

Title: Symbolic Hijab

Presenter: Tahirrah Badawi, San Bernardino Valley College

Mentor: Melissa King

This project explores the meanings of hijab by using a cultural anthropological symbolic approach. Symbolic and interpretive theory demonstrates how necessary it is to understand the situational and cultural contexts of an interaction or practice. The meaning of a symbol, in this case the hijab, is variable and molded by continuous contextualized interactions. To understand how others' perceive your appearance is not as easy as it seems, and the hijab has become a rich symbol for both Muslim and non-Muslim groups in the US. On the one hand, some Muslim women may choose to wear hijab for a number of reasons that reflect American ideals of individuality, freedom, and tolerance. On the other, non-Muslim women have often seen hijab as a symbol of gendered religious oppression and restriction, something to "save Muslim women" from (Abu-Lughod). In this presentation, I draw on my own experiences as a Muslim woman to discuss the interactions between these groups and how the symbol of the hijab is variable.

Works Cited

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