

Dr Shabana Mir

Muslims in Recovery: Seeking Authentic Muslim Lives After Stigma and Abuse

This paper is based on in-depth qualitative interviews with four Muslims on their gendered religious experiences. I will record and analyse their gendered experiences with family, friends, religious leaders, and religious community members. I am interested in how Muslim women and queer persons experience religious authority and authenticity in their relationships and personal lives.

In my research and observation, Western Muslim women and queer persons find themselves wedged between conflicting expectations on several levels in their personal lives: they are held to traditional religious strictures and idealized cultural notions, while they also navigate mainstream Western norms of everyday life. As they juggle different expectations, Muslim women and queers are under double cultural surveillance. Each set of norms demands exclusive but Muslim women and queers struggle to maintain balance. Neither religious community nor non-Muslim peers appreciate their endeavours, as each demands Muslim women and queers give themselves completely over to them to the exclusion of the other.

Amid these personal struggles, the Muslim women and queers in my research seek authentically Islamic life journeys. Even when religious community members reject their creative religious interpretive work to find balance and meaning, they persist, often in isolation, to pursue spiritual faithful lives. This complex agentic struggle is what I analyse in my paper. This will be valuable contribution to the literature in that there is a need for research literature that represents in-depth and holistic analysis of Muslim women and queer people's experiences of religious authority and meaning.



Dr Shabana Mir

American Islamic College, Chicago

Shabana Mir is Associate Professor of Anthropology and Director of Undergraduate Studies at American Islamic College, Chicago. She is the author of the award-winning book and the first ethnography of Muslim American youth *Muslim American Women on Campus: Undergraduate Social Life and Identity*, published by the University of North Carolina Press (2014). The book has received the Outstanding Book Award from the National Association for Ethnic Studies and the Critics' Choice Award from the American Educational Studies Association (2014).

Dr. Mir taught at Millikin University, Oklahoma State University, the University of Southern California online, Indiana University, Eastern Illinois University, and the International Islamic University, Islamabad. She has a Ph.D. from Indiana University, Bloomington, an M.A. in English Literature from Punjab University (Pakistan) and an M.Phil. in Education from Cambridge University (U.K.). She has lived, studied, and taught in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Pakistan. She is an international public speaker on gender, religion, education, and politics.