# Trends Towards Piety

## Situating Muslimah Identity through Discursive Artifacts

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# Abstract

This thesis investigates the phenomena of the ‘Hijabers’, a group of young, urban Indonesian religious influencers, who reinforce an idealized image of a modern Indonesian Muslimah (Muslim woman) within the space they occupy on Instagram. This research outlines the layers of Islamic morals of virtue in pious commodity that these influencers assert through a curated performance of middle-class lifestyle. These images have thus contributed in establishing a dominant perception of hijab-wearing Muslim women within Indonesian popular culture. From this knowledge, the observations are synthesized in proposing alternative media forms to situate identity representations of Indonesian Muslimah. The thesis employs discursive design as a methodology to prompt more nuanced sensemaking of identity in theorizing with Maria Lugones’ *la callejera* (the Streetwalker). This leads to the creation of discursive artifacts that follow an artifact-scenario alliance, presented in the form of augmented reality zines and a personal digital game. The reimagining of a subjective Muslimah identity through these prototypes also introduces other forms of creative representational practice away from the confines of Instagram. These explorations present various techniques to elaborate on the notion of a multiple self, through use of democratized new media technology in the landscape of 21st century, post-Islamist Indonesia.

**Keywords**: hijab, muslim women, hijabers, muslimah, digital games, discursive design, instagram influencers, religious influencers, personal games, AR zine, augmented reality zine, streetwalker theorizing

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## Dedication

I dedicate this knowledge to Indonesian, hijab-wearing Muslimah, our South-East Asian sisters, as well as Muslim women around the world. Let us be even more considerate to each other.

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# Prelude

My decision to wear the hijab as part of daily life was not something out of an epiphanic event. The reality of putting a cloth atop my head, covering my hair, ears and neck was a simple matter; coming to terms with that reality was not. I sought to understand a new version of my identity that comes with a newfound responsibility, of journeying and navigating the world to find a personal balance between the Islamic belief of what is ephemeral and eternal.

Every day, I engender in fighting against the seductions of what is expected of me. As a Muslim woman in my mid-twenties, I think a lot about the choices I make out of resistance and convenience, in life, love and a future. How that future materializes is grounded in one belief; of life extending beyond death. Yet I question where I can place myself in the supposed spectrum of being and becoming, as I align my worldly values with my religious beliefs.

I also think a lot about the socio-cultural mold of what has now constructed the ideal Muslim woman. I think about the continuous flow of images on social platforms, that are created to appeal and be consumed by me, women like me, through the work of other women like me. However, unlike me, they appear with confidence in having established who they are. These are images of women who proudly identify themselves as a group of Indonesian, hijabi (hijab-wearing) influencers, who inspire a certain form of confidence and assurance to other Muslim women such as myself, one whose trajectories can only be found through the representations of the circumstances presented in these images. But what of this image? How much of what is shared through that imagery defines who I am, or who I can become? How is this what is attributed to me?

In this journey to find that balance, I traverse and create versions of myself in the variety of indicators of who I am as a Muslim woman. I turn to the fight within myself, that seeks common sense in multiple dimensions. I look to the streetwalker, the *Callejera*, and how much of that person is me, and how much of that is not. Maria Lugones states:

> Strategically, *la callejera* begins to hear the power of the logic of univocity and the multiplicity drowned by univocal contestations. She devises the tactical/strategic practice of hearing interactive contestatory acts of sense making as negotiated from within a

> complex interrelation of differences. She hears contestations that are univocal as at the same time defiant of and compliant with the logic and systems of domination. (Lugones 169)

I read this statement and realize I can possibly be who she defines as the streetwalker; a tactical strategist navigating through spaces as an active subject who refigures an understanding of the social through resistant sensemaking. I hear, in which the logic univocity makes sense and holds a large part of who I am; it acts as an antecedent. In retrospect, I also see how it is hindering or perhaps, preventing this notion of multiplicity: "Multiplicity in interlocution: in the interactive process of intention formation, in perceptions, in meaning making." (Lugones 169) I realize that I am also both defiant and compliant. Defiant, in the act of trying to include the self, ourselves, as I venture in cultivating a sense of multiplicity, a depth of perception, and compliant, in the ways that I parse what I know and value into what constitutes the Muslim woman I am continuously becoming. In trying to find this sense of balance, I am also trying to achieve what a streetwalker is able to do, of practicing this act of negotiation between multiple possibilities of myself, and eventually, of a Muslim woman wearing the hijab.

# Introduction

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ ۖ وَلَا تَنسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا...

"Seek the home of the Hereafter by that which Allah has given you, but do not forget your share of the world..." (Surat Al-Qasas 28:77)[1]

Combating the prevailing stereotypes of a Muslim woman in Western popular culture, particularly in North America, remains a challenge. Orientalist tropes that align with notions of popular feminism (with the "western female audience in mind" (Abu-Lughod, "Seductions" 29)) continue to manifest in the depictions of Muslim female characters, especially to those who choose to wear the hijab. Much to the amusement of many global Muslims, the most common representation of these women in television and film are as ethnically ambiguous supporting actresses, donning a haphazard wrapping of the hijab on their heads.

Although a few notable characters[2] have been written to escape "the two figurations of women's suffering—polygamy and forced marriage—" (Abu-Lughod, "Seductions" 54), the "Westernized" intersection between Islam and daily life now hegemonic in media and films is a very specific kind of Muslim identity. The token veiled Muslim woman character in these adaptations is one who conflates religion to culture and is imbued with the deeply rooted liberal social imagination of what is considered "freedom" disguised as female emancipation. Lila Abu-Lughod aptly frames this as a narrative monopoly "within Western society and integrated immigrants" where "freedom" is symbolic in embodying "free sexuality and personal autonomy." ("Seductions" 32) She highlights how such observations have led to assumptions that the Muslim woman would need to be saved "to keep the 'dangerous' Muslim man in line" ("Seductions" 26). These thoughts have now commonly manifested within a trope that is elevated by the entrance of a white male savior who also serves as a love interest.[3] These stories painstakingly lead to a climactic scene that prompts the removal of the hijab as a way for the

[1] This verse pertains to how the Qur'an refers to balance in living religiously, an aspect that the 'Hijabers' attempt to evoke in their lifestyle choices, as well as many Indonesian Muslim youth.

[2] For example, hijab-wearing television characters Trenton (USA Network's Mr. Robot, 2015) and Raina Amin (ABC's Quantico, 2015). Despite the meager attempts of inclusive storytelling, these women are not confined to the figurations of the honor crime. See Lemon, Jason. "10 Western TV Series That Featured Hijabi Characters." StepFeed, 25 Sept. 2017, stepfeed.com/10-western-tv-series-that-featured-hijabi-characters-7941.

[3] See example in Elbaba, Rawan. "Why Quantico's Hijabi Character Confuses Me." Layali Webzine, 8 June 2016, www.layaliwebzine.com/why-the-hijabi-character-in-quantico-confuses-me/.

Muslim woman to practice said autonomy, marking its resonance only to those who may interpret this as an ultimate act of liberation when it is surely not the case. In conjunction to this token identity, miriam cooke[4] outlines how the idea of the veil "functions like race, a marker of essential difference" (140) that is inescapable: "As women, Muslim women are outsider/insiders within Muslim communities where, to belong, their identity is increasingly tied to the idea of the veil." (cooke 140). As such, the repetition of these ideas within current cinematic depictions carry deceptive implications in justifying the ongoing argument of Western media that insists on the notion of a "foundational singularity" (cooke 142). This encourages a dominant version of a Muslim woman trope that furthers a neo-Orientalist[5] agenda often guised as inclusive diversity in media stories tailored for a global audience.

It is within this discourse that the conundrums surrounding Muslim women in regards to a public (outside) and community (inside) begin to form. cooke elaborates on how the hybridity of 'The Muslimwoman' trope, as described by cooke herself, appears "threatening" to some, as she becomes bound within cultural standards of morality that define borders between what is seen as "the pure and the polluted": "The logic of the argument is that women are the potentially *outside* that insiders must keep pure or purify in order to save the purity of the *inside*." (141) This moral policing and monitoring of the two proliferated identities are what continues to affect various scenarios for Muslim women's existence, emphasizing how these distinctions point to a "foundational singularity" in making 'The Muslimwoman' a prominent symbol of purity for many communities. The concept of purity here can be compared to following what is prohibited versus what is *halal* (arabic word for permissible). This predicament of a black and white morality, a trope on its own[6], becomes reflective of the *Umma* (global Muslim society) that heightens the transparency of Islamist men, who cooke describes as "cultural custodians" (cooke 142) depriving women of individuality and agency. It is amongst these tensions that Islam ultimately becomes reduced to 'The Muslimwoman', for it "erases for non-Muslims the diversity among Muslim women and, indeed, among all Muslims." (cooke 142) The responsibility of the label of 'The Muslimwoman' has now become increasingly heavier with its entanglements in

[4] Lowercase due to Author name stylization.
[5] Neo-Orientalism refers to Orientalist concepts that exist in globalisation and by imposing dualism of the West and Islam. See Samiei, Mohammad. "Neo-Orientalism? The relationship between the West and Islam in our globalized world." Third World Quarterly 31.7 (2010): 1145-1160.
[6] "Black and White Morality." TV Tropes, tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/BlackAndWhiteMorality.

representing levels of Islamic piety in sociopolitical contexts, resulting in a heightened sense of identity politics. From this we can surmise that the headscarf, despite its simple material existence, is a defining trademark of Islamic morality and piety.

In essence, these observations place 'The Muslimwoman' in a confining role. It produces bias and confusion that is not reflective of Islam but those of Islamists. For instance, the presence of misogynistic legislations or *fatwas* in Indonesia have become cases for women to constantly challenge; gender equality is a right worth fighting for in understanding the "very nature of women as taught by Islam" (Mulia 7, qtd. in cooke). Therefore, the potential for this debate against those who monitor, police and control can be furthered. This then calls for discursive formations that can challenge the tropes many muslim women tend to fall into, which is where this thesis lies.

The title, 'Trends Towards Piety', is a phrase I adopted from lines in Abu-Lughod's paper on the 'Seductions of the 'Honor Crime'' and should not to be mistaken with its use in a particular footnote in Sigmund Freud's book on 'The Psychopathology of Everyday Life: Forgetting, Slips of the Tongue, Bungled Actions, Superstitions and Errors'. Unlike Freud's use to elaborate on severe instances of psychoneurosis on self-injury and its rather cynical association to the "renunciation of the world" (Freud 116n3), I speak to its use in a plural context that looks towards a shift in cultural and religious understanding. With a focus on Indonesia, a use of the word "Trends" refers to the current phenomenon of the 'Hijabers'[7], where a group of young, urban, female religious influencers enact "strategies common to the cultivation of microcelebrity" (Baulch and Pramiyanti 2) in exploring diverse forms of piety through social media affordances. These influencers came to prominence in the current socio-political landscape in Indonesia post New-Order, an era Ariel Heryanto dubs as Post-Islamism, and is best described as a new trend that has "largely come voluntarily" (Heryanto, "Upgraded piety" 62).

Proceeding Islamism, the current era that can be described as Post-Islamism has accentuated the notion of living piously in encompassing the integration of Islamic values within the daily life of Indonesian Muslims, as well as its growing presence in Indonesian popular culture. It is within the 21st century that the Hijabers place themselves at the forefront, establishing a dominant perception of an ideal Indonesian Muslim woman, through performative

[7] Unlike cooke's use of "the" to construct 'The Muslimwoman' trope, this use of "the" and capitalisation gives significance to these 'Hijabers' as microcelebrities (see Beta, "Hijabers" 377 and Baulch and Pramiyanti 2).

identities that negotiate and play with the limits of religious interpretations. These acts of pious self-transformations now take place on Instagram, a platform that is used due to "its popularity among Indonesian youth but also to the ease with which it lets its users maintain visual representations" (Beta, "Hijabers" 382) as opposed to their previous presence on blogging sites.

In addition, the important use of the Indonesian lexicon "hijaber" to distinguish stylistic veiling practices that differ from the dated use of *jilbab* (Baulch and Pramiyanti 2) allows for these women to be placed at a wider intersection of identity. The word *hijab* is a more accurate Arabic word that translates to the veil than *jilbab* (pronounced *jheel-bub*) does, as the latter would translate "to cover." This significant linguistic shift to the term *hijab* provides greater opportunities for these women to perform transnational identities on Instagram, giving them higher mobility due to the term's resonance with global audiences. These affordances supply the hijaber phenomenon and support their eagerness in wanting to present themselves as "a fashion conscious, tech-savvy, transnationally mobile career women" (Baulch and Pramiyanti 2) reflecting a continued reliance on online entrepreneurial practices in their pursuit of faith and virtue in materiality within "a crowded semiotic landscape of faith and consumption" (Jones 618). This is an important aspect to understand as these religious influencers unintentionally continue to subvert, appropriate and curate their identity to their liking on the virtual public space Instagram provides. Their followers, who are also referred locally as Muslimah (Arabic for Muslim woman) is the prime audience of this content. Although these Muslimah encompass a broad range of modern, young Muslim women active on social media, they are becoming increasingly associated with images attached to this phenomenon. Emma Baulch and Alila Pramiyanti observes this proliferation of identity that is "advanced concurrently by consumerist ideology and digital uptake" (13) in seeing how the Hijabers notions of Muslim publicness has also feminized audiences and to an extent, a fragmented Islamic authority (12-13).

On the surface, it may seem that the Hijabers have successfully deconstructed the neo-Orientalist trope that echoes in Western popular media by formulating *their own* definitions of a Muslim woman. However, in attempting to contrast The Muslimwoman trope, the image of an Indonesian Muslimah has now become synonymous with a young, urban woman, whose "freedom" is largely determined by her socio-economic capability to consume (Baulch and Pramiyanti 2). This distinctly middle-class centered lifestyle unintentionally poses itself as another conundrum for the Muslim woman. Despite the Hijabers' current efforts in situating their

practice to material piety, the contradictions that exist in parallel to these personalities points to an "indulgence in consuming a capitalist dominated global lifestyle" ("Upgraded piety" 65). This recurring pattern of interpretation is prominently shown through posts on their Instagram feeds. There is now a mainstream perception of the Indonesian Muslimah that shapes the Hijabers as the "ideal" role models, which has strongly influenced the personalisation of these identities on social media. This automatically grounds the phenomena as a trend that is meant to be consumed and deepens the societal pressures in conforming to this newly established norm (Heryanto, "Upgraded piety" 62). Through my research, I debate with the constant validation that "the ideal woman is a consuming woman." (Baulch and Pramiyanti 2).

Truthfully, it has been difficult to elaborate on this predicament as it often manifests as an anxiety that lands within the dilemma of making borderline assumptions of these women and wanting to make sense of the implications of their visual representations. The black and white morality system (as cooke explains it, "pure" and "polluted" or similarly, politically conservative and secular Islam) that binds global Muslimah hardly provides an opportunity to negotiate opinions and depictions that compromises with a "grey", where more relative expressions of identity can exist. I struggle with a personal understanding that at its core, Islam is subjectively a religion that celebrates pious simplicity but has become objectively complicated due to local socio-cultural contexts. As a hijab-wearing Indonesian Muslimah, I also identify with being transnational in terms of where I physically am and where I belong to; I am part of a diaspora of those privileged enough to maintain a strong material connection to Indonesia. With that, I would like to reflect on the subjective journeys that the Hijabers have taken in balancing an Islamic lifestyle and their significance in shaping Indonesian Muslimah identity online; these depictions have impacted my personal preferences and have bettered my community to an extent.[8] These motivations are significant in framing the acknowledgment and critique of this exclusively Instagram-dependent practice. Likewise, the matter of "freedom" in articulating the navigation of Indonesian Muslimah between the stark distinctions brought upon by those who police and monitor should also be able to change.

[8] By my community I mean the young women in the Doha-Indonesian Islamic community I spent most of my life with. I acknowledge the significance of the Hijabers in "empowering" and influencing the middle-class Indonesian diaspora in Qatar, despite being based in Jakarta and West Java.

Existing studies that concentrate on the Hijabers and Indonesian Muslimah as religious influencers (Baulch and Pramiyanti 1; Beta 378; Beta 2140; Nisa 68) and those that concern material piety and fashion veiling by urban Indonesian Muslimah (Bucar 68; Jones 617) have called for further understanding through discursive fields and formations. My research then offers to expand that into the realm of discursive practice in design, in leading the audience towards "particular ideas or systems of thought" (Tharp 212). This views how the relationship between the social, the material artifact and the activity reflects a certain perspective, and to some extent act as a product that represents the ultimate plan of the designer (Tharp 212-213). The plan in this case would be for the audience to feel and understand the "world" described by the artifact (Tharp 220). Understanding the role of Orientalism in shaping the current images and insights into representative practices of Muslimah in Indonesian popular culture will also make visible the West's significant influence upon it. This critique of the stigmatized understanding of a singular identity, especially that of a hijab-wearing Muslimah, aims to be reflected within discursive artifacts that can contribute to a rise in a trend of experimenting with democratized new media technologies. By situating this within the "streetwalker theorist" (Lugones 167) approach, zine making practice through AR (Augmented Reality) and personal games will be elaborated in aspiring to introduce alternative tools in proposing new avenues of self-expression.

## Overview

Through a critique of Orientalist frameworks, the thesis will begin by presenting a historical literature review Chapter that elaborates on the emergence of Indonesian popular culture in the era of Post-Islamism, a term used to describe the positioning of Islamic lifestyle in 21st century Indonesia. This will trace the thread of Islamic politics that govern "Pop Islam" (Heryanto, "Upgraded piety" 60) through the commercially successful Islamic film *Ayat Ayat Cinta (Verses of Love)* (2008) and the distinct strands of appealing content that commonly influences Indonesian pop culture products. Here, I point out characters 'Fahri' and 'Aisha' from the film *Ayat Ayat Cinta* through Heryanto's observation, extracting the ways they formulate Muslim character tropes prevalent in influencing identities on Instagram. I will weave this review with John Bowen's insights regarding state-controlled content in Indonesia. I then outline the influence of the Hijabers in mainstream pop culture and how they have constructed the norm of an idealized Muslim woman, with some reference to the character 'Aisha.' This section will

highlight various ways material piety has structured the Hijabers' performances on Instagram. Furthermore, I develop an interpretation of Islamic feminism through concepts and ideas that emerged from different studies of Indonesian Muslimah by scholars Annisa Beta and Eva F. Nisa in the context of soft *da'wah* (an invitation" or "the call" in understanding Islam). I situate *da'wah* as a practice that exists in conjunction with the performance of the Hijabers. Notions of entrepreneurial practice that come with Instagram and the emergence of neo-liberal feminist forms are then argued by seeing the problems of a "Muslim feminist agenda" that is motivated by the image of an ideal Muslim woman or "the empowered Muslim wife" (Baulch and Pramiyanti 8). This is supplemented through synthesizing the current observations of the Hijabers and other types of Muslimah influencers, through Nisa's soft *da'wah.*

Chapter Two and Three dives into the core of the research, where the notion of a discursive formation of diversity in imagery is framed within discursive design as the main methodology. I will return to my positioning through Lugones' streetwalker in the context of being a tactical strategist in using this methodological framework. My motivations behind these explorations are then elaborated through use of the artifact-scenario alliance. These discursive design principles are used in creating my discursive artifacts. The themes to my prototypes, AR zines titled 'Cergam Muslimah' and a personal game titled 'Aisha' are introduced in continuing the narrative after setting up the context of this research. I then go into my prototype making and explain alternative media practice tactics that situate and elaborate on identity. The two subjectively feminist forms of making that will be suggested in steering the practice are zines and personal digital games. A context review of selected media works with new media technology such as mobile augmented reality (MAR) will then be used to explore how these tools can be used discursively in a more detailed representation of Muslimah identity. This is followed by a chapter that outlines the discursive artifacts made through the media introduced in the previous, consisting of AR zines and a personal game created through reskinning and "sampling" (Anthropy 76).

Finally, I will discuss future prospects of these artifacts, including their role in a possible transmedial piece of work, as well as their potential place in conversations surrounding representational practice. I will return to The Muslimwoman trope outlined earlier and how it has been induced by mainstream culture and the affordances provided by the digital realm. This is followed by a reflection of the status of the hijab in Indonesia and its transformation into a trendy

material artifact of Islamic piety, that has served as a form of empowerment for a majority of young Muslimah. The implications of this for young Indonesian Muslim women positions them differently than those that are represented in the West. However, what remains is whether or not the Hijabers are aware of their impact in the agendas they have performed in formulating the image of the ideal Muslim women, one that has set and validated newer standards. Nonetheless, the discursive nature of these artifacts provides opportunities for an outlook into Muslimah representations beyond the Instagram package, as well as a look into digital media as a transnational medium for exploration into multiplicitous identity forms.

## Scope and Limitations

This thesis is mainly interested in understanding and providing a more critical perspective in viewing the current practice of the Hijabers on Instagram and widening the critical lens in the presence of Muslim women tropes through Heryanto's notions of "pop Islam" ("Upgraded piety" 61). The observations I make do not fully expand on the notion of gender roles and how state reinforced patriarchal ideology may have affected Muslim women's ideals, however, I do acknowledge this as an influence. My critique mainly focuses on repercussions to the lifestyle that is asserted in the Hijabers phenomenon. Moreover, this research expands the compatibility of Islam and feminist practices that have adapted as part of third wave feminism in positioning with Lugones' tactical strategist. This limits my research as an exploration into discursive design practice situated within an Indonesian context. Furthermore, I understand that I cannot change the mindset of Indonesian youth, who are caught up with the influencer culture that Instagram nurtures. Pointing fingers at habits that are deemed superficial is not productive; it has instead contributed to another vicious cycle of passive aggressive culture of blaming and showing of middle-class "superiority" through material possessions. This thesis does not advance such a position and advocates instead for channeling such claims towards making practices.

In steering the conversation surrounding representational practice, the thesis also responds to the trajectory of Muslimah trends that are established within Indonesian popular culture. There is already a widespread acknowledgment of Instagram as a platform for these representations to thrive, but these representations occur less so in other media forms. The prototypes are an invitation for young Indonesians and Muslimah to consider the potential of new media technology. Despite some complexities in the skill requirements, I introduce more

democratized forms of alternative creative practices of identity. By choosing EyeJack and Scratch as a platform for this making, I introduce how these technologies play a role in learning and developing personally and collectively. In shifting my positioning through Lugones' I to We, I offer options to creative tools that are more accessible in terms of literacy and learning, thus, framing these creative tools not as complex, but as tensions that can be resolved discursively.

# Historical Review

## Post-Islamist Indonesia

"I think we should talk about "new Islam in a media world."" (Abu-Lughod, *Local Contexts* 20)

In late 20th century Indonesia, hijab-wearing served as a symbol of opposition to the corrupt and authoritarian Suharto regime (dubbed as the New Order) that aimed to suppress political Islam. There was a continuous interrogation of women's intentions for wearing the headscarf in public, especially within school environments. Students were forced to strip off their hijab in order to properly enroll due to its association to a political resistance deemed a threat to the New Order. These tensions were primarily incited by radical Muslims in the Middle-East, specifically the 1978-79 revolution in Iran. Much of what affected the hostility in the ongoing interrogation was the fear of seeing an "Islamic militant mentality" resurface through frequent distribution of images of veiled Irani women, marching against the government.[9] While the sanctions on maintaining this practice in daily life fluctuated between authorial warning and the banning of it completely, the women who persisted as part of this movement upheld values of modesty and simplicity in dress. (Bucar 76; Heryanto, "Cinematic Contest" 151) Donning it was also used as a form of "ownership of individual responsibility in a strong patriarchal society." (Beta, "Hijabers" 379).

Soon after the impeachment of President Suharto, there was a reformation that focused on Islamic revival in an early 21st century political sphere, a movement that Ariel Heryanto frames as Islamism. ("Cinematic Contest" 142) He shapes a version of this political movement that is elaborated through the work of Asef Bayat[10], whose perspective derives from Middle-Eastern contemporary studies and Islamic politics:

> ...I take Islamism to refer to any social movement that advocates
> for a maximal application of Islamic teachings (as understood by its proponents)
> in the widest possible scope of public life, including but not restricted to
> the formal adoption and enforcement of sharia law as the basis of government in

[9] Jo, Hendi. "Jilbab Terlarang Di Era Orde Baru." *Historia - Majalah Sejarah Populer Pertama Di Indonesia*, historia.id/kultur/articles/jilbab-terlarang-di-era-orde-baru-6k4Xn.
[10] See Bayat, Asef. "Islamism and the Politics of Fun." Public Culture 19.3 (2007): 433-459.

a given nation-state. (“Cinematic Contest” 142)

Heryanto then outlines that the majority of Indonesian Muslims who adapted themselves within Islamism gave rise to two culturally dominant behavioral models in describing those who maintain fundamentalist values. One entails a persona of a provincial, orthodox Muslim, who cherishes long established tradition in the image of their parents’ or teacher’s generation, while the other can be described as a “modernist militant”, who believes in the commitment to pursue a moral and political agenda through science and technology, as well as requiring a personal sacrifice in aiming for a better world inspired by religious teachings (“Cinematic Contest” 141). These dichotomies are categorized as “secular-West” and “radical-Islamism” by Heryanto, as they are intertwined within the current political climate in Indonesia (“Cinematic Contest” 141).

In an opposing scenario, the young, urban, middle-class Indonesians challenge these competing models by turning to alternative modes of expression in presenting themselves as a modern Muslim. It is within this movement that post-Islamism is formed, one that is generated from its predecessor with core characteristics that primarily advocate for freedom of representation in exploring their religious identity. The term “post-Islamist piety” is then emphasized to best describe the current climate in agreement with Bayat, as this new form of Islamism favors ideas that fuse faith with democracy (Heryanto, “Cinematic Contest” 141). Furthermore, this post-Islamist era sees the emergence of Islam in Indonesian popular culture, when it would not have been associated as such in the past. Roots in the repression of Muslim rights associated with the Suharto regime as a bankrupt “Western-backed, ultra-rightist military rule (Heryanto, “Upgraded piety” 61) is not tolerated, which has allowed for more freedom in Muslim self-expression.

Using these socio-political terms is beneficial in forming insights surrounding the Hijabers phenomenon, especially with the ongoing transformations these urban Muslims contribute to in “the growth of hybrid forms of piety expressions in relation to modernity after the fall of the Suharto regime.” (Beta, “Hijabers” 379) The cultural impact of these localized political movements has also greatly shaped Islam in popular culture through the rise of Islamist films and the focal expansion of modest fashion in the fashion industry. These products aim to present modern Islamic identity that are not of binary opposites, but of a multitude of perspectives that balances worldly indulgence with piety, despite the ongoing debate within dominant Islamist dichotomy of the “secular-west” and the “radical-Islamist”.

## "Pop Islam"

Contrary to mainstream Western belief, Indonesia remains the host country of the largest Muslim population in the world (Pew Research Center) disputing the current representations of Muslim women in Western popular media. Although not transparent in the interests of many urban Muslims in Indonesia today, the lack of representational acknowledgment in Indonesian content in popular media has had an implicitly significant effect for the majority of the youth population. In trying to find a modern, individualistic self-expression of Muslim lifestyle, comes "pop Islam" or "Islamic chic" (Heryanto, "Upgraded piety" 60) that aligns with the characteristic of being contemporary. Borne from post-Islamist ideas, this movement emphasizes an ongoing search for moral certainty, spirituality and piety through consumption of popular culture products. It is here that characteristics of popular culture appropriates itself into "the role of a charged and popular arena for public discussion of and debate about Islam" (Abu-Lughod, *Local Contexts* 20) can be observed. This affordance also signifies a shift in how modernity has pushed religion from the margins and into the realm of popular culture, playing a larger role in public social life, despite broader moral divisions amongst Indonesian's Muslims (Brenner 230).

In that pursuit, many young Indonesian Muslims have favored Islamic commodification to articulate their identities. This new "personal" Islam is pluralistic in opening up how middle-class Indonesians can follow "a new set of variants" (Heryanto, "Upgraded piety" 60) of contemporary lifestyle options for Indonesian youth. The most common variant is a sense of self-defined balance between piety and daily life that has been articulated in "cyber-Islamic environment[s]" (Beta, "Hijabers" 377) present on social media platforms, such as Instagram and Twitter. This merging of religion and pop culture values has rapidly incited numerous insights and debates of Islam and a modern, 21st century lifestyle, especially in its ability to grab the attention of a broad range of youth that would otherwise be enticed by American pop culture (Heryanto, "Upgraded piety" 61).

According to Heryanto, popular Indonesian cultural products typically present themselves as three distinct strands of content: Islamic, liberal Western consumerist-indulgent, and indigenous mysticism ("Upgraded piety" 67). He observes how these three strands have since been used and repressed by the New Order regime in controlling what circulates within Indonesian popular culture. In building the legitimacy of each theme, elements of each can be assumed to have been imbued in what can be considered three decades worth of state controlled

content ("Upgraded piety" 68) that was largely affected, but not limited to, Western media imperialism.[11] The immense role of American cinema in cementing norms within popular media has still largely affected Indonesian cinema, particularly in congesting the field in formulating a cinematic utopia that values "a modern and prosperous Indonesia in the image of the liberal West." (Heryanto, "Upgraded piety" 64) This has posed problems for many Muslim leaders to see the compatibility of general cinema with Islamic values as there is a clear colonization of Western films and its representation of a modern, prosperous nation (Heryanto, "Upgraded piety" 64).

Historically, it was not until the release of the film *Ayat Ayat Cinta (Verses of Love)* (2008) that Muslim authorities saw the commercial success and potential of film in exhibiting hybrid Islamic values. Initially a popular novel, there were expectations to fulfill cinematically, such as the portrayal of the character Fahri by selecting credible actors involved. For instance, the male lead Fedi Nuril, was controversial because in "a previous film the actor was shown kissing a woman who was not his wife (both on and off screen)." (Heryanto 145) The scrutiny in wanting to create a faithful depiction of the novel was laced with the intentions to portray Islam in the light that changes the stereotypes incited by Western Orientalist tropes. Despite the internal conflicts incited within the film's production in being faithful to the novel, the reception was met with enthusiasm from the public due to the celebration of "elements belonging to Hollywood and Bollywood movies, as well as local Indonesian *sinetron* (television drama)" (Heryanto, "Upgraded piety"144) that were yet to be present in films in the early 2000s. These local elements, an aspect popularized through Indonesian *sinetron,* are earlier associations of Islam that viewed its depictions as part of rural practice, similar to how *jilbab* carried similar associations in conjunction to the evolving market of pious commodity. It can be surmised, along with Heryanto's observations, that Islam was not widely associated with ideas of wealth and modernity until after *Ayat Ayat Cinta* (2008) and that its current growth in Indonesian popular culture serves as a significant extension of the success of Islamic politics in post-authoritarian Indonesia. ("Upgraded piety" 61)

Moreover, what qualifies as Islamic popular content in Indonesia follows a linear trajectory that begins with the establishment of common laws that take place "mainly within the

[11] See Chadha, Kalyani, and Anandam Kavoori. "Media Imperialism Revisited: Some Findings from the Asian Case." Media, Culture & Society, vol. 22, no. 4, July 2000, pp. 415–432, doi:10.1177/016344300022004003.

framework of Islam" (Bowen 7) which then formulates into a localized social norm. John Bowen further elaborates how these issues are often acknowledged in central legal discussions that are "strongly shaped by the state through established and overlapping sets of experts who make pronouncements about Islamic law." (6) This establishes the notion of legal positivism that is rooted within such laws, and the extent that Qur'anic scriptures can be reinterpreted in line with Indonesian values and practices. (Bowen 7). As such, although there are significant developments of Islamic content in Indonesian cinema, there is still a deficit in more novel representations of a hijab-wearing Muslimah in films that do not focus solely on Islamist laws on love, marriage and polygamy.[12]

Even with its success, *Ayat Ayat Cinta* (2008) is far from being a perfect example. It does however, do well in presenting sentiments through characters that are less stereotypical Muslims. The protagonist Fahri presents himself as an Indonesian postgraduate student pursuing Islamic studies in Egypt who wears casual clothes, and is not so typically traditional with his beardless face and "trendy" hairstyle. Heryanto observes his character as someone whose physical appearance would be identifiable in Asian or Western mainstream films and emphasizes how he is "an attractive and much needed middle ground… between the persona of the contemporary militant Muslim and that of the traditionally pious" ("Upgraded piety" 71-72) This attractive blend of a pious, modern Muslim who is also a young, intelligent man "at ease with the world of classical Islamic texts as well as a Western-dominated global lifestyle" ("Upgraded piety" 71) is what resonates with the Indonesian audience, especially to those of the middle-class who possesses most of these qualities. Alongside him is the portrayal of the more prominent female characters named Aisha. She is a German-Turkish Muslim woman who becomes Fahri's first wife in the film and is later embroiled with his three other love interests after their marriage. Regardless of her hardships, she is a well-off, educated pious woman who was able to express her personal desire to be married to an agreeable husband. She also manages to try her best in becoming a dutiful Muslim wife and daughter in-law. All these aspects of the two characters in the film are inevitably more favorable depictions in the eyes of middle-class Indonesian Muslims: they present individuals who welcome plurality and globalism at a moderate stance

[12] See Brenner, Suzanne. "Holy Matrimony? The Print Politics of Polygamy in Indonesia." Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia, 2011, pp. 212–34.

(Heryanto, “Upgraded piety” 75) and in the case of Fahri, an Indonesian who represents someone who can exist in-between the Islamic dichotomy.

To conclude, these observations of pop-Islam are significant in seeing the values that young Indonesians uphold and deem positive in the post-Islamist era. Pop-Islam is how Islam embeds itself from marginal to a dominant aspect in Indonesian pop culture. The focus on representations that portray an appealing balance between religion and public life have immensely appealed to the urban youth. Fahri and Aisha, the two protagonists in the film *Ayat Ayat Cinta* (2008), can be deemed as favorable Muslim character tropes that address the combination of such a balance. Moreover, the ways Islamic values are embedded within this film makes transparent the ongoing influence of fundamentalist Islamist laws in Islamic themed films, but does not reduce it to merely being a religious product by intersecting socio-political elements. Heryanto summarises these views in his conclusion:

> At best, what we can see in the case of *Ayat-ayat Cinta* is one moment in the long and complex history of cultural, aesthetic, ideological and intellectual contestations and compromises between forces of capital and moral outrage– sometimes with religious overtones, sometimes without– against the inequality upon which capitalism rests. (“Upgraded piety” 76)

The prominence of this cultural product has since continued to become a memorable point of reference for future Islamist-like films. For this research, reflecting upon the dynamics in the portrayal of non-stereotypical Muslim characters holds significance in influencing the growing modes of self-expression for many middle-class Indonesian Muslims, including the ‘Hijabers’ on Instagram for Indonesian Muslimah.

## The ‘Hijabers’

While the “foundational singularity” (cooke 142) imposed upon Muslim women through Western culture created a general conflation of Islam to the veil, many have used it as a tool to speak for and against such misconceptions. Like all identities, religious expression for the Muslim woman has different meanings and intentions; it is subjective and personal. This is also true for young, urban Muslimah in Indonesia, who have cultivated ways to generate a hybrid of pious expressions. Beta describes this new expression of Islam within pop culture as a negotiation between "the global influences from the Western world, as well as from Islamic

Middle-Eastern countries and its locality." (Beta, “Hijabers” 379) This localized fusion of identity is a notable variable in constructing the visual culture of the Hijabers on Instagram.

Initially an exclusive collective of hijab-wearing bloggers, the involvement of female Indonesian fashion designers and celebrities in the ‘Hijabers Community’ (Beta 279) abbreviated as HC, have become a large network. They have become “agents in molding Islamic pop culture” (Baulch and Pramiyanti 2) through use of social media affordances to elaborately circulate their own self-productions. In conjuring a vision of a “fun-loving, colorful Muslim woman” (Beta 385), they perform extravagant lifestyles of middle to upper-class wealth through curated images and captions that they opt to share on their Instagram feeds. Their role as agents have also extended to becoming a visual and ethical reference for many young Muslimah, particularly in South-East Asia, who actively partake in the pursuit to redefining personal constructions of the ‘self’. This process is primarily centered around personal choices made in opting “to live the modern life religiously” (Slama and Barendregt 4). In addition, the prominence of these Hijabers in popular culture have made them microcelebrities who not only promote Islamic modernity, but also perform digitally mediated *da’wah*. Their presence is deemed compatible with post-Islamist values of religious balance that also advocate for an increase in women’s involvement in the public sphere, especially in the realm of modest fashion.

Through the influence of the Hijabers, the hijab in Indonesia has also changed into a symbol that signifies virtuous modernity. It is important to note that members of HC mainly comprise of women who are established young fashion designers, bloggers and verified Instagram influencers who wear the veil.

> According to them, wearing hijab allows for creativity and has a ‘language’ of its own. The HC holds that Hijabers (women who wear hijab) can be ‘virtuous’ and yet at the same time have fun, be friendly, and fashionable. (Beta, “Hijabers” 380)

This community joins all these women through a network that began from the formulation of membership across universities in West Java and Banda Aceh, that extends to overseas branches in Malaysia to even Egypt (Beta, “Hijabers” 380). These activities involve charity events, modest fashion-centric classes and workshops that are centered around spaces accessible for many urban Muslimah, such as malls, cafes and boutiques. This increasing visibility of the HC has since formulated a persona that heavily revolves around an urban, middle class lifestyle, with a certain

degree of free will in creatively conveying ideas of freedom (Beta, “Hijabers” 380). Attaining this form of autonomy of navigating through public spaces has regulated an expression of a personal aesthetic preference, as well as a newfound importance in demonstrating personal style.

Moving away from fashion blogs, the Hijabers have now established themselves well within Instagram, a prime arena for their visual culture to thrive. The affordances of Instagram’s content formatting tools allow space for tighter fit descriptions and retains loyalty to an image as a primary medium of information sharing. Beta highlights how this simplicity contributes to its popular use among Indonesian youth in circulating and maintaining visual representations, and that the platform “saves the hassle of keeping a blog, as it is available on smartphones.” (“Hijabers” 382) She points to how this particular experience supports a reflective practice within an “awareness of a public space” and the ways these self-representations "become visible to many, and at the same time it further enhances a sense of community." (“Hijabers” 384) In this visibility, Beta raises the behaviour of 'photo lurking', a practice that is a "common way to peek into others lifestyles and experiences.” (“Hijabers” 384) This is true of the habit that Instagram cultivates for many users, and for Indonesian youth, an act of surveilling the landscape of popular youth culture. It feeds the intentions behind a more holistic curation of an image before it is posted to be shared in representing a personal quality.

As a result, it validates studies (Beta, Chandler and Livingston; Hochman and Schwartz) of Instagram as a 'photo logging' site that enables the user to see themselves and others as prime, “‘perfect’ subjects while portraying daily, mundane activities” (Beta, “Hijabers” 385). The growth of this mindset thus contributes to the transformation of these Hijabers as *Insta Celebs* (Instagram celebrities), with a large following of Muslimah and those who want to pursue their own path as a hijaber. These are individuals who have begun to "idolize these women picturing themselves as beautiful yet pious muslims." (Beta, “Hijabers” 386) and have become prime consumers of what the Hijabers endorse on their Instagram feeds. The role of Instagram justifies how the Hijabers are key agents in creating a phenomenon that asserts core concepts of a Muslim woman who is "active and enjoys urban, middle-class activities" and is not tied down by "stereotyped notions linked to a domesticated gender."(Beta, “Hijabers” 385). It also legitimizes Instagram as an important platform that contributes to seeing perspectives and trends amongst young Indonesian Muslimah. Their daily engagement with these images procures another norm of self-expression that then establishes itself within post-Islamist Indonesian popular culture.

## Material Piety

For many young Indonesian Muslimah, the creation of these core concepts or style semantics of visual language are mostly influenced by hijabi trendsetters and the women who are linked to them (through tagged faces and accounts on Instagram). In taking a prominent example, Beta studies how personalities like Dian Pelangi have created a certain credibility amongst her peers as someone who has journeyed from being a local fashion designer to a now famous modest fashion designer and Instagram influencer. Like the content from Dian's blog and now Instagram feed, there is now an abundance of women who embody “the notion of veil-wearing, travel savvy women” (Beta, “Hijabers” 382) by exhibiting a style that is both modest and modern. Many have also implemented the same content preference of describing fashion items in a particular detail to show “the purchasing power of an upper-class woman.” (Beta, “Hijabers” 382) The result of this influence has created a form of material piety with a particular focus on fashion to indicate personal preference, and virtue in material consumption.

Aside from a show of material luxury, another way to express this virtue is to document their lifestyle as a conventional practicing Muslimah. A common example would be images that show pilgrimage to the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah or using different Quranic verses as captions in relation to the image posted on Instagram (Beta, “Hijabers” 382), making a reference to a *shari'a* imbued lifestyle, where pious acts are expressed to ground a semblance of importance to sharing religious values or as *da’wah*. This is often used by the Hijabers to “mark themselves as authentically pious, and... positions them as knowledge holders, not just hedonistic consumers.” (Baulch and Pramiyanti 4) This mirrors older material expressions of piety in Indonesia, where changing codes of religious devotion through pious dress would usually be indicated by "primarily older men or women who had completed the hajj pilgrimage" (Jones 618). For some individuals, this often followed by a heightened reflection of piety through dress that more closely followed the *shari'a* principals of Islam. As such, the code of Islamic dress in Indonesia for Muslimah has highlighted certain ideas of modernity through autonomous freedom in dressing modestly, creating a harmony between a more ‘ethical’ piety and the pursuit of a self-preferential aesthetic. Elizabeth Bucar argues on the importance of these ethical preferences as it is a form of “sanctification of the material world by using secular fashion trends to achieve Islamic goals.” (68) It is an inherent exploration into how “women negotiate multiple aesthetic authorities when they veil.” (Bucar 69).

Through mediation of the Hijabers, Muslimah have now found multiple expressive ways to show piety and modesty that isn't limited by traditional or conventional dress. Beta elaborates on this creative exploration in her paper:

> Most of them play with the veil, creating intricate layerings with pashmina or shawls (complete with how-to videos on Youtube and their blogs). Some even wear turbans, a type of headwear commonly associated with men. And they combine this headgear with colorful outfits. They often challenge convention (and draw attendant comments on blogs, Instagram, Facebook) with tight clothing or tops that reveal parts of the neck and arms. The combination of headgear and outfit is then often accessorized with designer bags and sometimes high-heeled shoes. Although the preferred combinations obviously change over time, the movement actually suggests ownership of the Hijaber style (both self-identified as such and identified by others). ("Hijabers" 383)

Pious commodities in Indonesia are not limited to the veil textile types and designs, but have now come in the form of makeup products and accessories that are in line with the hijaber lifestyle in shaping this cultural practice, especially in their selfies. Beta concludes that this is part of the material culture that comes with the exploration of beauty, one where the hijaber is proud of the products they own and are able to buy (Beta, "Hijabers" 385). Their adjustment to common understandings of modernity through levels of "colorfulness" contributes to a global acceptance of the hijaber as someone that can also epitomize the definition of being fashion forward and is thus defined as a quality of being a global citizen (Beta, "Hijabers" 385).

Although this form of mediated piety took time to cultivate, it has played a large part in countering the issues that arose from Muslimah who wanted to "discover their own style" and those who are considered as wearing "the real veil". This now widespread acceptance of dress puts to rest some of the anxieties in answering to authorities who police a Muslimah's level of modesty and of older notions surrounding the word *jilbab*[13], as outlined by Carla Jones. It has also become a common theme in strengthening narratives of "coming to love the material form of Muslim dress, which reveals its role in reflexive relationships with an inner self." (Jones 623) This connection of the self with the hijab is often represented with a sense of deep attachment to the object. Jones describes this connection as a "demanding yet comforting effects of society

[13] See *jilbab gaul* in (Jones 622)

and tradition" (623), placing the hijab as an aspect that remains significant yet subjective to Muslimah identity. In using Instagram to express the narrative, this relationship with the hijab is often reflected through an efficient combination of image and caption for followers to understand, despite being inextricably linked to class privilege (Baulch and Pramiyanti 13).

Furthermore, Jones also outlines how the matter of commodified piety (now supported by the use of Instagram) has pronounced the way capitalism functions harmoniously with values that are faith driven. As such, religion merges fundamentally with it:

> In this context, Indonesia holds a unique position in any transnational analysis of Islamic capitalism because its strength in population never compensates for its weakness in global status in the Islamic world. This conundrum in part motivates the aspirations of a globally oriented religious elite in Indonesia as well as its unease. (Jones 632)

There is a clear alignment of the "Hijaber movement" (Beta, "Hijabers" 386) in enticing many online businesses to put the faces of these women at the forefront of their brand. Many small businesses and entrepreneurs have now taken the opportunity to ride the hijaber wave to earn commercial success, as this practice promotes a form of visual culture that generates new norms and trends with potential for capital. The simultaneous existence of the Hijabers phenomenon and its inevitable entanglement in consumerism plays a larger role in different forms of *da'wah*.

## *Da'wah* and Entrepreneurship

Many of the observations that arise from the studies concerning forms of material piety for Muslimah (Bucar 68; Jones 617) in Indonesian youth culture have been framed mainly within *da'wah* (proselytization). Aside from their recent visibility in pop culture, numerous young Muslimah are associated with Islamic organizations that are active in the socio-political environment. Their participation in the 411[14] movement in 2016 is one of few examples of their involvement in demonstrations to uphold Islamic rights. Now that the affordances of social media have allowed for Muslimah to navigate through different spaces, forms of *da'wah* have an

[14] The 411 Movement was a demonstration of thousands of Muslims gathering at the heart of Jakarta, praying and protesting against Basuki Purnama or Ahok – then, the governor of the capital city Jakarta, who was video-recorded imploring voters to not be fooled by religious teachers who used the Qur'an chapter Al-Maidah verse 51. (Beta, *Commerce* 2141)

expanded meaning. By adhering to certain visual codes common for Muslimah to use, embedding Islamic content is performed through a distinct delivery on Instagram.

It should be understood that the Hijabers, despite their dominant role in representing the "pop Islam" Muslimah, iterate on their practice of *da'wah* differently on Instagram. In trying to maintain a visual standard, their participation is performed much subtly, where support is signified through images accompanied by a family member and posting hashtags within the caption section of an Instagram post, as Beta observes as part of a study (Beta, "Commerce" 2144). More pronounced forms of *da'wah* would instead categorize them as female activists, as Eva Nisa elaborates in her definition of soft or lucrative *da'wah*, which "refers to verbal and visual language, especially language containing positive and motivational quotes, used by activists or content creators of Instagram daʿwa." (Nisa 69) An example she presents would be how accounts like 'Ukhtisally' differ from accounts of the Hijabers, centering their content with aims to "work together to realize and normalize their transformation into pious Muslim women… through the adoption of proper – or stricter – religious practices" (Nisa 76) that are not exclusively tied to middle-class lifestyle. They also shape the content within a "focus on giving motivation without interfering too much in the everyday lives of their followers" (Nisa 77) in their intentions to provide daily encouragement for personal self-transformations. While the Hijabers iterate on the importance of maintaining a personal visual code to promote their lifestyle choices, these Muslimah activists aim to inspire content that engages with a stronger ethical dimension for veiling (Nisa 89). They perform what Nisa also calls "Instagram *da'wah*" (89) which is mainly about "attaining the kind of happiness mentioned in Qur'an 2:201, which spans good in the world and in the hereafter." (Nisa 89) This belief in the Quranic verse is reflected in their Instagram posts in a more transparent manner than those of the Hijabers.

In their own way, the Hijabers have now developed their own form of "soft" *da'wah* that adapts an activist voice. Their reliance on using aesthetically compelling images to embed motivational messages that prompt positive self-transformations have now served as an extension of what Baulch and Pramiyanti outlines as "feminisation of Muslim publics" (12) that includes them as part of a fragmented Muslim authority (Baulch and Pramiyanti 12-13). This authorial practice is different than the traditional Indonesian Muslim preacher who comprise mostly of male *ustadz* (preachers) and even of Dedeh Rosidah, known as *Mamah Dedeh,* who is

a popular *ustadzah* (female preacher) in Indonesia[15]. Although obvious politically charged statements would not be seen in their Instagram captions, the Hijabers reference this by packaging such declarations through their established visual preferences.

Despite noticeable differences in content, both the Hijabers and these young Muslimah activist user accounts exercise business through *da'wah* in their Instagram posts, optimizing their role as religious influencers. Beta defines a religious influencer as:

> ...a person or a group who is able to combine their interests in religious growth, financial gain and socio-political change as attractive and attainable by their (mostly young and female) followers, online and offline. (Beta, "Commerce" 2146)

Through this distinction, many Muslimah are now at an understanding and appreciation for anything that is driven by the successful parameters set by entrepreneurial practice. The strong focus in selling pious commodities has also stemmed itself in notions of being productive for Muslimah, especially in tying it with self-betterment (Beta, "Commerce" 2146). In justifying its credibility in productivity, Beta recounts a sharing session by the CEO of hijup.com[16], Diajeng Lestari, where she answers questions about her ability in managing her business while balancing her duties as a mother and wife. In her positive resolve, Lestari highlights how this can be managed by clear communication with her husband and how important gaining his *ridha* (willingness) is in easing the career experience. These principles of maintaining priority to family and placing themselves as a "subordinate" to their husband is part of a pious islamic practice. While this uplift the notion of a relationship that emphasizes gender harmony, it imagines a very specific future for the unmarried Muslimah:

> Although the groups' followers and audience are mostly young unmarried Muslim women, they are already imagined as future wives who will be obedient to their husbands, but also full of (entrepreneurial) potentials that need to be developed and, at the same time, managed. (Beta, "Commerce" 2148)

[15] See Rahad, Rizky. "Mamah Dedeh is the Badass Muslim Preaching Mom of Indonesia." YouTube, VICE Indonesia, 9 June 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3yoDVp0hzc.

[16] Hijup is an online commerce clothing website, where various Indonesian modest fashion designers sell their products. It is an example of a Muslim version of ASOS.com.

With the focus of productivity on something that is manageable remotely, notions of a *keluarga sakinah* (harmonious family) is enforced. At its ideal, "The Indonesian modern Muslim families... are not swept away by the worldly successes (although such achievements are important)." (Beta, “Commerce” 2148) There is a tension that comes from wanting to encourage self-improvement with a repeated emphasis on success through creating a personal business. This is where the appeal of becoming a religious influencer or religious entrepreneur has heightened in the landscape of post-Islamist Indonesia. This mindset has arguably continued to be a favorable representation of a virtuous Muslimah personality, as participating in commerce is often justified as a form of self-empowerment that also balances living piously.

## The ‘Ideal Muslim Woman’

Through synthesizing the observations of what Muslimah consider as model values, it can be stated that the ideal Muslim woman is indicated by appearing modest, showing a commitment to Islamic teachings, marries young, runs successful fashion businesses, travels widely and sets the personal goal of having children in their early 20s. (Beta, “Commerce” 2151) It is the construct of a woman who will marry as opposed to dating, become a good wife and mother, who is properly veiled according to *shari'a* and will consider running a business to fulfill her consumer desires. It is also the narrative of a woman who will then adhere to the codes selected by that visual culture in order to gain the influence needed to further their Instagram personality. These qualities are also commonly reflected in the values that the Hijabers assert in their self-publications, whether it is taught through styling workshops, fashion shows or Instagram posts (Beta, “Hijabers” 380). As religious influencers, they have arguably persuaded Muslimah to embody these tropes in shaping both their virtual and real self. They act as the trendsetters of this visual culture by shaping individually preferential aesthetics, reflecting an established, favorable image that they have also normalized.

This image of an ideal Muslim woman has significant parallels to the character Aisha from *Ayat Ayat Cinta* (2008). In the film, she is a character that emulates qualities that can be considered a model for a pious wife, as she is dutiful to her husband and is willing to compromise and endure hardships for him, even if they are a result of his faults. She also obtains a transnational characteristic by being of German-Turkish descent– despite being depicted by a biracial Indonesian actress in the film. Although her character may be exaggerated through the

conflicts in the story, she retains parallels with values that are considered positive qualities. This shapes a newer construct of a Muslim woman trope of ideal qualities, that combats the perception of cooke's 'Muslimwoman.' The Aisha character trope is a Muslimah who is not a token veiled Muslim woman character that fulfills the liberal social imagination. Singling her out from the other women in the film, her standing as a well-off, pious woman is reflective of a more favorable depiction of a "good" Muslimah. She also emulates an exemplary performance that can be followed by many Muslimah in exhibiting these favorable values, similar to the construct of an ideal Muslim woman.

Furthermore, this identity performance is also parallel to Baulch and Pramiyanti's observation of the Hijabers' orientation towards the independent Muslimah. Through the image of an empowered Muslim wife, their construct suggests a feminist agenda that leans in the direction of "transnational mobility, physical activity and, most notably, equality in marriage" (Baulch and Pramiyanti 8). In this scaffolding of an activist voice that also challenges the reforms surrounding marital rape and polygamy[17], the agenda also centers around the empowered Muslimah wife that expands on the 'Aisha' trope. Both promote a certain independence in being a Muslimah that is capable of exercising personal autonomy to the values that they deem ideal. To some extent, these various value driven qualities resonate with the multiplicity of meanings that Lugones describes as making concrete of a "space" (169). In operating with Instagram, they show mobility in the images they choose to post, reflecting their abilities in concretizing spaces (Lugones 169) for these religious influencers to evoke a more layered identity through performative imagery. Through these acts, they implicitly negotiate ways to agitate legislation on marriage (Baulch and Pramiyanti 8) through highlighting of such values. Moreover, they also emphasize how the Hijaber mindset gives a whole new persona to the hijab-wearing Muslim woman in "projecting a transnational imaginary" (cooke 153). This has steered away from personalizations of what Abu-Lughod describes as "powerful symbols of liberalism as freedom and choice" ("Seductions" 29) by redefining the variables of what liberates a Muslimah. The values that form this ideal Muslim woman offers new insight; one that has challenged the hegemonic perception that the West has constructed.

[17] Baulch and Pramiyanti cites Suzanne Brenner's article on Islamicisation and democratization in 21st century Indonesia, in their analysis of this "muslim feminist agenda". See (Baulch and Pramiyanti 8)

## Problematics of a “Muslim feminist agenda”

In their attempts to break down the Western stereotype posed through cooke’s description of ‘The Muslimwoman’ trope, the Hijabers have done their part in pushing that conversation into the realm of popular culture in Indonesia. Although parallels to the ‘Aisha’ trope does challenge the singular perception, this idealized Muslim woman remains a concerning aspect that validates a superficial aspect to Muslimah identity. Jones argues how this is often described as “spiritual beauty”, defined as a “connection between outer and inner states” (630), yet still produces the anxieties behind religious authenticity. It has procured the image of a woman that succumbs to persuasions of material culture disguised as reasoning to become a better Muslim. All these aspects also intersect with what Jones outlines as the definition of 'trendy piety' through fashion, which intersects with "religion, capitalism and materiality." (627) She further elaborates how this continues to affect feminine subjects than the masculine, due to the explicitly feminized nature of most fashion products (Jones 624) and raises these concerns by arguing scenarios that "frame the path to piety to consumption" (Jones 618). This tends to resolve notions of righteous consumption of commodities for Muslimah, instead of revealing how most of the issues around “concealment, revelation, and truth” (Jones 626) are not central to the values idealized by these women. In pursuit of perfection, there is lack of room for discussion of such concerns and how it is central to expressions of identity.

This is especially absent in the adornments promoted by the Hijabers. Baulch and Pramiyanti argue their articulation of an exclusive middle-class lifestyle as problematic in the feminist perspective, for it “limits such empowerment to women’s capacity to consume.” (11) Additionally, their attempt to subvert certain roles, such as the husband’s, has framed his position as a feature of this must-have lifestyle– which in turn has glorified aspects of Instagram’s capitalist affordances.

> Framing their relationships with their husbands as a feature of a middle-class consumer culture, they capitalize on Instagram’s valorisation of the consuming woman to present controversial female subjectivities (for example, the Muslimah wife who stands on an equal footing with her husband) in a palatable format. (Baulch and Pramiyanti 11)

It has dangers in becoming a feminism that continues to justify pious entrepreneurial practice (Beta, “Commerce” 2147) as part of popular culture. There is a tension that exists in the

Hijabers' behavior of creating an expanded stereotype that only builds up on the identity of an empowered Muslimah wife. Although they indeed exert their own power in expanding roles for women in view of the "Muslim feminist agenda" (Baulch and Pramiyanti 8) they do little to further nuanced representations of the Muslimah. In their declaration of the ideal Muslim woman, they are in danger of establishing a hegemonic norm that establishes new oppressive systems to expressing identity. This heavy interest in showcasing certain stylistic preferences has solely validated those who fulfill the Hijaber persona, thus shaping trends that intertwine with this visual culture. The curation of their Instagram feed is a culmination of what Bucar simply describes by a successful performance of "a widely accepted version" of what makes an expression "pretty" (86). She then elaborates how it then becomes dependent on a subjective yet universal acceptance of gendered "capitalist interests, consumption practices and patriarchal structures." (86) This responds directly to Beta's argument of how the emphasis of "sartorial choices" is a dominant way to express piety and provides access to a more autobiographical and personal story ("Hijabers" 384).

Essentially, the combination between this personalized expression of veiling practices enters the realm of shaping trends and the importance of gaining popularity and fulfilling self-worth through clout. These religious influencers, in their positioning of aligning piety with now mass commodification of hijab textiles to modest dresses, lead towards an antithesis to what is considered an ethical piety. In maintaining relations with Instagram's consumerist motivations, they reassert anxieties that mostly come from Muslimah being identified as superficial in their expressions of piety. There is a form of meritocracy at play in establishing these notions of aesthetic authority. It is an envisioned future that ominously shifts this new imaginary of the Muslimah that could possibly confine them to forms of neoliberal concepts. They mirror what Lugones describes as "the common practice": "The institutional set up, the language, ... this illusion of individual creativity and originality, this no-debt-to-no one, this lack of social links." (169). The confinement of this Muslimah subjectivity, although resistant of certain Islamist values, does not truly reflect Lugones' notion of a multiplicitous self. It is here that this thesis aims to critique and discusses such common understandings that have now dominated popular culture. To broaden the discourse of identity practices that do not fall into such traps, I propose that Indonesian Muslimah should look to exploring alternative modes of self-expression.

# Discursive Formations

The conundrums that have risen for Indonesian Muslimah as a result of the tropes that lace representations in Indonesian popular culture, provide a case that calls for discursive formations to avoid replicating new stereotypes. Reflecting on the values that the Hijabers assert, notions of middle-class empowerment have become a core part of their self-publications as a form of "soft" activism or *da'wah* (Nisa 89) and turns it into a "palatable" feminism. Such agendas have created new ways to confine Muslimah into a restricted definition of selfhood. Social media, Instagram in particular, have acted as an online mediation (Slama and Barendregt 17) tool for these women to enact transnational identities, allowing navigation through a variety of social spaces beyond their geographical location. However, in its "illusion of individual creativity and originality" (Lugones 169) the Muslimah who identify with the mobile hijaber persona has become reduced to merely supporting iterations of an idealized version of a Muslim woman. In trying to achieve such notions, this Muslim woman carries risks in reproducing neo-liberal feminist values within their situated individuality.

It should be reiterated that in 21st century, post-Islamist Indonesia, the overlapping of experts and authorial figures that make up the "greater state supervision" (Bowen 6) continue to affect discussions in Indonesian public space. As such, the lens in talking about feminism in Islam still requires an acknowledgement of socio-political tensions that exist. In her study into Indonesian women activists, Rachel Rinaldo highlights how mainstream feminist ideas tend to be seen "as culturally inauthentic or, worse, a form of Western imperialism." (8). In this climate, such claims also proved contradictory to the Hijabers, who at best can be interpreted to be "rejecting, selectively appropriating, or even reworking Western conceptions of modernity." (Rinaldo 14) However, their constructs have limited these ideas to a middle to high class positioning. Their forms of "empowerment" in challenging patriarchal constructs of Muslimah identity, such as the "empowered Muslimah wife" or the ideal Muslim woman remain laced with classist interpretations. While some would justify such actions by expressing *shukr* (divine gratitude) to God in their Instagram post captions, the notions surrounding class privilege have clouded their intentions and efforts. In lieu of wanting to advocate for Indonesian Muslim women, placing entrepreneurial practice at a pedestal that becomes part of their identity needs a rethinking of what empowerment means in challenging stereotypes. These conceptions still

require a framing that is more thoughtful in rejecting and appropriating Muslim women tropes that tend to become another singular construct in popular culture.

In steering away from identifications of this mainstream form of feminism, I introduce my positioning in resisting and respecting these singular concepts. As previously introduced, I take the perspective of Lugones' tactical strategist in situating my proposal of the multiplicitous, multifaceted self. In identifying as a hijab-wearing Indonesian Muslim woman, I take this stance to recognize and resist "intermeshed oppresions" (Lugones 160). I seek what she describes as an epistemology that "dissociates itself from individualistic perspectivalism" (Lugones 161) for an understanding beyond the singular and confining values of what is considered ideal. I want to navigate representations that "lives without myopia, without epistemological/political shortsightedness." (Lugones 161) I want to be able to perform, consider and enact "tactical-strategic practices of resistant/emancipatory sense making" (Lugones 161) through understanding the intermingling of confining dimensions of the self that have been imposed by modern Orientalist constructs like that of "The Muslimwoman" (cooke). This encompasses what I describe as a discursive formation for exploring nuances of Muslimah identity.

## Methodology

In positioning myself as a tactical strategist, I employ discursive design as a methodology. This *tactic* is used by referring to the way Lugones' "complicates" Michel de Certeau's distinctions of the tactic/strategist positioning in his book, 'The Practice of Everyday Life' (1980). Where de Certeau individualizes the strategist as a subject of power with a point of view of "distance mastered through sight and abstraction" (Lugones 164) and the tactician as the weak who lacks "distance, concreteness, for shortsighted creations… and "makes do"" (Lugones 164), she disrupts this dichotomy in proposing a new active subjectivity. This is the tactical strategist, an active subject that comes with "a renewed understanding of intentionality… exploring the opening of logical paths in order to refigure the possibilities of the oppressed from within the complexities of the social." (Lugones 165). Lugones then synthesizes these notions in creating the positioning of the streetwalker theorist (167). Through my perspective, the possibilities she refers to is relevant in grounding representational practice that can be refigured to evoke multiple roles of the self. This understanding uses ways to shift from "ephemeral contestatory negotiations of sense to more sustained engagements." (Lugones 167). These

sustained engagements can be articulated as multiple and through this methodology, dimensions of Muslimah identity through design can be explored. To this end, discourse surrounding less transparent dimensions of identity can then materialize.

In shifting representational practice away from Instagram, I propose that we begin to understand certain problems in what religious influencers value as creative identity representation. Given that social media does provide these affordances and instantly presents feedback through the form of likes and comments, it has also limited the scope of the self to one image. It should be noted that although I recognize that the Instagram feed can regulate different dimensions of identity in every post, the pursuit of perfection has hindered other conversations that are not transparent to Indonesian Muslimah. The incentives to invite religious self-transformations in their images and captions are rendered as merely a show of achievements and standards. There is still a scarce sense of nurture in the progress that comes in that journey, one that welcomes and presents diversity in embracing the self as a Muslim woman that continues to become. Therefore, I believe there should be more ways to utilize the visual culture noted in existing studies of religious identity that concentrate on the 'Hijabers' and Indonesian Muslimah (Baulch and Pramiyanti 1; Beta 378; Beta 2140; Nisa 68). Through use of discursive design principles, the discourse of image diversity Annisa Beta concludes in her paper can be furthered:

> "...Considering their importance in the Hijaber mindset, we need to consider the pivotal role of images in redefining young urban Indonesian Muslims. One point to keep in mind is how the mediation of images in the social relations between classes of young Muslims has brought about their commodification (Debord, 1994, cited in Goh, 2013: 232) on the various SNS, while the visual is no longer a monopoly of those in power, but is in constant dispute. As this article demonstrates, the vernacular practices of posting photographic images on blogs and SNS such as Instagram have created a wealth of data that helps understand the diversity in discursive formations of Muslim society." (Beta, "Hijabers" 387)

Not to be confused with Talal Asad's perspective of looking at Islam as a religion of discursive tradition[18], my research focuses on identity representations to create discursive artifacts and to further diversify and expand current depictions of Muslim women, specifically

[18] Ideas of discursive formations are also apparent in Rinaldo's observation of different Indonesian Islamic groups' and institutions' interpretation of Islam through Talal Asad's theories of secularism. In contrast, the frame in which the Hijabers express their values are still grounded within textual interpretations of the Qur'an. See Rinaldo 24.

the Muslimah in Indonesia. I focused on women that I identify with, and situated my making through discursive artifacts that inform what I believe to be missing in Indonesian pop culture representations. These scenarios are sourced from my personal concerns and understood to be common for Indonesian Muslimah. Informing this process are techniques within alternative, DIY (Do-It-Yourself) media forms of zine, and personal digital games, that can contextualize the importance of art assets and using modifications to alter existing games as part of self-publishing cultures. I extract relevant visual elements in reference to existing hijaber content circulating on Instagram within prototypes that can express emotions more intricately. I also touch on the realities through different ways of presenting multiple nuances that I believe have been purposely hidden in local mainstream representations.

Furthermore, the artifacts for this thesis should serve as examples of representations that encompass using alternative storytelling techniques and new media technology in executing a variety of means to tell a personal story. This is all done while maintaining an understanding of the discursive formations of images that arise from the identity politics of an Indonesian Muslimah. This discursive quality matters as the techniques presented in this thesis are suggestions to encourage a creative practice that contributes to a larger critique of Orientalist iterations that confine the Muslim woman.

## Discursive Design

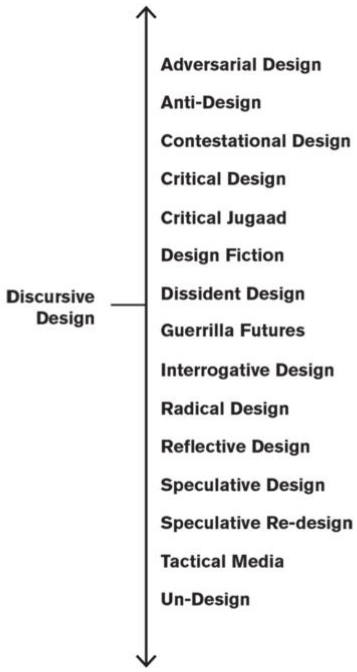


Fig. 1. "Genus" and "Species" from: Tharp, Bruce M., and Stephanie Tharp. Discursive Design: Critical, Speculative, and Alternative Things, 2018, p. 84.

Discursive Design, as Bruce and Stephanie Tharp describe it, is a means to embody and engender ideas of psychological, sociological or ideological importance within artifacts (Tharp 74). The primary motivation of this design process is to achieve audience reflection (Tharp 53) that are situated within "utilitarian artifacts whose primary purpose is communicative" (Tharp 51). This reflection is also able to prompt self-reflection of the discourse embodied in the artifacts. Moreover, the design process in discursive design "reinforces the powerful relationship involving the flow from artifacts to ideas– from design to discourse" (Tharp 76). The artifacts within this realm are to be seen as "calculated carriers and deliberate embodiments of systems of thought or knowledge" (Tharp 77). The understanding here is that discourse is the reason discursive artifacts exist, in raising consciousness of an issue as opposed to attempting a concrete solution (Tharp 77). This process spans as a genus for existing foresight techniques (see fig.1) and is not concerned about confining practice for designers to operate within, but to assist in developing the effectiveness of the product in being understood as design (Tharp 85).

Furthermore, the Tharps assert that discursive design is indeed a type of design– "it uses design's form, methods, conventions, and sensitivities" (95) and leverages the use of design language and tools for an atypical effect (95). Often there might be a certain distinction needed

from art because although the practice might want to achieve the same goals as conceptual art, it does not want to be understood as such as this might affect the perspective of interpretation (Tharp 95). They also assure the nature of general design practice as part of rhetorical tradition as well as sociocultural tradition of communication (Craig, qtd. in Tharp.) in acting as both a "catalyst for reflection" (Tharp 103) and understanding objects as "powerful media in society, helpful in the construction of new meanings and ways of being and doing, as well as in solidifying others" (Tharp 106). Essentially, discursive design in the sociocultural position supports the knowledge of the designer as an important subject in furthering the discourse, and in raising questions of "the cultural conditions and rationale that support the object" (Tharp 106). The discursive artifacts created for this thesis communicates a message that results in a better understanding of "ethical responsibility" and efficacy (Tharp 367). To reiterate, this thesis does not aim to change the social media practices of Hijabers, but rather to critically compliment and elaborate upon self-expression through alternative forms of storytelling and to account for the conflation of singular representations in both Western and Indonesian popular culture.

# Discursive Artifacts

Through theorizing with Lugones' streetwalker, I identify different aspects to the tactics and strategies used in establishing the discursive aim of this thesis. The steps taken to lead towards these artifacts are acts of sensemaking to recognize the elements, forces and subjects at play in expanding and critiquing the Orientalist view of the Muslim woman. They serve as evidence to challenge the Orientalist notions lacing the representations of Muslim women in popular culture (despite the differences between the West and Indonesia, there is still an oversimplification of these images in both cultures). Discursive design compliments this approach in negotiating and understanding different parts to the techniques used to create these artifacts. In following the artifact-scenario alliance (Tharp 220), these prototypes explore varying levels of dissonance and clarity to shape designed art forms in telling stories of the Muslimah. These are also alternative forms of representational practice in comparison to using Instagram. Situating the narrative in this manner is a critical approach in exploring varying levels to ways identity can be expressed.

Moreover, I acknowledge that most of what occurs on Instagram for these religious influencers also situates the performance of this practice within the same socio-economic standing. This creative practice is accessible to those who are able to engage with these alternative tools within the media space that is applicable to these Muslimah, which are of the middle-upper class. It remains a class-based activity that aims to see the potential of these forms of self-expression emerge in parallel to the curatorial intricacies already prevalent on the posts published on their Instagram feeds. This is mostly encompassed within what I call the 'Hijaber Visual Code' that I have extracted from observing and being part of that culture.

## Artifact-scenario alliance


Fig. 2. Driving the Discourse from: Tharp, Bruce M., and Stephanie Tharp. Discursive Design: Critical, Speculative, and Alternative Things, 2018, p. 220.

I use the framing of the artifact-scenario alliance to contextualize and ground the making of the artifacts by providing subjective perspectives of an Indonesian Muslim woman. Part of identifying with this process is knowing that the design "could be more exact with words but that artifacts can do something more" (Tharp 219) This helps acknowledge the strength and weaknesses of the chosen tool of communication itself. Another aspect to this alliance is knowing that these artifacts can be more poetic and emotive, as opposed to being pragmatic (Tharp 219). By joining the two, there is an intention to see how these aspects "work together in wonderful ways" (Tharp 219) in achieving a sense of effective dissonance (Tharp 211) to bring about emotive qualities.

In addition, the Tharps use the term "objective correlative" popularized by T.S. Eliot and its relevance to describe when emotion is evoked through elements embedded within a physical object (219), such as using specific hues of color or context specific metaphors as a formula to build upon a scenario. These objects should be able to describe feelings better than mere words would, bringing about an emotive quality through selected components (Tharp 220). The audience role as a user allows them to feel and imagine that discursive "world" better, as the value of the artifact then presents itself within a range of possibilities. In this thesis, that possibility is achieved by "unique contextualisation" (Tharp 221) of the knowledge of theories critiquing Orientalism and Western definitions of liberation as well as an understanding of a rhetorical user, which in this case would be an Indonesian Muslimah.

> As designers are already adept with optimizing or satisficing object attributes, when working discursively they apply their skills to give the artifact its aesthetic, functional, semantic and other operational values that help support and communicate a productively dissonant scenario. (Tharp 221)

The clarity of dissonance in the design can be measured to the degree of which the artifact is then refined by the designer. Similarly, the matter concerning functionality in eliciting values that the audience can understand is dependent on the designer's goal of wanting to be dissonant or interpretive, for example. For whom is this artifact for? And for whom might it produce value? What scenarios am I leveraging in the designed artifacts? As I answer these questions I also reflect upon the discourse I wish to incite through the thesis prototypes. These artifacts, although coming with some expectation of desirability from the audience, may not "comport with the audience's situation or understanding" (Tharp 232) as I introduce a "less-desirable" reality by choosing "innocuous aesthetic forms" (Tharp 233) to direct the audience's focus to aspects of identity I want to call attention to.

These aspects of interpretation and opportunity is what makes the process fitting for the tactical strategist. It negotiates an "in-between" of "conversations, interactions that take in and also disrupt, dismantle, dominant sense" (Lugones 174) that situates the "I" that Lugones uses in moving towards a "we" (174). The desirability of the created artifact lies in orienting towards target-specific audiences (Tharp 231) which in this case is a discursive formation of identity politics of Indonesian Muslimah in pop culture.

## Trends Towards Piety - Themes

To challenge the stereotypes presented through mainstream representations of Muslim women within Indonesian and Western popular culture, the content explored in these prototypes experiment with varying levels of critique to the ideal Muslim woman construct. The themes also elaborate on certain imperfections that would otherwise not be made transparent through the single image on Instagram, but can be realized through the chosen media forms of zines and personal digital games. The perspectives evoked in these artifacts are personal to myself and also generally experienced by fellow Indonesian Muslimah in my community.[19] These topics also exist as an in-between of the Islamic dichotomy in portraying varying degrees of individuality to address the nuances of the multiple self and freedom in exploration of such identities.

In this section, I introduce my prototypes and the chosen themes in each artifact as an entry to the active subjectivity that I propose as part of this thesis. Here, I show the different perspectives of the Muslimah that come from my personal experiences as well as common interpretations of themes that generally resonate with Indonesian Muslimah. I also outline the elements I use in refining my artifacts to situate the perspectives I chose to elaborate upon. These are extracted by looking at the visual culture of a hijaber persona on Instagram.

## Augmented Reality Zines - '*Cergam* Muslimah'

*Cergam* Muslimah (translates to Muslimah drawn out stories; pronounced *chur-gum*) is an exploration into zines as part of a creative practice that utilizes the affordances of mobile augmented reality (MAR). Through the layers of short stories told within these 8-page zines, the MAR helps evoke a dual or a hidden meaning in the augmented reality. Each of these three zines are a personal story situated through my point of view, but are common anxieties or feelings that can be endured by many Indonesian Muslimah. They explore various themes of life, love and thoughts about the future and present a different way to read each of the stories through AR.

[19] Anecdotes gathered from my peers who identify with my positioning.

**‘My Hairline is Receding’**

Fig. 3. Page in “My Hairline is Receding” Zine, augmented.

This story comes from my own experience that many hijabis experience, regarding their receding hairline as a result of wearing an inner hijab, or having worn the hijab for a long time. The notion of a receding hairline can also metaphorically refer to the idea of “aging” or stressing through all the policing that occurs for Muslimah in general, regardless of being veiled or not. The double meaning of worries that can be considered as superficial as opposed to its root in anxiety induced by societal expectations is conveyed in the augmented reality content.

**‘Living on Estuaries’**

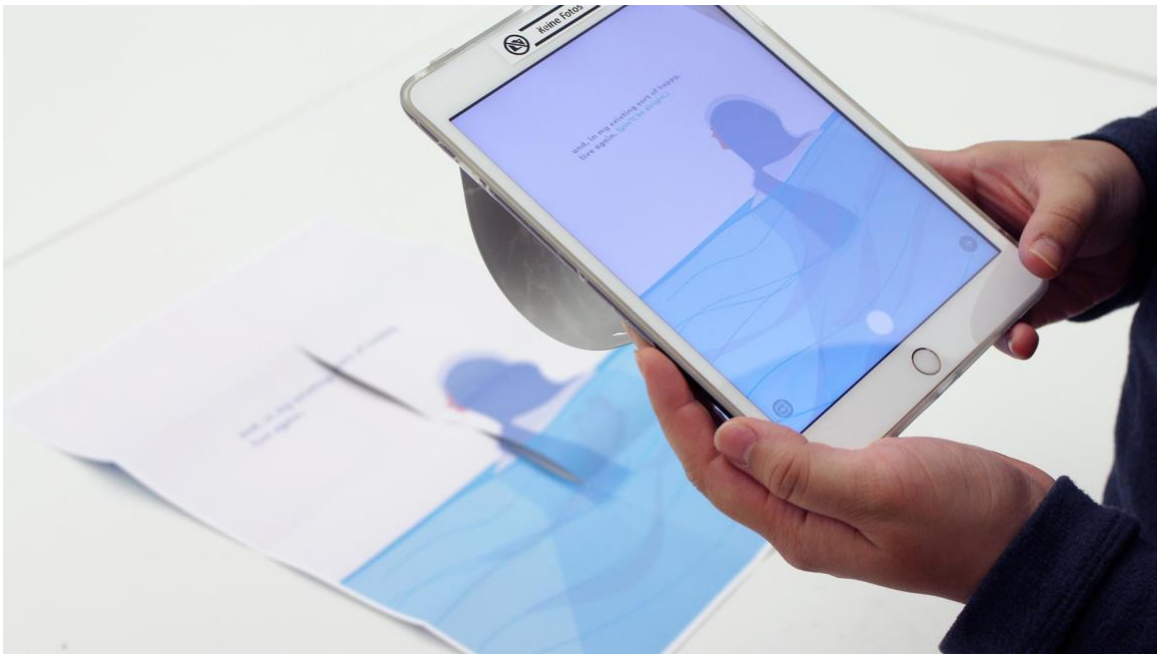

Fig. 4. Page in “Living on Estuaries” Zine, augmented.

This story comes from an experience regarding personal choices about the future. It expresses regret, loss and self-comfort of a life path that could have been. It evokes themes of marriage as part of a common Muslimah’s desire and sense of responsibility for their future self. The metaphor of an estuary, an area where a freshwater river or stream meets the ocean, is used to convey how the mixing of the two bodies of water here are almost impossible, or else “brackish” (National Geographic). Estuary is used as a way to situate how the choices I made have led to living completely separate lives and are unable to mix completely with each other. I also situate this feeling as grieving with myself, in feeling sorry for the path that I did not take.

**‘Anak Shalihah’ (Pious Child)**

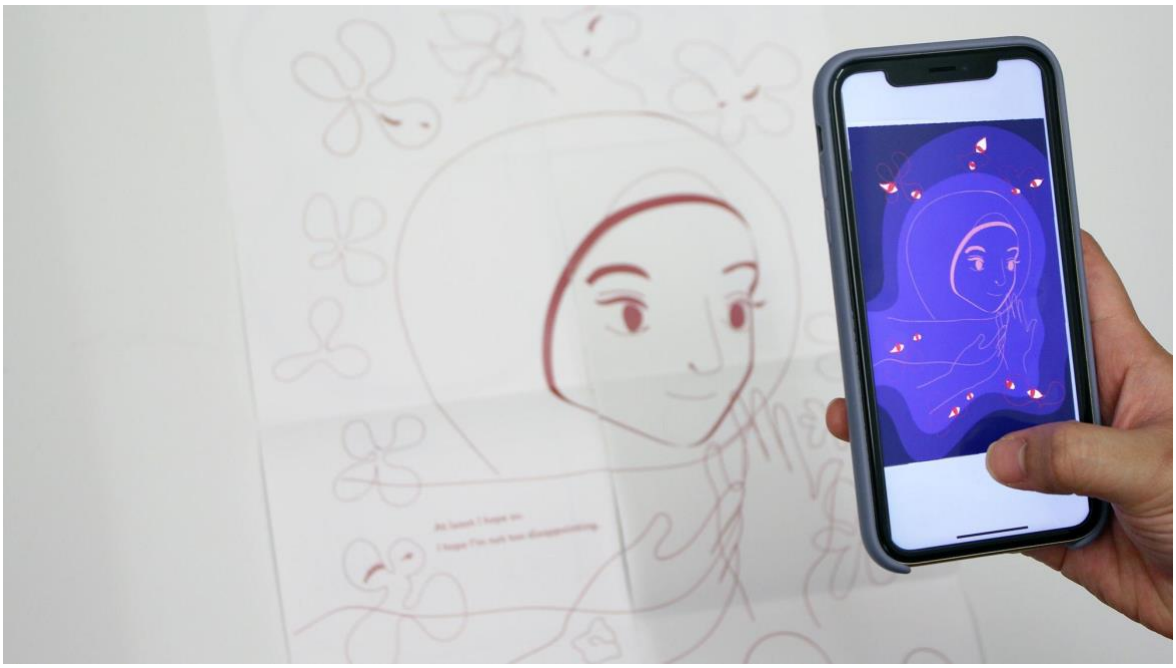

Fig. 5. Back page of ‘Anak Shalihah’ (Pious Child) Zine, augmented.

This story comes from the common experience endured by Muslimah as they grow older and the “familial” pressures that are inflicted upon them, thrown around as passive-aggressive nudges or teases. It reflects the Indonesian culture of “caring” for family and family friends, as they often throw around phrases that primarily come with societal expectations. These suggest certain grounded milestones for each Muslimah to fulfill as they transition in becoming a more “responsible and wise” woman. The AR aspect to this dramatizes the surveillance of this policing through anonymous eyes that surround the hijabi character in the zine. It is also worth mentioning that the use of localized language, such as the transformation of the Arabic word *salih* (pious) into *shalihah* (localized female pronoun for pious; pronounced *saw-li-hah*) are also used in this zine to reference the language used to address younger Muslimah.

## Personal Game - ‘Aisha’

Fig. 6. Screencap of the first level of ‘Aisha’.

‘Aisha’ is a personal game that situates a hijab-wearing player character through a maze style game and tells a story through play. The “keys” collected to advance to the next stage is replaced by assets that act as checklist items to becoming the social norm of the ideal Muslim woman. The golden key is the true key to access the door– obtaining only the blue keys will not let the player proceed to the next level. As the levels go, there are more keys scattered around, but only the golden one "unlocks" the door.

This game is a commentary of the construct of the Muslim woman that leads to an ambiguous end– once the player completes the game, that “accomplishment” is posed as a question that is asked for the player to reflect on. Choosing the maze format for this personal game expresses two aspects to the story: the different levels suggest the “turns” that the hijabi character takes to fulfill the checklist in following these norms, while the ease in which she moves through the maze considers how straightforward or favorable the path to these keys are. The thought bubbles that appear as part of the character’s reaction to the steps taken also compliments the story through a light-hearted manner. The title of this game takes from the ‘Aisha’ character in *Ayat Ayat Cinta* (2008) and notions of the idealized Muslim woman asserted in Indonesian popular culture products.

## Hijaber Visual Code

The visual code that the Hijabers assert on their Instagram feed play a large part in determining the illustrations and the game assets for the artifacts. Pulling from verified Indonesian religious influencers on Instagram, the colors common in these feeds are extracted to create a color palette. As previously outlined in the Introduction, the qualities brought upon by using *hijab* as a lexicon instead of *jilbab* transform the hijaber aesthetic from a purely local Indonesian standpoint into a form of transnational Indonesian culture. The images they choose to post are also staged in ways to evoke a certain theatrical quality, particularly through their choice of poses and attention to lighting subjects. By placing themselves as the prime subject in a dramatized backdrop, they also visualize places where they can exist, suggesting the transnational nature of their presence as hijab-wearing Muslimah. This can be interpreted in some of the ambiguous geographical backdrop for the images (see fig. 7.)

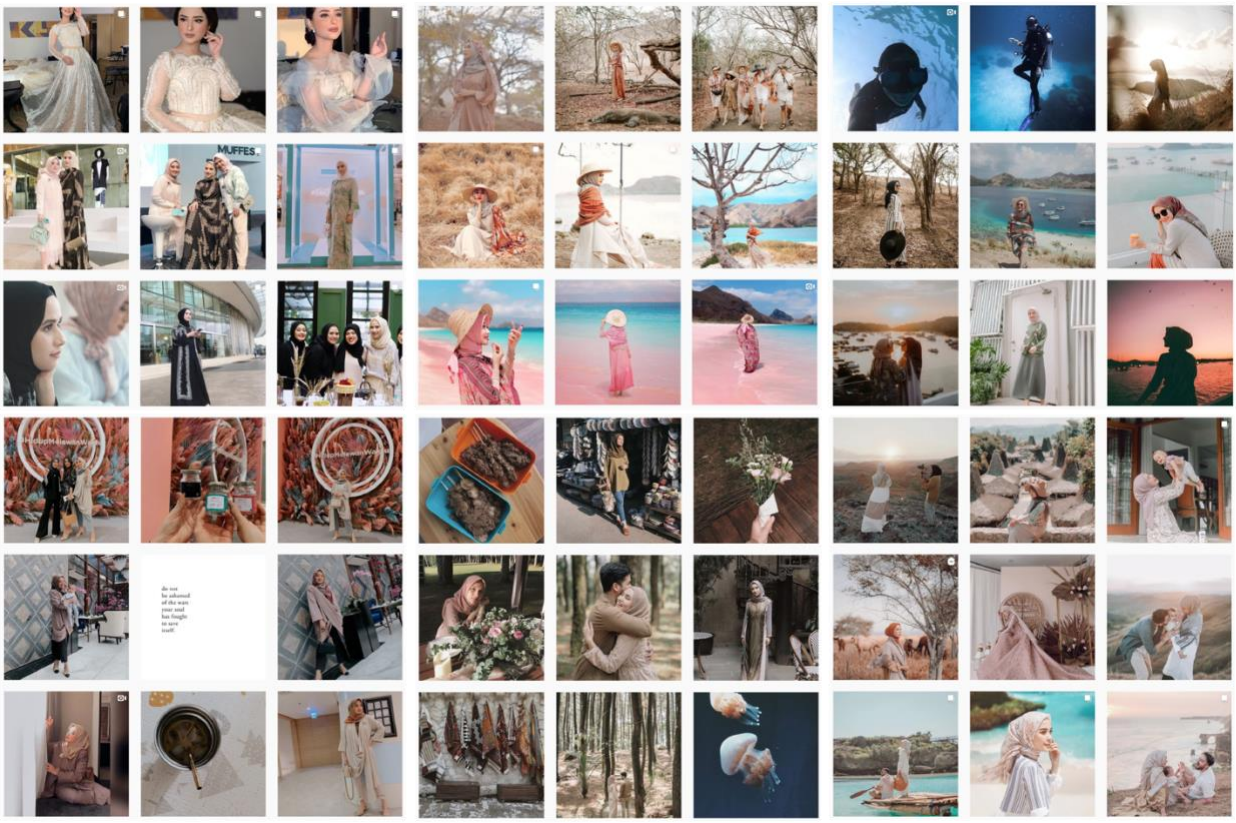

Fig. 7. A common visual Instagram feed of the hijaber persona.

These colors are used as part of the zine making and in consideration of creating the hijab-wearing player character for the personal game, to maintain a coherence in the aesthetic language of the prototypes. The style of the hijabs used by these women are also used in illustrating a modern Muslimah way of dress, such as using the pashmina or shawl to layer the bust, or the square hijab that is folded and is secured around the neck (see fig.7).

Fig. 8. Hijaber visual color palette for the artifacts.

As Beta observes, “The Hijabers play with colorful clothing while pushing the limits of what is considered proper.” (“Hijabers” 383). This notion of properness is equated with modesty and is reflected in these color choices through the subtleties in shades of beige, blue, green and pink, as opposed to a high contrast palette. The visual code, consisting of a color palette and hijab styles, play an essential role in the artifacts.

This color palette is also applied in creating the player character for the game through pixel art. This was a contribution made by my sister Cania Antariksa.

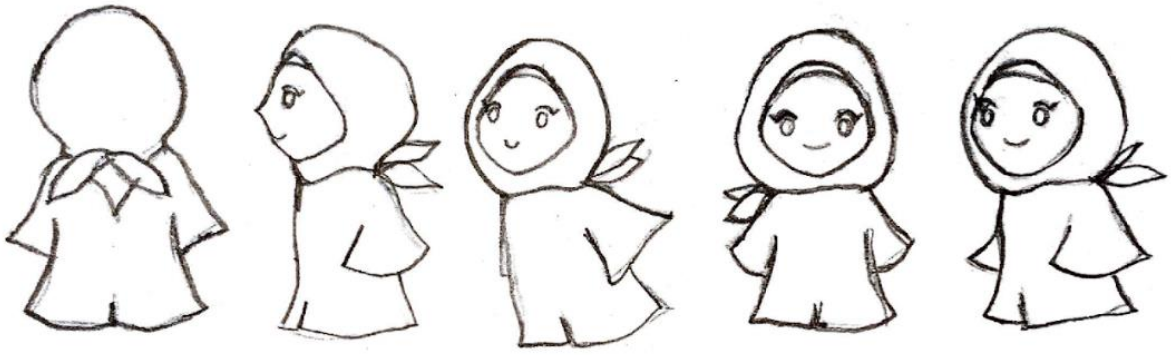

Fig. 9. Sketch of the hijaber player character.

This sketch was in consideration of the visual codes of the hijaber persona, as well as a common Indonesian Muslimah. The scarf tied up on the neck is a style that is commonly used by middle-class Muslimah as seen and popularized by the Hijabers. The player character was created by using pixel art, encompassing its visual versatility in being characteristically game-like. This

choice reflects the level of technicality in how the player assets can be created. Pixel art range between various levels of fidelity and is widely used as a timeless game art style.[20]

Fig. 10. Pixel art of the Hijabi player character by Cania Antariksa.

By making these choices, these assets can be used at a positioning that can exist outside and alongside the Hijabers. I extract these aspects with the intention that they "appeal" to the hijaber persona in order to adapt a level of desirability to the discursive artifacts. These assets compliment in adhering to the norms of the hijaber persona while also existing as a tool to be used within alternative media forms that I chose to create as the thesis prototypes.

[20] Byford, Sam. "Pixel Art Games Aren't Retro, They're the Future." *The Verge*, 3 July 2014, www.theverge.com/2014/7/3/5865849/pixel-art-is-here-to-stay.

# Prototype Making

In identifying as the tactical strategist, using alternative media as a means to communicate stories of the self allows for a broader implementation of creative practice within subcultures of exchange. The subculture of zine making in particular is explained by Michelle Kempson's understanding of many scholars of zine studies as "a disparately inhabited cultural space, to which participants feel a symbolic connection." (461). It supplements the tactical, in selecting personal aspects that can be negotiated as part of the making process. It also activates what Lugones describes as "a renewed sense of active subjectivity and sociality" (172) to an extent that situates this representational practice as a form of resistance. Resistance is about using forms of circulation that are not exclusively in the mainstream but are recognizable as alternative media. Games (digital games in particular) and Zines are tools that can support this process of exploring forms of sensemaking through the artifact-scenario alliance. By framing both media forms as independent publications, personal (digital) games can also be situated within zine practice.

As part of a discursive formation, I also define these media forms as "alternative" to the common narrative of the Muslimah within Indonesian popular culture. These forms are also a situated response to Orientalist constructs. Moreover, they are independent in terms of how they disrupt the common methods to circulating mainstream media forms. In trying to use this creative practice also comes a subculture that forms sentiments in finding a sense of community by aiming to represent the underrepresented complexities of Indonesian Muslimah subjectivities. This also cultivates a DIY (Do-it-yourself) practice rather than necessarily placing itself within the broader DIY movement. It is more of an introduction to a lifestyle of alternative practices in representing identity. Furthermore, the creation of these prototypes places it within an art and design practice that explores distinctions between being dissonant or clear, poetic or pragmatic. Sensemaking within this in-between provides value to these variables in reflecting the nuances that have been veiled by the popularity of Indonesian religious influencers on Instagram. These techniques support the artifact-scenario alliance in both prototypes as there is a continued sense of implied and interpretative meaning in visually representing a hijab-wearing Muslimah in the AR zine and in the personal game.

Additionally, I acknowledge how using games and zines as alternative media situates the influence of feminist thinking within the making itself. This act of sensemaking happens to align with instances of third wave feminism that Anna Anthropy and Alison Piepmeier exercise through their zine-making, whether it is through videogames or “grrrl zines” (Piepmeier 2). For this thesis however, the use of these media forms does not exclusively identify with Western waves of feminism and instead situates it as a cultural form to be used in post-Islamist Indonesia. In theorizing with Lugones, this positioning differentiates itself with third wave feminism but also respects the surfacing of parallels to the movement. While Piepmeier concedes to the cultural concepts that fuel the debates to third wave feminism, she uses the term to instead support the vernacular movement of ‘grrrl’ zines.

Instead, the lens I adopt looks at the affordances of each media form and its capability in situating subjective experiences. This perspective is also attentive to how fundamental each form is as a creative practice that is part of an accessible subcultural tool to be freely used by the designer. In that, I also identify with Kempson in working within the tensions that arise in finding personal feminist subjectivities within simultaneous movements (Kempson 459); the perspective of a tactical zinester.

## Zines

Zines have been used as a media form to situate feminist subjectivities. As Kempson defines it, feminist zines are "independent, not-for-profit publications that are circulated via subcultural networks" (459) that are often conceptualized through a paper-based, DIY (Do-it-yourself) magazine (460). These products also utilize various creative methods that are not limited to drawn, typed or handwritten text and image. Nowadays there are numerous techniques for creating this media form in establishing what might be framed as the 'zine aesthetic' (Kempson 460) as it begins to gain traction within different socio-cultural and geopolitical contexts. These publications are most commonly in the form of booklets that are "A5 or A6 in size, white photocopied, and hand bound with staples, string or sewing." (Poletti 184). The distinction of being classified independent media is important here as it can also be independently published as a way to reflect on the self.

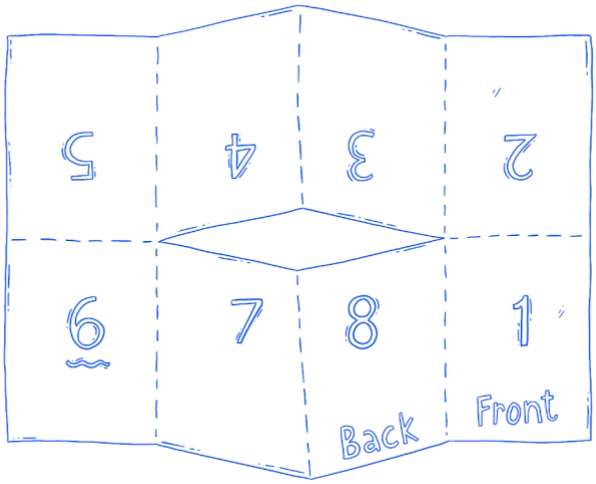


Fig. 11. Simple 8-page zine format from: Burke, Sarah. "A Beginner's Guide to Making Zines." Vice, 1 Oct. 2018, www.vice.com/en_us/article/d3jxyj/how-to-make-a-zine-vgtl.

In narrowing down the specific type of zine for this research, Kempson highlights Anna Poletti's 'perzine' (personal zine) as "a genre of zine that focuses on personal experiences of the creator), that zines represent attempts to creatively (re)construct and represent the self on the page." (460) She then elaborates how this zine approach argues "construct complex narratives that do not always reflect a desire to challenge cultural and media hegemonies." (Kempson 460) For this research, such sentiments are parallel and negotiated to the intentions created for the discursive artifact. While it can be implied as part of a resistance, it can also be seen as a perzine in

articulating experiences of Indonesian Muslimah. This situates it well as an in-between that sees possibilities in combining subjectivity and sociality (Lugones 172).

Moreover, Kempson focuses on her argument of 'zines as lifestyle' for creators who "do not identify with such context-specific articulations of the third wave" (462) and pursues her framing of zines within "an expansive notion of feminist subjectivity" (463). She also presents a new framing of zine subculture that makes up a movement called "DIY feminism" that is multifaceted in being inclusive (Kempson 463-464). Although this thesis is not in pursuit of creating a new movement, I would like to point out how in thinking of zines within post-Islamist Indonesia would align with this concept. It looks at feminism not necessarily from the larger 'grrrl zine' (Piepmeier 2) perspective, but broadening the term to include more individuals who can comfortably situate their subjectivity (Kempson 470) within the umbrella term that is feminism. For Indonesian Muslimah who have certain reservations for identifications of feminism, zine-making can then be situated as a practice for expressing feminist sensibilities within personal differences (Kempson 471). In advocating for such sites of contemporary creative practice, this prevents the prejudice around young Muslimah who would want to express their subjective positionings as a wife, daughter, niece, mother or just as a Muslim woman. This "multiple self" would then navigate beyond certain politicized movements that Western waves of feminism are in pursuit of.

In further understanding the relevance of the perzine, Poletti emphasizes how zine communities have formed "a subculture of storytelling and knowledge sharing" (184) that has become personal to the experience of the creator. She also highlights that by participating in this culture comes a certain independence:

> By establishing participatory communities which seek to erase the distinction between those who consume and those who produce culture, people involved in these activities feel more connected to their culture of choice (whether it be independent electronic music, zines, or independent media), and less harassed by the demands of consumer culture. (Poletti 186)

As a result of this knowledge sharing culture, Poletti also observes how this has affected the understanding behind autobiographical, life narrative styles of writing and circulation (186). The reframing of these life narrative forms that make up the perzine is the creative practice that informs the artifact-scenario alliance in the goal to multiplicity. It employs narrative strategies

that are more dynamic and provisional (Poletti 189), in the sense that they exist as an expression of a self that continues to become, in acknowledging and fulfilling multiple roles. Perzines function as a media form that also indicates complex modes of reflecting about life as a process that continues to grow from learning experiences.

In looking at the usage of new media technology as part of the 'perzine', this thesis proposes the AR (augmented reality) zine to further enhance nuances of dimensionality. The affordances of AR in utilizing the virtual and real is suitable in this context. In expressing layers of spirituality that is rooted in religious interpretations of the self, experiences or content material that are considered "imperfect" can opt to be shown through AR. Recent developments of accessible tools to use this technology is available through Mobile Augmented Reality (MAR) and is as simple as downloading an application on the mobile phone. As previously observed through Beta's study of Indonesian youth, the simplicity and having something readily available on smartphones ("Hijabers" 382) contributes to ease in creating content.

## Mobile Augmented Reality (MAR)

The developments in Augmented Reality (AR) as a recently democratized form of new media technology has evolved in terms of its affordances and public accessibility. AR is referred to as "experiences that superimpose or composite virtual content in 3D space, directly over the real world, in real time." (Azuma, "A Survey of" 2). There are now numerous mixed reality (MR) applications with image tracking and marker-based AR that are available for use with cameras on smart devices. This technology is often used within products that target mass markets for purposes that span from advertising, education and entertainment. AR experiences have also advanced in its presence within what Ronald Azuma describes as traditional media (books, film, video games) into more established media that utilizes a combination of real and virtual elements for compelling storytelling methods ("Location based" 260). It is here that the potential of AR technology can be observed and explored to expand how these systems can be used for certain experiences. A lot of what is required within Mobile Augmented Reality (MAR) for storytelling in particular has been the process of familiarizing how these devices host capabilities as well as their limitations. Enabling an effective delivery of these stories still depends on how MAR devices aid in understanding the narrative and create nuances that utilize the balance between real and virtual content. There remain fundamental challenges that AR storytelling poses as a

subset of a “broader area of location-based experiences” (Azuma, “Location based” 261) that include and are not limited to, Alternate Reality Games (ARG), performance art and trans-media experiences (Azuma, “Location based” 261).

One of the challenges that Azuma argues within most common applications of AR in physical objects is the level of meaning and approach that the content can be conveyed. He states that “if the experience is based on reality itself, with little contributed by the augmentations, then there is no point in using AR.” (“Location based” 261) Likewise, he also fears the novelty that comes in only using AR as a layer of virtuality; it may deem the technology as a form of new media that isn’t viable (“Location based” 261). It can be surmised that the core aim for a more critical AR storytelling experience are ways in which elements of reality and its augmentation can function as complementary qualities. The dependency on the augmented and real content should have equally compelling roles in order to effectively utilize the storytelling component. Azuma elaborates these techniques within three different concepts: Reinforcing, Reskinning and Remembering (“Location based” 261) that can be used to leverage different components in telling stories. For this research, the concept that resonates the most with AR printed media is reskinning, as opposed to reinforcing and remembering that are heavily dependent on geographical locations as part of its reality. Reskinning is described as a strategy that designs reality to suit the purpose of the told story through a focus on the strength of the virtual content, and “how it adapts and exploits the real world to fit that virtual content.” (Azuma, “Location based” 265) This places the augmentation as the important substance sought in telling the story and places the artifact of the real environment as supporting material.


Fig. 12. Sutu. MODERN POLAXIS, modernpolaxis.com/.

An example of work that adapts the reskinning AR technique is Modern Polaxis (2014). This work is an exploration into AR comic books by Australian artist Stuart Campbell, also known as Sutu. The story follows Polaxis, a paranoid time traveller who recounts his daily life in a journal that contains secret information, paranoid delusions and conspiracy theories that he "hides away in a layer of Augmented Reality" (sutueatsflies). The character firmly believes we live in a holographic projection called 'Intafrag' and that he is being patrolled by agents in that plane in the universe, placing Polaxis as a fugitive (sutueatsflies). As the reader immerses themselves in the private layer of information presented through AR, they become his insider, one who has exclusive access to the secrets of the world that the character is investigating. The AR content builds up on the science fiction genre and uses aspects of privacy and surveillance to enhance the storytelling experience. This strategy answers to the reskinning concept that Azuma outlines, placing the prominent elements within the augmentation and using the physical comic book as an artifact that supports the delivery of the story. The augmentation is also realized through a MAR application called Eyejack, a free resource to create AR experiences through smart mobile devices.

Creating an experience that deploys reskinning then requires some thought in managing the content that will be augmented. The relevance of this material can be integrated as part of the story in ways that can draw memories, reveal new knowledge or explore duality of meaning. Measuring success in the product becomes less of a concern as it is more reliant on the viewer's personal understanding of the intersecting themes in the story that is told. It would be relevant to then explore aspects of layering onto content that is not as dense as a storybook. The minimal content that the 8-page zine (see fig.11) provides an exploration into storytelling that can prove more effective to MAR.

AR Zines that are realized through the combination of printed zine and MAR is an experimental entry into using new media technology that contributes to the creative practice that expands from merely the printed object. If the printed publication only represents a single layer of meaning, then the AR component provides an additional dimension that deploys aspects of reskinning in conveying multiple meanings. This aspect to creating AR storytelling experiences is relevant in the making of AR zines to situate Muslimah identity, in layering a narrative of reality that is considered a more careful yet playful approach to discussing issues that would otherwise be deemed disagreeable when revealed directly and explicitly.

**Technology Used**

The MAR technology used for this prototype is Eyejack (eyejackapp.com), which is the same application used by Sutu in creating Modern Polaxis (2014). In using this as opposed to creating an AR application in Unity, I demonstrate the accessibility of this technology as a free resource. Although there are a number of MAR applications available, I found that the process of uploading the art through Eyejack was straightforward and did not require a large learning curve for the purpose of this practice. Making the experience through this application can also be as simple or complex, depending on the story the designer would like to evoke. In my process, the augmented layer of the story consists of creating vector gifs and images based on the content of the narrative to enhance the dimensions to the story. Both the printed artifact and the augmented content are as important in expressing the dimensions of the perspective told. Different reskinning techniques are used here to balance the duality of the story.

**Making 'Cergam Muslimah'**

This lexicon used as part of this prototype, *cergam*, is an Indonesian word that can be described as a comic strip, elaborated by Toni Masdiono and Iwan Zahar:

> Cergam is a terminology derived from an abbreviation of cerita (story) and gambar (graphic). This terminology was introduced by Zam Nuldyn, a comic artist who wrote in newspapers in Medan in 1957. Cergam also became well known as Cerita Bergambar (Comic) (Masdiono and Zahar 1)

This term is used in trying to find a sense of in-between of the zine and the comic strip, as zine culture in Indonesia has not been associated in uses outside of its historical relevance in Indonesian underground metal, punk band scenes.[21] In introducing *cergam*, I situate this zine as a format that can be historically traced as "cheap entertainment" compared to television, and could be read by everyone regardless of age (Masdiono and Zahar 2). I also see the *cergam* as a term that does not bind the format of the circulation of these zines to exclusively printed material, but also as one that transforms based on the digital or physical platforms it can exist within.

[21] See Rawhani, Anisa. "Global Zine Report: Indonesia." Broken Pencil Magazine – Broken Pencil: The Magazine of Zine Culture and the Independent Arts, 2 July 2019, brokenpencil.com/news/global-zine-report-indonesia/.

The three zines were created using a step by step process that involves illustrating traditionally. I found that this approach was most relevant to my making in situating my point of view, as opposed to collaging or using photographs. This is then vectorized digitally to be saved as images and gifs for the augmented component of the prototype. The images are then arranged according to the 8-page zine format within a tabloid size paper, which also uses the page in reverse of the page as a poster that counts for the final page of the story. Below are the steps taken to creating this prototype:

1. Drawing/Sketching out of story in an 8+1-page sequence
2. Digitize Drawings on Adobe Illustrator and arrange these images on a template of the 8-page tabloid zine format
3. Duplicate the images on each page to layer the AR imagery and save them as separate files to be uploaded to the EyeJack Creator
4. Follow the steps to upload the image files (.jpg or .gif) as the Image Trigger and the augmented content onto EyeJack Creator
5. Download Eyejack application on mobile device (available on Apple and the Play store)
6. Scan the Eyejack generated QR codes for each page and screenshot the codes to share, along with the physically printed zine
7. Use a chosen mobile device (iPad or iPhone) with the Eyejack application open to activate the different artworks for each page. These are manageable once signed up and logged in into the app using a designated email. The codes detected through this account will then be saved onto this user account and can be managed as well.

The steps outlined above are in consideration of creating an AR zine that can be as simple (or as complex) as the designer chooses. My method of creation is also to imagine the process within a workshop format for future iterations in which this creative practice can be shared, particularly amongst Indonesian Muslimah who share similar sentiments in extending the practice of visually representing and publishing stories of the self.

There are notable differences between each AR zine in exploring reskinning as a technique in the narrative. The first zine, ‘My Hairline is Receding’ uses the AR to tell a story that exists in parallel to the one on the printed artifact. The visible text focuses on the appearance and a “superficial” perspective to the story, while the augmented content is a deeper insight into the thoughts that would not be surfaced. I often equate this habit of keeping imperfections hidden

as a way to hide *aib* (shame), and AR allows for it to exist and not exist within another space of reality, as the mobile device acts as the doorway to this side of the story. In the second zine, 'Living on Estuaries, the AR is used as a way to enhance the poetic aspect to the metaphor. Most of the augmented content are animated gifs to situate a movement of bodies in grief, whether of myself or of water. Lastly, the third zine 'Anak Shalihah (Pious Child)' is a darker insight into the societal expectations of steering the daughter to becoming a pious person. It dramatizes the surveillance of others, whether it is people from the community or from family members, in wanting to both nurture and critique the Muslimah in their growth as a person. The augmented content in then reflects this through the chosen colors and text, where some parts of the content is omitted and highlighted. Overall, distinguishing the various reskinning methods here are essential to explore the affordances of this technique in conveying the duality of meaning in the story. The imagery expressed through the illustrations and the text is experimented with through its revelation in augmented reality, allowing for a more dynamic interaction or reading of the story. This form of storytelling is what I wanted to see emerge from the use of this technology, in being able to negotiate, recognize and incite conversations that bear a nuance to the themes of love, life and what constitutes the subjective definition of freedom of choice.

## Personal Games

"If we can at least agree that we observe a closer relation between games and activism, between games and war, between games and the city– in other words, an infiltration of games into certain regions of the world– we would do well to analyze the power of games." (Schleiner 10)

Situating the individual as a player with power to create, change and modify the game (Schleiner 11) can inspire ways to view games as a tool to incite play. In understanding the emergence of play for critical means, Mary Flanagan examines how "alternative games" is an umbrella term that reworks the popular game practice model. Unlike its mainstream perception, these games are "designed for artistic, political, and social critique or intervention... to propose ways of understanding larger cultural issues as well as the games themselves." (*Critical play* 2) She also investigates games as a medium of expression, highlighting the elements common to games that can be manipulated to question aspects of human life (*Critical play* 4). These observations of altered forms of game making lead towards the understanding of "activist games" that have the primary intention to provoke, challenge and transform social expectations or norms (Flanagan, *Critical play* 3). Reframing game making practice within these interpretations have altered perceptions behind the conventional definition of a game that was often equated to commercial, masculine computer artifacts that take place within contemporary culture (Flanagan, *Critical play* 224). These versions of games have contributed to the "alternative game" definition and its role in deconstructing general conceptions to games.

As a result, many interventionist, experimental and personal games have aligned itself within making practice that intersects the social with the political and the cultural. Flanagan sees how this perspective is also an artistically inspired choice, by taking the stance of an "outsider":

> This position itself suggests alternate readings of contemporary issues in electronic media and offers the possibility of commentary on social experiences such as discrimination, violence, and aging that traditional gaming culture either avoids or unabashedly marks with stereotypes. (*Critical play* 226)

The positioning of an outsider (or an "alternative") for this genre of creative practice can be situated within personal games. Whether it is through subverting social constructs or exploring

what the media form is intended for, the potential of games to also naturally rework stereotypes (Flanagan 226) suggests its potential as a tool to communicate narratives of the self.

The term 'personal games' has evolved into a broad term that is used to offer spaces for creative practice, particularly in disseminating subjectivities. Examples of games within this genre has ranged from leading the player through narratives advanced in a series of interactive arcade-style games in Natalie Bookchin's *The Intruder* (1998-1999) (Flanagan 227) to processing the complexities of grief through making in Ryan and Amy Green's *That Dragon, Cancer* (2016)[22]. The embodied experiences of these games, whether autobiographical or to represent subjectivity, fundamentally "explores how the game form structures self-narrative, and how such games negotiate agency" (Poremba, *Play with me* 703). This form of agency would refer to its capability to reflect on the designer's subjective reality and use it as a prominent component within the game created.

A personal game prototype that encompasses a similar intention in situating the active subjectivity is Consume Me (TBA) by Jenny Jiao Hsia. This personal game of dark humor covers the designer's relationship with food, dieting and disordered eating (Foulston and Volsing 141-143). The game presents a dynamic that involves the player, the character in-game and the author herself, who the character is based on. She expresses an experience that looks into the dieting mindset through a number of "distressing" mechanics, such as 'fit', 'slap' and 'control' to imply a more intimate and confessional relationship with the player (Foulston and Volsing 143). Hsia also frames each part of the game as goal-oriented, as a segment of her current prototype crams "Tetris-shaped pieces of food on a plate to hit a calorie target" (Foulston and Volsing 143) for example. At certain points, she also shows the character's distress in trying on a crop top to "place powerful feelings of self-consciousness and anxiety" (Foulston and Volsing 143) that the player would experience along with her. All these pieces formulate a deeper connection between the player by presenting the complexity of the content that is evoked through this media form. Moreover, Hsia sees how games "possess a degree of interactivity, which other media, including literature and film, do not have." (Foulston and Volsing 141) and utilizes it to realize her voice and perspective. This prototype is autobiographical as well as universal– it is situated between

[22] See Tanz, Jason. "A Father, a Dying Son, and the Quest to Make the Most Profound Videogame Ever." WIRED, 2016, https://www.wired.com/2016/01/that-dragon-cancer/.

wanting to make sense of a past experience or memory while also approaching the nuances within diets that many people can relate to.


Fig. 13. Hsia, Jenny J. *Consume Me, game development screenshot*, playconsume.me.

With a focus on digital (personal) game creation, Anna Anthropy advocates for the narrative potential of this media form in her book, *Rise of the Videogame Zinesters* (2012):

> Digital games– through their ability to keep complex systems of rules, their ability to keep complex systems of rules, their ability to present audio and visual information, and their reproduceability– have enormous potential for telling stories. (Anthropy 161)

She then proposes various techniques to change the game for those who prefer to not make them from scratch, such as using kits or “piggyback on existing works” (Anthropy 69) to borrow assets like music or code (Anthropy 69). The relevant method to creating the personal game for the discursive artifact would be to infiltrate game formats through performing what Anthropy refers to as “hacks” and “mods” (modifications) in “changing existing games to create new stories” (70). Described as “sampling” (Anthropy 76), this form of modification repurposes commercial game assets to pursue a creation act. These choices, from replacing art assets to reworking the code with aims to “present your original script” (Anthropy 79) is an optional technique to reflect the intentions in a personal game. This rethinking of what a conventional game structure entails redefines what it means to appropriate elements to address agency in representing identity. Furthermore, Cindy Poremba highlights “Game mods as folk practice” in approaching mods as a valued cultural form that debates “situated, local practice versus extricated but "universal" themes and values” (Poremba). This specifically interprets the act of

game modding to “recognize and appreciate a variety of folk-art practices among digital consumers.” (Poremba) In gathering these observations, making sense of “sampling” for the thesis prototypes requires this interpretation of game modding. Contrasting the common intention of game mods to be used exclusively for critiquing mainstream game forms or in being “critical/subversive in relation to their host game” (Poremba), this practice sees an entry into personal modifications. More than anything it should “support an active sharing of meaning” (Poremba) for many artists, storytellers and designers in reworking components of creative practice to inform discursive formations in achieving “multiple sense making” (Lugones 173).

An early example of “sampling” can be noted through BlackLash (1998) (see fig.14) by the collective MongRel. In trying to simulate a commentary “upon a street culture discriminated against largely on the basis of racial identity” (Nideffer 183), MongRel samples an early 1980s vector graphics game called Tempest, where the player maneuvers through a 3D geometric plane, firing at various objects as they appear and move towards the player (Nideffer 183). The BlackLash version then swaps in assets of “white wigged judges, cops, hypodermic needles, Ku-Klux-Klan heads” (Nideffer 183) to name a few, coming at the player to be fired at. This is also accompanied by a rumbling, disturbing soundtrack to elevate the experience (Nideffer 183). In sampling Tempest (1980), MongRel situates the player through the perspective of racialized characters navigating through “the filth” that “is still in command of society and the streets” (Harwood). The game play enhances the understanding of what the designers may have experienced and discusses the extent of actions that would need to be done in the environment the game has simulated.


Fig. 14. MongRel. *BlackLash*, anthology.rhizome.org/blacklash.

This method of "sampling" could also be compared to reskinning tactics (Flanagan 33) in evoking critical play. However, this version of reskinning functions very differently in the context of the personal game created for this thesis, as its common use suggests notions of "redressing" (Flanagan 33) the feminine subjectivities apparent in the genre of "dress up" doll games that are common amongst young girls. Flanagan situates this as an interventionist play that challenges notions of domesticity and femininity in Victorian doll play and its ability in liberating the player from "the process of fitting into cultural norms." (220). This is particularly apparent in Anne-Marie Schleiner's 'ludic mutation' framework, where she elaborates on the nature of the KiSS Doll computer game (surfaced mid-1990s) in projecting desires driven by dispositions of expressing identity beyond the normative gender constructs (24). In contrast, the "sampling" done in experimenting the hijaber identity within the game space instead employs a more thoughtful look into what Beta describes as core "semantic" concepts of the hijaber style ("Hijabers" 386) and its alignment with the constructed social norms of the Ideal Muslim woman. It leans more to the concept of a scaffolded space in expressing the narrative that would otherwise be out of place within social media platforms such as Instagram. Comprising aesthetic preferences, these elements have shaped the authorial aesthetic of the common hijaber that can be synthesized as part of a common visual style to create a 'localized' hijab-wearing player character. This provides an interesting place of departure in imagining a Muslimah self to exist within spaces of narrative play to suggest or simulate a commentary.

Like the 'perzine', personal games contribute to the discursive formations of expressing the self. It treads through a form of zine making practice as a genre that is capable of situating the multiplicitous self by utilizing different facets, tactics while maintaining recognition of the "intermeshed oppressions" (Lugones 160) that exist in navigating through this understanding of the self. By recontextualizing methods of making a personal game through sampling as a form of game mod, the process of game making can become democratized. Although working with new media technology still requires a motivation in engaging with a learning curve, these creative practices have been made accessible for a larger sense of play and storytelling. Encouraging the affordances of these tools in creative practices that look beyond a packaged aesthetic is also essential in sharing more thoughtful subjectivities. In identifying with the streetwalker and the constant process of acknowledging, contesting and complimenting, the potential of these media forms can also be used tactically within strategies to virtually ground the self. This looks to a

movement parallel to Lugones' "I-we" in finding ways to "seek out, put out, rehearse, consider tactical strategies of emancipatory sense making." (173). There is a streetwalker sense embedded in seeking a "resistant creativity" (Lugones 173) that the discursive formations of the "I" ask for in using alternative media to exist outside and beside hegemonic constructs.

**Technology Used**

In the spirit of using democratized technology, Scratch (scratch.mit.edu) is used to create, share and post this personal game. Scratch is a place to also learn coding through tutorials and create games by remixing other user's work– a simpler way of "sampling" games while also maintaining the credit of the original creator. The "remix" aspect to this platform is what makes the process of sharing and creating knowledge less involved with pressures to adhering to certain standards of conduct in order to express an identity. This iterative design culture within Scratch cultivates knowledge sharing as the social norm, as the remix allows for the user to see the inner workings of the code blocks. These processes allow for different game mechanics to be used when elaborating on a story. Through Aisha, I explored how the mechanics within the maze game format can convey themes or topics that may be considered imperfect for public viewing. Exploring these anxieties in creating a remixed personal game can also help the designer/user cope with these problems as it generates a discussion in a socially palpable manner.

Games hosted on Scratch are also at varying levels of difficulty and simplicity and explore themes that are fun but also maintain a safe environment for people of all ages to enjoy. Scratch was initially a technology marketed for young people to learn and create through coding, as mentioned in their 'About' section on the website. Although the "childlike" quality of the website is both welcoming and easily underestimated, the user becomes part of a community of Scratchers in cultivating and gaining new tools for creative making. They can also begin as users that are educators and create starter templates for the type of games other users can then remix. The ease in publishing and sharing creations also fits the interests of designers and creators who wish to simply send the message across on an accessible platform. A sense of belonging that comes by participating in this community is a future prospect that can be explored for collectives of Muslimah who create games to share and tell their stories.

**Making 'Aisha'**

Creating and selecting the art assets comprise a large part of the making of this personal game. The design of the player character has been through several rounds of collaborative feedback between my sister, Cania Antariksa, and myself. Aside from designing the character, creating the backgrounds and title screens as well as searching for the additional game assets that complement the pixel art style was also relevant as part of the craft. This required looking through free game assets on itch.io to find assets that are similar to the avatar. For this purpose, I selected key assets (created by Kyrise at itch.io) to place within the maze as part of the storytelling experience. After choosing these elements, I had to search within Scratch to find the suitable game to remix. This entailed playing and experiencing different scratch games posted by other users that can be accessed through the search function. By inputting the right key terms, such as "starter" and "maze", the results showed many basic starter games that can be played. Once the starter game has been chosen, it is remixed to create a game that uses the narrative I intend to express. Below are the core steps taken to creating this prototype:

1. Creating and finding Art assets relevant to compliment and tell the story in mind
2. Choosing a starter game by searching on Scratch– this selection choice also allows the user or designer to experience the games created by other users and testing which games are suitable to tell the story.
3. Pressing the remix button on the selected starter Scratch game
4. Familiarizing yourself with the blocks of code and how certain assets work by seeing the code in action in the Scratch studio editor
5. Replacing art assets with own assets and altering parts of the code accordingly
6. Playtest the game by pressing the green flag
7. Save the progress and review the gameplay before sharing it on your page.

The steps outlined here describe the basic process that occurs when remixing on Scratch. This variation of the sampling method provides an opportunity to simulate a playable narrative that is accessible through the affordances of the tool. Another aspect to note when creating games is that a great deal of personal motivation is needed to familiarize the self with the learning and creation process. Scratch eases that by creating an environment that encourages this learning through the studio editor, forming an ease of access to tools that can be utilized by anyone with the interest in mind.

The main script to this game that appears in the thought bubbles throughout the game are based on the checklist outlined as part of the 'Ideal Muslim Woman' social norm in post-Islamist Indonesia. This is divided between the different levels of the game and are shown as the player interacts with the keys. For instance, the first level covers the norm of marriage, where the golden key contains the term "young marriage" as opposed to the blue one containing only the "marriage" term. Obtaining the gold key to progress to the next level indicates a favorable point to this checklist that comes with a sense of clearance for the player. The norms that are embedded within the following levels surround notions of piety, career and the favorable "modern" image of the Muslimah. All of this is experienced by the player and is intended to be reflected upon in the end screen, where the question appears. This rhetoric is how I have engaged with discursive design principles in presenting a way to further this discourse of the 'Ideal Muslim Woman.' The question comes as a prompt of reflection for the Muslimah who identifies with the sentiments and narrative I display through the personal game. I also employ a level of theatricality in the game by highlighting these terms or words through the chosen game assets as a point of success for the player character. The link between the norms that are idealized and the discursive aim of the game work together to convey the expression and the critique of a constitutively favorable Muslimah identity.

# Reflections

In using the framework of the artifact-scenario alliance, I was able to situate my perspective as an active subjectivity, specifically drawing from my personal experiences as a hijab-wearing Muslimah. The themes I chose to highlight in the AR zines and the personal game emerge from what I believe reflect a balance in perspectives that might be considered shameful to talk about culturally. I subvert the portrayals of the ideal Muslim woman by accounting for the different trajectories and personalities that do not necessarily follow the checklist determined by the religious influencers on Instagram. For instance, 'Anak Shalihah (Pious Child)' situates a scenario that highlights the struggle of wanting to become and succumb to the pressures of becoming a "good" Muslim daughter, sister and child, while also being aware of the surveillance of other members of the Islamic community. These representations are activated through the zine as a media form that allows for these dimensions to surface. Where in the mainstream the Muslimah is primarily attached to ideas of wanting to be liberated from these aspects, the Muslimah in the zine negotiates and navigates through it while staying true to what she believes in. This effective dissonance between the AR and the printed zine creates a space for that discourse to happen. The artifact also incorporates elements that are local to the active subject by use of language but are also universal as it elaborates on the complexity of being a responsible daughter, sister and child.

By using the techniques of reskinning and "sampling" I elevate assets created through extracting the visual code of the hijaber persona. This can be seen in the equal importance my AR zines place on the printed artifact and the augmented content. I use this in 'My Hairline is Receding' to tell two different stories that are led by the same sentence, but reveal alternate meanings to the notion of the receding hairline. Where one storyline talks about the physical impact, the augmented aspect focuses on the internal conflict that aligns with the metaphor of what it means to have your hairline recede. Moreover, "sampling" is used in the personal game 'Aisha' by selecting a maze game that is then remixed to place the hijabi player character in the play space. By changing the act of finding a key to unlock a doorway to finding items that help fulfill the checklist of an ideal Muslim woman, the context of the maze game changes into that of a personal experience in the efforts taken to "collect" or become this construct of woman. It demonstrates a way to engage in play that is critical but still retains a certain ease in sharing the

story through a more democratized game-making platform. These techniques are important in promoting a creative practice that can reflect on stories that relay dimensions to identity, as opposed to the environment on Instagram.

Moreover, using the EyeJack app and Scratch as a platform for this making allowed for a clear view on seeing a step-by-step process to create artifacts within this alternative media practice. The use of these techniques expanded on the perspectives of Indonesian Muslimah identity through tactics and strategies that are accessible for everyone to use. It reduces the potential anxiety surrounding these technologies as a tool that would require a high level of skill to use, with the hope more Muslimah will enter into this sphere of practice. This embodies the shift of my positionality from I to We, in framing the use of creative tools as not only techniques for making, but also to create a sense of community that explores and creates more sustained engagements of the self. Ultimately, this journey in becoming a more active subjectivity is what drives the creation of these discursive artifacts. In finding a balance between being defiant and compliant of the forces that confine the Muslimah, this practice develops a sense of the multiple self, as well as a reimagining of stories that are free from ‘The Muslimwoman’ stereotypes in Western and Indonesian popular culture.

# Discursive Prospects

In approaching this topic through streetwalker theorizing, I have surmised that these alternative storytelling tools are capable of creating a more nuanced interpretation of the Muslimah that can challenge the mainstream perceptions in both Western and Indonesian popular culture. I believe that if Muslimah are looking to see themselves represented in the mainstream away from the empowered consumer wife and notions of Orientalism, there needs to be a better awareness in articulating other aspects of their (our) lives. Creative practice should not be limited to merely accentuating aesthetic driven preferences on Instagram or other social media platforms. If we want to shift from these accusations of what is considered "superficial" by people who police and monitor (such as Islamist authorities) there needs to be action that steers the conversation. The cycle of continuing to fall into traps of idealizing career paths that are primarily bound by Instagram should continue to change. Diversifying the content and the characters in media forms that can provide space for portrayal of a Muslim woman is ever important to break cycles that confine and conflate our existence.

By understanding the ideas and rights that Muslimah believe in, this practice can be nurtured to articulate a sense of identity that can expand what is already emulated through the Hijabers. These artifacts are just evidence of certain creative practices that I believe can be learned by anyone. With the right motivation, Indonesian Muslimah can be encouraged to pursue a more elaborate creative practice of expressing the self. The technologies introduced in this thesis contain the right affordances in altering, complimenting and furthering the narrative as they are accessible and do not require a high level of proficiency. As outlined in this paper, to execute an MAR experience, EyeJack only requires an install of the creator software and provides a quick step-by-step tutorial the user can follow. On the other hand, Scratch breaks down the barriers to promote learning of code through a helpful interface of a block-based visual programming language. This form of making is not completely tied down to the capitalist formula that Instagram frames itself within. If empowerment is situated within creative expressions of material piety, then this line of making through new media and digital technology can also prove to be successful in cultivating a broader creative practice. Furthermore, there is potential in these experimental pieces to eventually shape a non-fictional Transmedia story world in becoming part of a bigger personal project. The subjectivity can be focused into possibly creating new characters that can establish new tropes.

To attain a more reflexive practice of expressing Muslimah identity, I also intend to invite like-minded individuals who can further the scope of these artifacts to cultivate the creative practice performed by the prototypes in this thesis. Various prospects for this project can include creating workshops on using AR and digital games as tools that invite a collective exploration for Muslimah to explore this technology. If trends that are shaped in Indonesian popular culture are in the form of riding waves on what is deemed "cool" and "trendy," I propose that we begin riding those waves strategically. There should be less intention to exploit and more to promote methods that can change perspectives surrounding material piety for Indonesian Muslimah. As I have elaborated in this thesis, these discursive artifacts intend to move beyond using Instagram as a primary mode of disseminating identity and highlighting the possibilities of alternative tools that flourish alongside the communities present on social media platforms. It is time to shift the confining ideas that construct the ideal woman as a consuming woman (Baulch and Pramiyanti 2) and rethink the extent of the themes that are defined as liberation for Muslimah. The social imaginary that prominently associates broad ideas of autonomy through love and life in both Indonesian and Western popular culture for us should be furthered in multiple forms.

Moreover, by forming a collective of Muslimah who find value in this practice, I envision a reimagining of content and stories associated to Muslimah in popular culture. As part of an Islam majority country, Indonesian Muslimah should be able to pursue representations of our identity by being aware of ourselves as subjective writers and storytellers of our own lives. In conjunction to how religious influencers, such as the Hijabers, have presented themselves on Instagram, we should be able to acknowledge the affordances of other media tools in challenging and reflecting upon ways we can portray more nuanced images of ourselves. If what is currently represented are a dichotomy of themes that lean towards Western assimilated concepts of Islam and the glorified and idealized constructs of a Muslimah, there should be space in between for subjective portrayals of Muslimah identity that also originate from a Muslimah voice.

In addition, Bowen observes how Muslimah activists have called for gender-equal understandings of the *shari'a* in Indonesia and how it can be developed through different interpretative frameworks. There is an implicit calling for men and women to understand *shari'a* laws in newer ways, and hopefully one that leads to better understanding of balancing piety and

worldly pleasures. As Carla Jones concludes in her paper, “Pious women, therefore, have to deal with a social problem that simultaneously benefits and challenges them.” (632) In identifying as a woman striving to live and uphold Islamic piety, I (we) truly navigate this world as the tactical strategist’ Lugones describes, although at varying degrees of fully grounding the self in that sphere of thought. However, in finding ways to situate the self beyond singularity, we need to challenge what continues to benefit the forces who dominate and control us in this world.

In shifting from I to we, I propose that we understand the implications of performing self-representations within the middle to upper class media space that comes with the packaging of Instagram content. We should begin to discuss how there are forces of domination (despite being largely concealed and clouded in Indonesian popular culture). Lugones situates how the streetwalker acknowledges “this passivity as revealing the illusory quality of the closure of dominating sense, understands it as a technique of domination.” (175) But while many might still equate such passivity as part of piety, there should still be a heightened sense of resistance. In whatever scale that exists within this spectrum of being tactical and strategic in navigating life, perhaps we should keep seeking a balance to be at peace with our sense of self-worth. This is the journey in understanding Muslimah as a multiplicity; as women who navigate, negotiate and resist to live in this world.

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**Appendix A: Prototype Documentation**

The COVID19 pandemic has led to changing the format of the AR Zines to a digital zine, as opposed to its original form in the printed and foldable 8-page zine format. '*Cergam* Muslimah' is hosted online in the links below:

'My Hairline is Receding' - https://trendstowardspiety.format.com/hairline-zine

'Living on Estuaries' - https://trendstowardspiety.format.com/estuaries-zine

'Anak Shalihah' (Pious Child) - https://trendstowardspiety.format.com/piouschild-zine

The personal game 'Aisha' is hosted and playable on Scratch.

'Aisha' - https://scratch.mit.edu/projects/293634471/

Documentation: https://trendstowardspiety.format.com/

Alternative link: https://cantariksa.com/Discursive-Artifacts