

Muslimproapp and elegant_muslimah_ describe beauty in terms of being kind and having good manners, while learn_islaam goes into detail what beauty means. They believe that beauty includes both a pious character and a modest appearance. Female Muslims who cover themselves and display a pious character would fall under the category of modest and beautiful, according to these ideologies. According to DuBois' theory of the veil, female Muslims who do not wear the hijab, would be surveilled as unattractive and impious according to these profiles' ideologies of beauty and modesty.

This actually brings up an important discussion about the ways that Muslims surveil and judge each other. Because surveillance of each other's beauty and religion is usually done by looking at the outer appearance, internal qualities such as good deeds and thoughts cannot be seen through surveillance of physical appearance. Therefore this raises a contradiction within the Muslim community because you cannot see someone's faith and so you cannot accurately judge their religiosity. Surveillance and judgements of Muslims by Muslims is also discussed by a few profiles.

Surveillance/Judgements

Judgements That Female Muslims Experience

On December 27th 2019 amuslimmamacomics posted a cartoon drawing of hijabi women holding signs in what seems to be like a protest. One of the ladies is holding a sign that says "stop judging/shaming breast-feeding moms!!" The other lady is holding a sign that says "stop judging and shaming formula feeding mothers!", then they see each other and the next image is them holding hands and their signs now say "stop judging and shaming moms!" Her caption for this post says:

"There are so many dimensions of this Illustration: 1) I hear you say who judge bf [breastfeeding] or ff [formula feeding] mom? Maybe not in ur surroundings or in ur country, back home there is a mix of both groups few judging bf moms that they are silly bc formula makes babies healthier (i.e fat) and others judging ff mom on how formula is just chemicals and dangerous. While i strongly believe in BF as commanded by Allah swt in the Quran, i try my best to not judge others. However, i sincerely hope that they are making informed decision abt feeding their baby. Rest assured. Their baby. Their choices. 2) judging is not limited to feeding only, essentially every choice a parent is making wrt children should be respected. Our job could be dissipation of information without judgement - which means that information can be shared kindly without the element of embarrassing others over their choices. Because again. Their kid. Their choice. 3) most importantly, sometimes when we claim to take a stand against judgment, we are often judging ourselves. Like the mum is standing against bf judgment but soon

realizes that her stand is judging in itself and hence Changes it to standing for MOMs instead. This has been me. And im working on it myself :)"

She discusses how negative judgements and surveillance make her feel. As a Muslim female, she also faces surveillance from the mom community and others about how she should parent, specifically regarding breastfeeding. In the Quran, breastfeeding is discussed in numerous chapters. Because of this, the belief that breastfeeding is the dominant standard for feeding your child might create stigma around mothers who do not breastfeed. She says that other people should not be so judgemental about how mothers feed their children, whether it's breastfeeding or formula feeding, it's their child so it's their choice. She added a new perception about the surveillance that female Muslims face as mothers, which I have not seen in previous literature.

On December 26th, 2019, "Muslimgirl" posted a picture of a screenshot of someone's twitter conversation. A Sheikh tweeted the following:

"Telling a Muslim man that he has no right to even speak about the Islamic dress code that the quran prescribes for believing women is the height of immaturity and arrogance..." and a female Muslim responded to their tweet saying "Sheikh, please stick to policing your brothers on upholding their hijab code first and foremost then you can concern yourself with the sisters @skeykhazhar"

This post shows you how a Muslim man posted his thoughts online about how females should not tell men they do not have a right to speak on the Islamic dress code. A female Muslim responded to him saying that before he worries about how female Muslims dress, he should focus on the hijab code for men. This woman acknowledged that the word hijab does not mean just the headscarf, which was also shown in research by Litchmore & Safdar (2016) and Siraj (2011). She acknowledged that hijab means modesty, and men should focus on their modesty instead of worrying about how female Muslims are dressing. Similar to what has been shown previously, modesty is something that is stressed mostly on the woman. Thomas et al., (2014)

showe how most Muslim men looking for a wife asked for physical qualities rather than internal qualities like being pious. This shows that the male community needs just as much lecturing about modesty like the female community receives.

On January 3rd, 2020, the account “muslimsoftheworld1” posted a picture of a Muslim lady wearing a hijab and smiling. Their caption said:

“There were times when I felt stuck, small, and insecure in my abilities. And I felt like I had every reason to feel so, for I am Young, Muslim, Arab, African, and a Woman in a world that's generally pretty much biased against these people categories. I felt helpless because even in settings where I wished to hide these "identities", I simply couldn't; a Hijabi in her 20s with female features who looked North African, easy guess, right? One day I asked myself, is it really that bad being a Young Muslim Arab African Woman? I realized it was the labels which caused me pain. What I feared were the socially constructed labels placed on these identities, labels that made me feel less than good enough. And walking away from these labels seemed almost impossible, because the whole world enjoyed reminding me of them every time I tried to push past them. But, labels are nothing without you and I identifying with them. Labels have so much power over us only because we allow them to. Knowing this put the power back into my own hands. I then worked on redefining my identity, away from judgement, societal pressures, and any other outside expectations. I solely focused on how I ideally see myself, painting a picture of the morals and values that coincide with my highest and most authentic self. I started walking away from labels that do not serve my ambition and desire to grow, and little by little, building a new, different narrative for myself, one that inspires Confidence, Trust, and Dignity. What are labels you identify with? Why do you identify with them? You choose what to identify with. Choose wisely. @fatifromspace #muslimsoftheworld1”

This post is from another profile, but it was reposted on their account. This discussed how a female Muslim faced numerous challenges as a minority. As seen in previous literature, being fair skinned is the ideal beauty standard. Also, wearing a hijab comes with numerous labels within Western societies like oppressed, anti-feminist, terrorist, etc. This woman shared her experience about how she overcame those challenges by focusing on herself and not associating with the labels that negatively impacted her. She also showed how she responded to negative

surveillance and stereotypes. Instead of identifying with negative labels, she labeled herself. By labeling herself as a moral and authentic woman, she was able to gain confidence and live her best life.

How Islamic Accounts Responded to the Act of Surveillance

On January 8th, 2020, the profile muslimsoftheworld1 posted a picture of a man praying on the beach. They wrote the following caption:

“Don’t let anything get between you and your prayers. It doesn’t matter how many sins you are struggling with. How many drinks you have had. How often you frequent clubs. How “bad” of a Muslim you or others think you are. No matter your struggles or your weakness, don’t be too proud to stop what you are doing five times a day and bow down to your Creator. Praying consistently when struggling with various sins doesn’t make you a hypocrite. It’s a sign your heart loves and seeks God, and your prayers will eventually give you strength to leave that which displeases your lord. Abu Huraira reported: A man came to the Prophet PBUH and he said, “This person prays in the night but he steals in the morning.” The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Verily, prayer will stop him from doing that.” Keep up your prayers my friends. And remember we are all in this struggle together. Growing a beard, wearing a hijab, doing your prayers - it doesn’t mean you claim piety or are sinless or better than others. It just means you are trying. And all God asks of us is to try. Keep taking a step forward to Him no matter how many steps back you have taken. Abu Dharr reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, “Allah Almighty says: Whoever comes with a good deed will have the reward of ten like it and even more. Whoever comes with an evil deed will be recompensed for one evil deed like it or he will be forgiven. Whoever draws close to me by the length of a hand, I will draw close to him by the length of an arm. Whoever draws close to me by the length of an arm, I will draw close to him by the length of a fathom. Whoever comes to me walking, I will come to him running. Whoever meets me with enough sins to fill the earth, not associating any idols with me, I will meet him with as much forgiveness.” - @hshibly”

This post got 8,591 likes and over 76 comments, all consisting of positive feedback saying how thankful they are and how beautiful this post is. A lot of people liked this post, myself included.

This post emphasized how important it is to not lose faith and to not let negative judgments impact your faith. As a Muslim I know that there is stigma within the Muslim community when a

person engages in haram (sinful) behavior, so this post combats the negative judgments from others that tend to hurt people's faith. They might feel like they are not a good Muslim because they break a few rules, but this post is emphasizing how it is important to pray. Prayer could help influence you in a positive way that will help you practice Islam and stop doing the things that are haram. At one point they comment about the ideology that wearing a hijab does not mean you are more pious than others, it means you are trying to be a practicing Muslim. This post emphasized how important it is to never lose faith and always keep trying to improve yourself and lifestyle to be that better version of yourself that you are trying to be.

Muslimgirl posted on December 31st 2019, an image with the text saying "what do you hope Muslims leave behind in this decade?" Her caption said "the Muslim ban and hijab policing would be a nice start". By saying this, she reflected on the surveillance of Muslims by Muslims and the surveillance of Muslims by non-Muslims. She shows how hijab-policing (criticizing how female Muslims wear their hijab) is something Muslims should not do anymore. She also acknowledged the Muslim ban. On January 27, 2017, President Donald Trump signed an executive order banning Muslims from Iran, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan and Libya from entering the United States. This made a lot of Muslims upset because it further stigmatized Muslims as the cause of terrorism within the United States, although this is not the case. She believed that this should be left in the past, meaning, Muslims should not be banned from entering the United States. And, Muslims should not surveil and criticize how female Muslims wear their hijab.

Similarly, muslimgirl also acknowledged another way that Muslims surveil other Muslims. On December 14th, 2019, the profile muslimgirl posted a picture with text that read:

“Muslims accuse other Muslims of being kaafir [Arabic word for disbeliever] because they wish Merry Christmas to their neighbors, hand out candy on Halloween, and celebrate their kids’ birthdays. And we expect others to trust us kindly, because #islamophobia”.

This post adds onto the previous literature by acknowledging a new ideology behind the surveillance of Muslims. She points out how surveillance of Muslims behaving in cultures or traditions outside of their own can be perceived as negative and could cause others to doubt their religiosity or faith. Just because a Muslim decides to take part in other cultures and traditions, does not mean they are a bad Muslim. As I mentioned earlier, the Quran states that it is haram for a Muslim to call another Muslim a non-believer. As Muslims, we are supposed to be tolerant of other religions [6:108]. If we expect others to be respectful of Muslims and Islam, we should not disrespect other cultures or Muslims who participate in those cultures and we should not discredit Muslims’ faith.

On December 29th, 2019, the account muslimsoftheworld1 posted a picture of a blank image with the text:

“there are muslims that drink alcohol that still want to come to the Masjid and pray. There are Muslims that party, and still want to be part of the Muslim community and enjoy Ramadan. There are Muslims who don’t wear hijab, they still love their religion!”

The caption of this image read:

“STOP THE JUDGING: The reason Muslims of the World has become such a popular platform is that it shares stories of normal Muslims. There is this idea in the Muslim community that if you say you are a Muslim you are suppose to be perfect. And if you do sin or are not as outwardly Muslim as someone else then you are less of a Muslim. I traveled most of America and across the world and it’s all the same. Muslims always judging people: he did this and she did that. And that leads many people to stay away from the Muslim community as they see it toxic. I want to make it very clear, this platform is for anybody who is trying to be a better person. If you are struggling with something it’s ok, we all are whether we admit it or not. For all the Muslims who are constantly calling people out, judging people, making people feel less, you guys are no different than the

Shaitaan who tries pushing people away from Islam. You are a Muslim that drinks alcohol? Try your best to stop but the MOTW Family has its arms open for you. You are a Muslim that doesn't pray? Well, Ramadan is coming up, try to go to the Masjid. You have a bad past? Try your best to have a better future! This platform has nothing but Love for our Muslim brothers and sisters no matter what. Thanks for all the lovely followers who have been part of this journey and we can't wait to show you the next stages of development!" Sincerely, @sajjad12345 and @mrs.motw #muslimsoftheworld1"

This post and caption talk about the judgement and surveillance within the Muslim community. They say that within Muslim communities, they believe that if you are a Muslim you must be perfect. This ideology is flawed because as human beings, we make mistakes. They relate the Muslims who call people out for their mistakes to the shaitaan(devil). When you stigmatize a person for the mistakes they have made, you are making it harder for them to move forward and improve as a Muslim. You are preventing that person from getting close to Allah, which could honestly make you a bad Muslim. Instead of clinging onto the mistakes a person has done, allowing individuals to move past their mistakes and continue practicing Islam is the right thing to do. This post tries to bring a more positive energy to the Muslim community, and to their followers, by reminding us that it is not okay to make another Muslim feel like they aren't good enough because we are all human, and we all make mistakes. This post is being positive about changing and trying to be a better/halal Muslim by encouraging their followers to not give up on their faith and identity.

On December 23rd, 2019, the profile muslimsoftheworld1 posted a picture of a man praying. The text on the image says:

“unknown in this world but in the hereafter, Insha Allah amongst the known and the inhabitants of Jannah”. The caption of this post said “Don't ever look down at anyone in this world. We do not know the piety in the hearts of people. #muslimsoftheworld1” .

Their post validates the argument that surveillance of people's faith through outer appearance is deeply flawed. Piety is not something you can see and therefore judging people based on their outer appearance is inaccurate and it only leads to negative impacts for the individual.

On December 27th, 2019, the account muslimsoftheworld1 posted a picture of a man at some sort of convention with the caption:

“Salaams my name is Musab and I have a story to share with you all. At first glance you may not see anything different about me, however, I am deaf. I wasn't always deaf, I was born hearing. However, in Jordan, I was given an immunization shot at a young age and the next day I woke up and I was deaf. Growing up in the Muslim community deaf, is not easy. At times I don't feel included, at times I feel sad. My only ask is for the Muslim community to be more educated of the deaf struggle. Make us feel more accepted. We want to feel the Muslim bond just like everyone else!” @ca.u #muslimsoftheworld1 (stop by our booth at ICNA G49 and say salaams). Follow @noorforsign for more information!”

This post explains a new perspective about the feeling of being left out within the Muslim community as a deaf person. This is important because I have never seen a sign language interpreter at any masjid I have been to in my life. I also agree that we should make accommodations for the deaf. It is inexpensive and simple to have someone translate lectures at the masjid but in order to do this, we need to care and be aware about the needs of those within our community. Rather than serving the needs of one one category of people, Muslims are responsible for including all types Muslims in our activities.

On January 7th, 2020, the profile learn_islaam posted a picture slideshow that said:

“A non Muslim may not read Quran but they can read your character. So beautify your character according to quran and sunah and maybe they will see the beauty of Islam through you”.

This post acknowledged the misconceptions about Islam and Muslims that occur in Western societies. Surveillance of Muslims occurs within Western societies, and this post emphasized

how in order to show a good example of Islam, you need to “beautify” your personality. Many accounts discussed how beauty is something that incorporates a pious, kind character. According to this, as a Muslim, you should present yourself and your character in a beautiful way because you are an example of Islam to non-Muslims, since they might not fully understand the religion, you are the gateway or that bridge connecting the two pieces.

These profiles validated the fact that Muslims do judge each other and that surveillance does occur within the Muslim community. Many topics are discussed by these profiles. First, they talk about how if a Muslim wears the hijab and practices Islam, it does not mean they are better than you, it just means they are trying to be a better Muslim. These posts discussed how judging each other causes more problems, and that as Muslims we should not cling onto people’s mistakes. By holding a person’s mistakes or past against them, we are actually preventing that person from increasing their practice of Islam. These posts also discuss the alienation of deaf people within the Muslim community and how Muslims should learn ways to include deaf people rather than focusing on a certain population within the Muslim community. These accounts posted their beliefs of surveillance and judging each other which validates the argument that judging each other is invalid and does not provide any benefits to society, it actually hurts the society.

Conclusion

These Muslim Instagram accounts displayed their opinions about modesty, beauty and surveillance. Previous literature discussed how modesty, beauty and female Muslims’ dress and behavior are surveilled and these profiles added onto those ideologies. They described beauty as mostly an internal quality, where previous literature described beauty typically as an external

quality that included European beauty standards. One post also discussed the racism that occurs within Muslim communities and they validated the theory that female Muslims are categorized based on preferred physical attributes. Because that post was very recent, it should be an issue that is examined in future sociological research. The racism within Muslim communities could have more effects on female Muslims other than being categorized based on beauty preferences. These profiles also described beauty as an internal quality that focuses on piety, according to their ideology, female Muslims appearing modest are considered beautiful.

Learn_islaam described modest appearance to include covering everything, your hair, skin, even your hands. While learn_islaam believed that certain beauty practices such as makeup and accessorizing are immodest, modestyaroundtheworld posted Muslim women wearing the hijab and makeup, high heels, and jewelry. This shows how, similar to what previous literature has shown, the interpretation of modesty is different, even online. Because beauty is described as being pious and modest, female Muslims who physically appear modest and covered are more likely to be categorized as beautiful and valuable. This shows how surveillance of female Muslims' dress will continue to be a dominant ideology within Muslim societies.

In terms of surveillance, these profiles acknowledged that Muslims tend to surveil one another, attempting to judge their faith. Additionally, these posts show how female Muslims face criticisms within the mom community. Issues regarding the correct method of feeding your child, breastfeeding or formula-feeding, was acknowledged by amuslimmamacomics which is something new that has not been mentioned in previous literature. Female Muslims also argued that men should stop "hijab policing" women and focus on their own hijab code. Muslimgirl also

showed how Muslims can get judged and called disbelievers for participating in other traditions or cultures outside of their own.

A majority of posts expressed to their Muslim followers that they need to stop judging each other because the negative impacts of judging can actually prevent individuals from continuing their practice in Islam. Accounts posted that if a Muslim appears more religious it means that they are trying to be a better Muslim, it does not necessarily mean they are better than you. Even if a Muslim wants to practice Islam, they might still sin and that does not mean they should lose faith and stop practicing. When another person uses a person's sins against them, they are actually making it harder for that person to feel comfortable practicing Islam. These profiles said that if you are struggling to perfect your faith you should pray. These posts acknowledged how Muslims criticize each other based on their behavior and how their judgements can make it difficult for Muslims to continue practicing. This also shows you how Muslims can face the same consequences of surveillance that occur as a result of islamophobic surveillance in Western societies. Muslims might stop practicing Islam as a result of the negative judgements they receive from the dominant ideologies within a society.

In conclusion, these Instagram accounts showed how certain ideologies pertaining to modesty and beauty exist as a result of the surveillance of outward appearance. For female Muslims, they will continue to be categorized on their physical attributes. Previous literature has shown that women with European beauty standards were considered beautiful and valuable to Muslim men and this is prevalent in these posts. Additionally learn_islaam showed how female Muslims are categorized as beautiful based on their modesty. The more covered you are, the more modest you are and the more beautiful you are. Negative impacts from surveillance are also

stressed by many accounts. Despite the effort to remind their Muslim followers that judging is harmful and wrong, piety is surveilled by female Muslims' dress. Surveillance of female Muslims' outer appearance will always occur because as previous literature and my own research have shown, piety is tied to religiosity. This makes it an inevitable experience for female Muslims.

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