

Research reveals connections between social science and high fashion

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Stephanie Sadre-Orafai, a University of Cincinnati assistant professor of anthropology, will present research at the 114th annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association. Credit: Ashley Kempher/University of Cincinnati

While they're often linked with studying remote civilizations, the role of

the contemporary anthropologist is changing. Stephanie Sadre-Orafai, a University of Cincinnati assistant professor of anthropology, will apply one example as she examines how anthropology is linked with the high fashion industry in New York. The presentation is part of a panel at the 114th annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association. Billed as the world's largest gathering of anthropologists, the meeting takes place Nov. 18-22, in Denver, Colorado.

Sadre-Orafai explains that casting agents often have some form of anthropological training. Although many of these casting agents apply this expertise toward scouting diverse talent for commercials, magazine layouts and other media in the New York fashion industry, Sadre-Orafai says they can be limited by conservative views in the industry. As a result, some turn to creative outlets on the side, creating documentaries and blogs.

"The role of the anthropologist is evolving and the kind of people we work with is evolving, too," says Sadre-Orafai. "As anthropologists studying professionals, if we're only focusing on what people do on the job, we may be unwittingly narrowing our focus. We need to grant multiplicity to our research subjects when we're measuring the work they do."

Sadre-Orafai's presentation features several vignettes based on years of fieldwork and face-to-face interviews with casting professionals in the New York [fashion industry](#). The presentation is part of a session titled, Para-Ethnographies of Branding and Design.

The theme of the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association is "Familiar, Strange." Sadre-Orafai's paper reveals that "Just as ethnographers use techniques of intimacy and estrangement in their fieldwork, balancing insider and outsider perspectives to make the strange familiar (translating others' experiences so that they are

intelligible beyond a local context), and the familiar strange (gaining enough critical distance to see underlying patterns and connections), so too, do street scouts and casting directors."

More information: [www.americananthro.org/AttendE ...
aspx?ItemNumber=1578](http://www.americananthro.org/AttendE...aspx?ItemNumber=1578)

Provided by University of Cincinnati

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