

In this essay, I expand on the 4 types of hermeneutical impasses introduced by Luvell Anderson in his 2017 article “Hermeneutical Impasses” by introducing a fifth type. I argue that this fifth type is unique because it occurs between two marginalized groups that are responding to different third parties. As an example, I examine the case of Muslim women advocating *for* the hijab in the movement World Hijab Day (WHD) and a second group of Muslim women advocating *against* the hijab in the responding movements ‘No Hijab Day’ (NHD) and ‘Free From Hijab’. Although members of WHD and NHD are both marginalized groups and share in being Muslim women, they are responding to vastly different third parties. WHD is responding to Islamophobic interpretations of the hijab coming from outside of the Muslim community and NHD is responding to problematic interpretations of the hijab coming from within the Muslim community. In responding to different third parties, they tend to utilize hermeneutical resources that will serve the progression of their movements but risk, simultaneously, leaving the other movement epistemically excluded. To provide an understanding of ‘epistemic exclusion’, as it is relevant to type 5 impasses, along with the risks of ‘contributory injustice’ and ‘epistemic oppression’ more generally, I utilize Kristie Dotson’s account of these terms, particularly, her 2012 article “A Cautionary Tale: On Limiting Epistemic Oppression”.

In the first section of this essay, I briefly describe Luvell Anderson’s account of hermeneutical impasses, with additional attention to his fourth type because it is the closest to type 5. In the second section, I move on to introduce and clarify the definition of a type 5 impasse and I provide WHD and NHD as an example. Here I focus on highlighting the characteristics of type 5 impasses, that are, at least potentially, shared with type 4, as well as the characteristics that are unique to type 5. Following this, my third section will follow Dotson’s account to explore the risks of epistemic oppression inherent in type 5 impasses. I demonstrate how this impasse occurs and these risks are real by examining the tweets and articles of WHD and NHD advocates, including journalists Asra Nomani and Hala Arafa, as well as, Alia Al-Saji, an excellent scholar that has nonetheless biased one group’s experiences over the other. Lastly, I will continue following Dotson in exploring how her suggested advice can point to potential resolutions to type 5 impasses. With Dotson’s advice in mind, I will conclude that advocates on both sides can do better to make sure their words do not come down on other women.

Work mentioned:

Al-Saji, A. (2019). Why We Should Stop Fixating on What Muslim Women Wear. *New Statesman America*. Published 02/04/2019. Retrieved online 10/19/2019, retrieved from: <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/feminism/2019/02/why-we-should-stop-fixating-what-muslim-women-wear>

Anderson, Luvell (2017). Hermeneutical Impasses. *Philosophical Topics* 45 (2):1-19.

Arafa H. & Nomani, A. (2016) Wearing the Hijab in Solidarity Perpetuates Oppression. *The New York Times*. Retrieved online on 12/15/2019; retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/01/06/do-non-muslims-help-or-hurt-women-by-wearing-hijabs/wearing-the-hijab-in-solidarity-perpetuates-oppression>.

Kristie Dotson. (2012). A Cautionary Tale: On Limiting Epistemic Oppression. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 33(1), 24-47.