Unveiling What the Veil Means to Young Emirati Women

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Abstract
Veiling among women is entrenched in Emirati people’s behavior and collective consciousness as it connects with Islamic religious commandments and local traditions and values. Recently there is a marked relaxation of the strict Islamic veil dress code especially amongst the younger generation of women. This study, therefore, examined the practice of veiling among a sample of 325 young Emirati females. The focus was on whether the recent sweeping socio-economic changes have altered local veiling practices. Using a questionnaire and drawing on class discussions and on the author’s extensive formal observation of change in young Emirati women’s behavior, appearance and dress, the research particularly examined whether veiling continues to be the norm among young Emiratis and if the veil has retained its original meanings. Results showed that the veil continues to carry a religious significance, but females increasingly value the dress as a means of distinction, whether as a symbol of national identity or as a status symbol. The veil seems to have also acquired an aesthetic significance as females reinvented the habit* to meet religious mandates while expressing their taste for fashion and luxury. The study construed veiling as covering oneself with a sheila (headscarf) and abaya (long cloak).

* Refers to religious dress.

Keywords: Veiling, hijab, abaya, sheila, modernity, identity, women, United Arab Emirates.
1. Introduction

The new social context in which Emirati women currently live is complex and overwhelming if not confusing. Following the discovery of oil, the new generation of Emirati women lives in an increasingly affluent, modern, and open society. While these young women are still exposed to their ancestral cultural heritage, unlike their mothers and grandmothers, they are also highly exposed to Western worldviews, thoughts, values and ideals through education, media, and direct contact with the Western expatriate workforce. The new generation of Emirati women go about their daily lives burdened by the forces of traditions and the pressures of modern life (Khelifa, 2010). The contradictory pressures placed on them create enormous and incessant tension often visible in their everyday behavior. They wear the veil and designer clothes underneath. They pray but chat and meet up with boys. When they speak no one can anticipate whether they will use English, Arabic, or a mix of both. As they create and reshape their personal and social identity, their dilemmas are immeasurable.

One of the most remarkable socio-cultural changes of late concern female veiling; the religiously mandated and traditionally cherished Islamic practice. Recently, there is a marked relaxation of the strict Islamic veil dress code especially amongst the younger generation of women. This study, therefore, examined veiling among a sample of young Emirati Muslim women attending a public university in Dubai. The focus was on whether the recent socio-economic changes have altered veiling practices among this group. The research especially examined whether veiling continues to be the norm among young Emiratis and if the veil has retained its original meanings. It was hypothesized that the practice of veiling and its traditional meanings have changed significantly as a function of the country’s pursuit of modernization. This study conceived veiling as covering oneself with a long cloak, known in the local dialect as *abaya*, and a headscarf known as the *sheila*. The veil was not construed as the face veil; a transparent black fabric used for face-concealment known as the *niqab*. Further, in this study, the word veil is used interchangeably with the Arabic word *hijab* to mean covering a woman’s body, hair and neck with both a *abaya* and a *sheila*.

2. Review of the Literature

One of the recent and noteworthy socio-cultural changes concern the practice of veiling among young Emirati women. To understand these changes it is important to examine the relationship between dress and identity formation, how gender-role stereotypes and gender-role expectations influence dress and social relationships. In addition, in order to understand the Islamic veil, it is important to explain its meanings, its significance, and to understand the theoretical debates and common discourses about it.

2.1 Dress, Identity and Context

The way we dress is inescapably shaped by historical and socio-cultural forces. The clothes we choose to wear communicate symbolic messages about our personal and social identities (Humphreys & Brown, 2002). Dress conveys gender identities (Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997), political affiliation (Droubi, 2011; El Guindi, 2005; Mule & Barthel, 1992), socio-economic status (Omair, 2010) and religious membership and status (Droubi, 2011; El Guindi, 2005). Omair (2009) noted that dress “as an object symbol is a useful medium to understand how people constitute and represent themselves both as individuals and as group members” (p. 414). Dress conveys, among other things, information about a person’s nationality, religion, gender, social class, subjugation, or power. Dress also facilitates social interactions (Artur, 1999) or hampers them.

Dress as a performance (Omair, 2009), i.e. as an intentional behavior meant to convey identities, social and cultural affiliations, and loyalties, evolves with time and is affected by context (Kelly, 2010). Trice and Beyer (1993) suggested that the meaning of symbols is time
sensitive and are subject to constant redefinition. Similarly, as a symbolic expression, dress changes over time and evolves as societies evolve. Changes of clothing styles and dress requirements were noted throughout history even among primitive and conservative societies. Today, as the world becomes increasingly more connected and homogenized, the global tendency is to wear Western-style clothes and fashion. Kelly (2010) discussed changes to the abaya, the traditional clothing of Kuwaiti females, and how some young females come to university dressed in Western clothes. Al-Qasimi (2010) also noted how the fashionable abaya is replacing the traditional garb in Gulf States resulting in an antagonism between piety and fashion.

2.2 Gender-Role Stereotypes, Gender-Role Expectations and Dress

In any society, prescribed gender-roles contribute immensely to the formation of beliefs and expectations about the appropriate dress for men and women. Traditional gender-role expectations are firmly anchored to the prevailing socio-cultural norms and values (Rosencrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman, & Broverman, 1968) which in turn form the basis for dress norms for both genders (Bennet, 1990). Through a variety of social channels and media, prevailing values filter down to individuals and shape their views on what is appropriate or unacceptable including dress and clothing. In a historical study, Bennet (1990) studied social rules governing dress and appearance and provided evidence of how people dressed to comply with social expectations. Basow (1980) also suggested that in addition to behaviors, gender-role stereotypes prescribe the appearance to which a person is to conform. In turn, gender-role expectations for dress shape social interactions as they form the standards against which conformity is measured (Workman & Johnson, 1994). Role theory also stipulates that conforming to gender-role expectations is rewarding to those who conform and to those who share and hold the expectations since conformity facilitates social interactions (Stryker & Stattem, 1985).

In the Arabian Gulf, religious and traditional social expectations for female dress in public spheres include a loose covering of body contours, hair and neck using solid black color fabric and without any decoration. Al-Qasimi (2010) argued, that in the Arab Gulf, donning the abaya as a veiling practice, transcends the domain of social expectations to become an institutionalized form of national dress. Thus, the veil satisfies not only gender-role expectations for female dress but also a national expectation. In discussing the abaya within the paradigms of Islamic and nationalist dress, Al-Qasimi (2010) envisages the abaya as a sign of solidarity that “transcends national boundaries” (p. 49) in a time when the national cultures of Gulf States are being threatened by pursuits of modernization.

2.3 Cultural Meanings and Significance of the Islamic Veil

The Islamic veil carries a number of connotations for Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It represents different things to different people and conveys a host of meanings (Secor, 2002) including those that are religious and personal, to those that are religious and political, to those that are social and cultural. For many Muslim men and women, female veiling, is before all, a religious and personal duty. To satisfy this obligation women must cover the body parts considered as awarah (parts of the body not to be exposed in public). Some Muslim communities are more conservative than others in interpreting the construct of awarah, hence the striking differences in women dress code across the Muslim world. Nevertheless, regardless of whether awarah is interpreted strictly or loosely, the veil, as a religious mandate, requires women to cover all that is socially agreed upon to be sexually attractive to men and a source of male “corruption” (Mule & Barthel, 1992).

Therefore, for Muslim societies the veil represents a powerful symbol of women chastity, purity, and morality (Esposito, 2005;
El Guindi, 2005). It is intimately linked to the notions of family pride and honor (Al-Qasimi, 2010). Indeed, the reputation of a family heavily rests on the conduct of its women and the respect of the prescribed dress code. Shame is what every Arab and Muslim family fears when an adult female member evolves in the public sphere. Therefore, the veil represents a safeguard protecting women not only from being attractive to men and from being the subject of male desires and harassments (Mule & Barthel, 1992) but also as a guard against their own indecent thoughts and desires. Thus, the veil seems to transcend the religious and personal to symbolically act as a physical barrier that shields women from the curious eyes of men and their own personal demons. It further acts as a reminder for men and women of their religious and social obligation (Esposito, 2005).

2.4 Western Perceptions of the Islamic Veil

The practice of veiling among Muslim women has generated a lot of interest among Western scholars. The controversial nature and multiple meanings of the Islamic veil continue to fuel heated debates and discursive disputes among scholars. For the most part, Westerners have been somewhat conditioned to view Muslim women as oppressed second-class citizens. The representation of veiled Muslim women in Western societies, almost invariably evokes images of backward, subjugated, sexually repressed and abused women (Worsnop, 2006).

The stigmatized portrayal of veiled Muslim women in the West has long preceded Albert Hourani’s 1955 publication on the vanishing veil (Ahmed, 2011) in which he equates the Islamic veil with backwardness and stunted intellectual development of Arab women. For instance, in the 19th century, British colonialists viewed the veil as symbolic of Eastern backwardness (Hirschman, 1997). In general, the Islamic veil is considered centerpiece to the negative perceptions held by Westerners about Muslim women (El Guindi, 2005) as the veil continues to suggest a host of images of oppression, servitude, and ill-treatment of the women who wear them (Hirschman, 1997). Whether true or imagined, behind the veil women are still believed to be traditional, backward, dominated, oppressed, and abused.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

The study followed a mixed research design combining the use of a questionnaire, and drawing on class discussions on the subject of the veil and on the author’s extensive formal observation of change in young Emirati women’s behavior, appearance and dress. The study was descriptive in nature and attempted to offer an objective analysis on the practice of veiling among young educated Emirati women.

3.2 Participants

The sample used in this study was non-random and included 325 students conveniently sampled from various colleges and programs of a gender-segregated public university in Dubai. The study university is fifteen years old and was a female-only university for the first 11 years of its establishment. Participants were all females from the Emirate of Dubai, mostly never-married singles in their twenties. Although the selection was done conveniently, the sample was representative of most of the levels of education in the university.

3.3 Instrument

The questionnaire used for this study was developed and refined to measure traditional vs. modern value orientation of participants, the level of perceived religiosity among participants, veiling practices, attitudes towards the veil, changes in veiling practices, the meaning of the veil, and the multiple identity dimensions participants attach to the veil. The qualitative information was derived from the researcher’s extensive formal observation of student behavioral change including dress and appearance and from multiples class discussions on the veil. This information was used to support and enrich the
descriptive findings from the questionnaire. The class discussions centered on the topic of veiling in the UAE and were part of the activities of two courses; one on culture and society, and the other on the politics of identity. This qualitative content is presented in the discussion section of this study.

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis
The quantitative data was collected using a questionnaire developed for the study. Participants were approached for voluntary participation and were provided two copies of an informed consent, one to sign and one to keep for themselves. Respondents were also provided assurances about the anonymity and confidentiality of the results as well as the precautions taken to ensure the protection and integrity of the data. Participants also received brief information about the study and the required time commitment should they agree to participate. The qualitative data were essentially records of more than ten years of formal observation of student behavior on campus especially in relation to changes to female students’ dress and appearance. The data also included records of class discussions on the subject of the Islamic veil, veiling, clothing, cultural identity and other related topics.

The collected quantitative data was analyzed at the descriptive level to examine changes of normative behavior in relation to veiling among young females. The qualitative data was used to support, corroborate, and extend the quantitative results of the study. It was especially used to contextualize the quantitative results and to provide, when appropriate or necessary, some real life examples or illustrative quotes from students.

4. Results
The sample included 325 respondents conveniently recruited from a public university in Dubai. All participants were from the Emirate of Dubai and no other Emirate was represented in this sample. The average age of the respondents was 21.5 years old (SD = 1.3).

Among the participants, 29% were first-year students, 32% were sophomores, 24% were juniors, and 15% were seniors. Most women in the sample (97%) were never married singles and 3% were married women.

Findings showed that 77% of the respondents follow a modern lifestyle while 23% believe they continue to live traditionally. Among the respondents, 21% see themselves as conservative, 46% think they are liberal, and 33% believe they are neither conservative nor liberal. About 81% of respondents believe themselves to be moderately religious, 11% think they are very religious, and 8% indicated that they are not religious.

Results showed that 91% of the participants wear both a sheila and a abaya when in public or in front of unrelated males while 7.5% of the respondents wear just the abaya but not the sheila. Only 1.5% of females do not wear the veil at all and wear Western clothes instead. Among the females who veil (wear both the abaya and sheila), only 7% wear the niqab (a face-veil that shows the eyes). Among the participants, 63% believe that women must always wear the veil when in the presence of unrelated men, 24% think that it is preferable that women veil, 7% think that it doesn’t matter either way, and 6% think that females do not have to wear the veil if they so choose.

Participants were asked to provide five reasons by order of importance for why they personally veil. Participants identified religious beliefs as the number 1 reason for which they veil, followed by respect for traditions, respect for family, to express national identity, and to be distinguished from non-nationals. Other reasons mentioned quite frequently include wearing the veil to express a taste for fashion, to express social status, veiling out of habit, and veiling to attract Emirati males.

When asked to provide the most likely five reasons why other young Emirati women veil, respondents again suggested religious beliefs as the number one reason, followed by respect for traditions, national identity, taste for fashion, and to attract Emirati men. Other frequently mentioned reasons for wearing the
veil included to communicate a status symbol, to earn the respect of others, to keep women safe, and to help women find a husband.

In general, most respondents (93%) believe that the practice of veiling has recently changed from the way it was practiced in the past and 7% think that the practice remained quite unchanged for them. Among those who think that veiling has changed, the majority (86%) think that the veil is not worn the same way as before, i.e. females do not adhere to the strict guidelines of not showing their hair and their body. The majority of participants (94%) also think that the modest nature of the veil has been lost with a similar percentage of respondents (95%) believing that the veil is increasingly used to communicate class and fashion rather than a religious commitment. In general, most participants (95%) feel that the traditional meaning of the veil has been altered as this new generation adapts to the social changes of the country.

5. Discussion

The controversial nature of the Islamic veil continues to fuel the debate among Muslim religious elites, Western and non-Western scholars including those with feminist views. Previous research on the Islamic veil has suffered from many limitations. For instance, the prevailing view of Western scholars examining the veil and related issues is that Muslim women are oppressed second-class citizens. This narrow and stereotypical view has, in general, affected Western scholars’ neutrality and clouded the results of their research studies on the veil. Similarly, studies on women and veiling in the Middle East mainly focus on the traditionalist, modernist and feminist debates (Ömair, 2009; Sidani, 2005), on whether women should or should not veil, and on Arab women social and economic integration thus overlooking to research women experiences of wearing the veil (Ömair, 2009), what the veil signifies to them, and how they use it to represent themselves in public and to negotiate social interactions and identity. In addition, previous studies have also failed to closely address the issue of how modernity affects perceptions of the veil among Muslim women. Therefore, this study, attempts to bring empirical evidence to bear on current debates about the meaning of the veil for young Muslim women from the UAE and their veiling practices.

5.1 To Veil or not to Veil that’s the Question

Findings of this study suggest that veiling is still the prevailing social norm among the surveyed young educated women from the Emirate of Dubai. Despite the suggested decline in religiosity and the apparent adoption of more modern lifestyles and liberal attitudes, donning the hijab remains largely unaffected by recent pursuits of modernization. As contradictory as this result may seem, it reflects accurately the current prevailing veiling trends and practices among young Emirati women. Due to its historical significance, the practice of veiling seem to be well-entrenched in Emirati people’s culture and psyche reaffirming its importance as a signifier of religious commitment and social morality (El Guindi, 2005; Mule & Barthel, 1992; Sidani, 2005). In a time of great social and cultural changes, gender-role expectations for dress showed more resistance to the forceful tide of modernity.

The fact that women veiling was less affected by the obvious push for Westernization may suggest that it is rooted a lot deeper in Emirati people’s collective conscience and traditions. When we consider its strong connection with the notions of family honor and shame (Al-Qasimi, 2010) we can possibly imagine why veiling proved resilient and such a die-hard practice. Al-Qasimi (2010) blames the hegemonic order of Muslim patriarchs for the survival of the veil and thinks that the practice is less likely to fade away soon. Few students in my class said very simple yet powerful words about the veil and why they did not consider shedding it. The first student simply said “the abaya and sheila are not abnormal to me” pointing out to the normalcy of the act of donning the religious and traditional attire. The second student said
why fix what is not broken” to mean why should she drop the veil if it is the normal and right thing to do.

In his 1955 article, Hourani viewed the veil as a marker of backwardness and retardation while being unveiled simply meant being a modern and advanced Muslim (Ahmed, 2011). Results of this study show that being veiled cannot be easily equated with underdevelopment. These women are far from being underdeveloped and quite to the contrary they are increasingly empowered by the state, the family, and the community. The UNDP Human Development report (2009) provides concrete evidence for the intellectual, social and economic gains these women are achieving year after year. The enduring negative representation of veiled Muslim women in Western discourses is often simplistic and biased. Linking the veil to core Western notions such as equality, personal agency and freedom is, for the most part, obsessively Western-centric. For instance, the aforementioned notions are indeed important in Arab cultures to the individual and the community, but they are not as valued as other cardinal values such as kinship and community on the basis of which the self is defined and choices are made (Hirschmann, 1997) such as the decision to veil. For the most part, the notions of self-agency and personal freedom (not national and religious freedom) are not as central to the Arab individual and are not a salient part of the conception of self (Hirschmann, 1997). In short what is paramount is the well-being of the family, the tribe, and the community. Independence, individual freedom, self-control and self-reliance are not core-defining values for Arabs.

5.2 The Religious Veil

Quantitative findings of this study revealed the most important reasons why young educated Emirati women veil. Why a women veil underlines the meaning(s) she assigns to the veil. For instance, if a woman veils because she is forced to, she would consider the veil oppressive. Participants in this study identified religion as the most important reason for which they veil. This result is similar to that observed by Omair (2009) and suggests that religion is still primordial for these women and is a major influence in the construction of their identity and a strong factor that shapes their behaviors and decision-making choices. Religion is an important source from which cultural norms are drawn including those for clothing and dress. Nevertheless, adhering to norms is still a personal choice people make even when the normative dimension is operating at full force. Al-Qasimi (2010) noted that when women are not coerced to wear the veil “the symbolism of the veil supersedes the ideological function of veiling in general, since it is not worn out of an obligation”(p. 65). Participants of this study asserted that they wear the veil out of religious beliefs and not because they are coerced.

While, it is true that in some societies women are coerced into wearing the veil, nowadays, a large number of Muslim women around the world, wear the veil freely, out of devotion to god, and as a symbol of political, social, and cultural affiliation. Many Westerners may not believe that a veiled woman may be happy underneath her veil. It may also be difficult for some Westerners to conceive that the very act of veiling is indicative of personal agency, freedom of choice, and sense of control. For many women, the action of veiling is inherently and intrinsically the echo of her free voice. When Western feminists fail to acknowledge this fact, their models of reality can only be wrong and their theories can only be inherently flawed.

The most problematic aspect though is when some biased Western thinkers impose their world views such as those formed about the veil. To Muslim women this sounds more oppressive than wearing the veil out of subjugation and fear. This perhaps explains why in several parts of the world Muslim women wear the veil as a sign of resistance to unhealthy Western obsessions with the veil (El Guindi, 2005; Hirschmann, 1997).

5.3 The Veil as a National Dress
In addition to religion, young Emirati females wear the veil for distinction from non-nationals and to express national identity. Even though the original meaning of the Islamic veil is to project commitment to religion, modesty, propriety, and reserve (Al-Qasimi, 2010; Droubi, 2011; El Guindi, 2005; Kelly, 2010), the special meanings these young Muslim women attach to the veil are definitely non-traditional. Al-Qasimi (2010) links wearing the veil to a growing national drive to preserve national identity amid the double threat Gulf nationals feel due to the Westernization of the Gulf States and to their minority status given the large size of the expatriate workforce. In fact, Emiratis refer to the *abaya* and *sheila* as the national dress for women and the *Dishdasha* (white gown), *ghutra* (head cover) and *agal* ( turban) as the national dress for men. One Emirati student noted that because she does not wear the veil no one considers her an Emirati. Chatterjee (1993) argued that national dress becomes the visible marker “of the nation’s ‘true identity’ in the face of its relationship with the ‘modern material world’” (p. 121). Emiratis, males and females, increasingly feel the need to use dress as a mark of national distinction and recognition. This is especially important in social situations where wearing the national dress comes with socio-economic privileges or helps in mate selection.

### 5.4 The Fashionable Veil

Findings of this study showed that most participants believe that veiling practices have changed recently and that they are different from those of the not so distant past. Some of the areas of change respondent mentioned is the relaxed and unorthodox way the *abaya* is worn, and the fashionable look of the *abaya*. The way the *abaya* is worn nowadays on campus is very different from the recent past. When the author came to Dubai in 1999, the young female students always adhered to the strict guidelines of the *hijab*. That is, the attire is simple, modest and in plain black color loosely covering the entire body and hair. The young women used to always wear the *abaya* totally closed and pay attention to their *sheila* so that no hair is shown. Nowadays, different variations exist with increasingly more students leaving the *abaya* a little or widely open to show the expensive and designer clothes students wear underneath. The *sheila* is worn in different ways but fewer and fewer students pay attention or worry like before when some hair becomes visible. Many even purposefully wear the *sheila* so that their hair or hairstyle is visible. In addition, to students who do not wear the *sheila* at all, some students wear the *sheila* on their shoulders leaving the hair completely uncovered in complete contradiction with the Islamic dress code mandate. It is not known whether these students leave home with the *sheila* covering their hair and letting it fall over their shoulders later when they are on campus.

The *abaya* that young women wear today is a re-fashion of the traditional garb but with an extreme make-over. While the traditional *abaya* was simple and made of inexpensive solid black color cloth with the double intention to cover women up and to divert attention away from them, the new *abaya* is very expensive, colorful, stylish, and chic designed to impress and to attract attention to the wearer. The new-style *abaya* is glamorous and elegant (Al-Khalifa, 2006), is embellished with embroidery and crystals, is cut to express taste for fashion and to reveal silhouette. It carries the signature of designers and top fashion name-brands and is sold in places like Harrods and the Saks Fifth Avenue. Labi (2008) noted that the revolutionized *abaya* is fashionable and appropriate and that the “hitherto unadorned robes now sport some serious bling” (p. A6). Al-Khalifa (2006) refers to the *abaya* as an effortless religious elegance. She noted that the *abaya* is her “answer to the dilemmas of modern fashion” (p.17). When she wears the *abaya* she feels “mysterious, modest and chic, all within the margins of being religiously conscious” (p. 17). She adds that in wearing the *abaya* “glamour is achieved, modesty is secured, and self esteem is upheld...looking good has never felt so right” (p. 17). Al-Qasimi (2010) notes that the *abaya*,
as a fashion, disrupts its principal symbolism without fully displacing it. While the original abaya embodies a host of meanings in connection with religion, in its new reincarnation the abaya is a conciliation between tradition and modernity, legitimate and illegitimate, piety and fashion. In reinventing the veil by mixing old and new, the new generation of females, like in this study, are pushing the envelope of the permissible (halal) all the way to the last frontiers of the forbidden (haram). Al-Qasimi (2010) thinks that by privileging fashion over piety this recent trend in abaya wear reflects an immodest modesty. Barnard (2007) suggests that dress can be used as a weapon in collective struggles for power. This trend perhaps outlines a bargain with the hegemonic order of Arab patriarchy, and a complex form of challenge and passive resistance to prevailing patrilineal social structures and traditions (Al-Qasimi, 2010). Thus, the abaya symbolizes female authentic religiosity, social responsibility, and subordination with a strong hint of independence, confidence, protest, challenge, and rebellion against the prevailing social order.

5.5 The Veil as a Status Symbol

One of the functions of dress is to convey social class (Omair, 2010). The expression of status symbol using the veil is a recent development. Kelly (2010) argued that traditional dress undergoes change over time, it seems, however, that the meaning of traditional evolves as well. The projected meaning of class and status are linked to post-oil economic prosperity and affluence. Wanting to dress to impress, yet confined by religion and traditions to wear a simple and uniform outer garment when in public, has stimulated the imagination of Emirati women to reinvent the traditional garb to convey status, affluence, and power.

The original abaya in its simple, modest, and all black version suggests uniformity among the wearers. To the contrary, the sophisticated and fashionable twist to the abaya reinforces women glamour, elegance, and individuality and thus becomes a symbol not only for women taste for fashion but also highlights social status and class. Participants in this study suggested that, in addition to fashion and national identity, one of the meanings this generation conveys through the abaya is social class. Haute couture, designer, and graceful abayas with serious bling and high quality fabric that cost a fortune inevitably renders the abaya a status symbol par excellence. It is now worn to suggest affluence and social hierarchy as increasingly no abaya resembles another one. On campus, like out of campus, the young women compete and parade their traditional-fashionable dress complemented by other seriously expensive designer accessories, jewelry and make-up. The new veil and its accompaniments, not only go against the simplicity required by Islam but also suggest “the formative role of fashion in the evolution of a new habitus and social class” (Sandicki, 2010, p.15). The re-fashioning of the traditional abaya does not only suggest the reinvention of the veil but also highlights the newfound and growing relationship between market capitalism and religion (Labi, 2008; Sandicki, 2010).

6. References


