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Young Muslim Women

'Neo-Muslims'? Social engagement of devout young female Muslims

Germany

Iris Dähnke

CJD Nord

Executive summary:

In academic literature and the media a new type of young Muslim woman has emerged in the last 15 years – the so-called neo-Muslim woman. The term was coined by sociologist Sigrid Nökel in 2002 after conducting biographic interviews with second-generation post-migrant women. It described young women who had 'returned' to religious practices and dress codes and at the same time successfully participated in higher education and aspired to a professional career. Being both migrant and German, the young women are holders of hybrid 'this as well as that' identities. Their multiple affiliations are challenged and perceived as mutually exclusive dichotomous identity categories – in particular by the so-called 'majority society'. By wearing the Muslim headscarf they demonstrate belonging to the Muslim side of their identity: a transnational neo-Muslim identity potentially transcending national categories, which can represent a third option beyond the either-or identity dilemma.

We spoke to devout young Muslim women who are actively engaged in society and want to 'make a difference'. They want to co-shape society as visible Muslims and their choice of dress represents an expression of agency. We look at the wearing of the headscarf as a social practice of identity and investigate contexts of conflict: in school, work and public areas. The young women experience discrimination and stigmatisation on the basis of their clothing practice and alleged ethnic belonging. As 'representatives of Islam' they are subject to stereotypical ascriptions and assumptions of an essentialised and stereotyped collective Muslim identity. These often gendered ascriptions and assumptions are perpetuated by members of the so-called majority society, but also by members of their religious or ethnic community. Their body becomes subject to essentialising discourses.

Against this backdrop we want to investigate their individual and collective engagement: They are volunteers in various fields – youth sports, Islamic girls' groups, religious encounter events, refugee support and poetry slams – to name but a few. Their engagement reflects their wishes for cooperation and social cohesion, their fight against prejudice and for belonging and for positive identification as Muslims.

This report should be read in conjunction with the document "Individual case studies – introduction."

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Contents

1. Introduction

The target group of this case study were young Muslim women who had taken the decision to wear a Muslim headscarf and were actively engaged in different social contexts. This target group was chosen for a number of reasons: firstly, a few years ago reference to the so-called 'neo-Muslims' ('*Neo-Muslima*'[1]) started to appear in the media and in the specialist literature. In empirical studies at the beginning of the millennium Siegfried Nökel coined the term in her qualitative study '*Die Töchter der Gastarbeiter'* (Nökel, 2002) where she conducted biographic interviews with young Muslim women aged 18-28 and semi-structured interviews with representatives of Islamic associations in the Frankfurt and Bielefeld area in the mid-1990s. She described the lifeworlds of the young women, referred to as 'neo-Muslim women', as being characterized by the conscious confrontation with the more traditional Islam of their parents, through which they have acquired their own viewpoints, often in intensive critical engagement with Islam. They wanted to find an individual standpoint between the tradition of their parents and the culture of the host society. Women whom we can describe as 'neo-Muslims' tend to be sceptical about religious authorities. According to Nökel, their rational approach to religion leads them to feel suspicious about having an Imam or Hoca as authority figure and they follow their own feminine perspective (Nökel, 2002: 51). Many young Muslim women of 'neo-Muslim' orientation make a conscious decision to wear a headscarf and see no conflict between their chosen religious way of life and their educational and professional aspirations. They see their future in Germany and see no contradiction between the headscarf and their sense of belonging to the society in which they live (cf. also Rommelsbacher 2002, Dinç, 2014).

We understand young Muslim women as 'young people in conflict' primarily when they wear a headscarf, as their belonging to society is called into question amidst Islamophobia and constraints in the world of work. Broad sections of German society, as in many other western countries, are marked by increasing scepticism towards or even rejection of 'Islam', whereby the latter is often portrayed as the opposite of 'their own' by definition modern, democratic, liberal and egalitarian social order. This construction of Islam and Muslims as the embodiment of 'otherness' is part of a long tradition of Eurocentric constructions of foreignness. One of these is the discourse on orientalism, in which the Muslim world is portrayed as the antithesis of the western world, which is understood to be enlightened and modern. 'The West' and 'Islam' are constructed as a dichotomously contrasting pair, whereby both are essentialized (Said, 1979, 2009). Surveys show that anti-Muslim feelings and fears extend into the mainstream of society. For example, 40 percent of those questioned in the so-called *'Mitte'-Studie* ('Mainstream Study') of 2016 stated that Muslims should be prevented from migrating to Germany (Decker et al, 2016: 50). An anti-Islamic mood and the 'fear' of Muslims manifested themselves in Germany as a result of the resonance and success of anti-Muslim and anti-immigration publications, such as the one by the former Head of the *Bundesbank* Thilo Sarrazin: '*Deutschland schafft sich ab. Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen*', ('Germany is abolishing itself. How we're putting our country on the line', 2010), anti-Islamic movements like PEGIDA and the success of the right-wing populist party 'Alternative für Deutschland' (AfD). The debate about Muslim life in Germany is also reflected in the political discourse of the established parties: for years the so-called people's parties have been playing out a battle of interpretation around the question of whether Islam 'is part of' Germany *('Der Islam gehört zu Deutschland'*), or not. The expression 'Islam is part of Germany' was used by the then

[1] The term *Neo-Muslima* coined by Nökel is feminine and referred only to women. Since in English no feminine version of 'Muslim' exists we use the term neo-Muslim. We also use the term 'neo-Islamic' at a later point in a gender-neutral sense.

(CDU) President in 2010, but was refuted by leading politicians in his party. Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) repeated the phrase in 2015 and recently the new minister of the interior (CSU) stated publicly when taking office in 2018, that Islam 'is not part of' Germany. One reason for this symbolic statement is surely the attempt to win over right-wing voters after the success of the AfD. With regard to the almost five million Muslims that actually and permanently live in Germany, and are therefore 'part of' Germany, the statement can be understood as a symbolic one, which is, however, relevant for the identification and self-perception of many people living in Germany. The discussion about the symbolic belonging or non-belonging in Germany affects the Muslims living here and has a negative effect on their sense of belonging and 'being part of'.

With the Muslim headscarf this discussion acquires a gendered dimension. Approximately 30 per cent of the Muslim women in Germany wear the headscarf, and about 50 per cent of those that call themselves 'very religious' (Haug et al, 2009). In her work '*Anerkennung und Ausgrenzung*' (Recognition and exclusion', 2002) Birgit Rommelsbacher analysed continuities and fractures in the construction of 'otherness' in Christian-European culture. She described how the headscarf was regarded in western colonial times as a sign of backwardness and the repression of women. From this point of view the headscarf is understood in the 'Western' interpretation as a symbol of the repression of women and the removal of the headscarf is equated with liberation (Rommelsbacher, 2002). This interpretation is also propagated in Germany by prominent feminists, such as the journalist and publicist Alice Schwarzer. According to the linguist Reyhan Şahin the headscarf is usually seen in public discourse in Germany as a 'traditional Muslim symbol' and/or as a 'politico-Islamic symbol' and as such is associated with the 'backwardness' and fundamental stance of the wearer (Şahin, 2013). At the same time, many of those of the second and third generations in Germany who wear a headscarf are young, educated women from an urban environment. Against this social backdrop there have been almost twenty years of legal battles at the national and federal state levels over the right of Muslim women to wear a headscarf or not in their profession.

In many public service occupations the wearing of a Muslim headscarf is forbidden, as it is regarded as a religious symbol which contradicts the secular neutrality of the state. This applies, for example, to judges, public prosecutors and police officers. Discussion about whether to allow or ban the headscarf for teachers has been ongoing since 1999; an across-the-board ban was declared illegal by the Federal Constitutional Court. The issue continues to be discussed at the federal state level and many decisions have been delegated to schools in individual cases. From a legal point of view, the state's imperative of neutrality is in conflict with the right to religious freedom assured by the constitution. The position of women who wear a headscarf is difficult in many areas of the private labour market, for women who wear a headscarf are at a disadvantage when applying for jobs. An experiment carried out by the Institute for the Future of Labour showed that applicants who had the same level of qualifications, but wore a headscarf were much less likely to be offered an interview than applicants with a German name or foreign name, but did not wear a headscarf (Weichselbauer, 2016). Employers are therefore allowed to ban the headscarf because it is a religious symbol, as long as they ban all religious and political symbols at the workplace as part of company policy. If this is not the case, a hijab-ban is not permitted. [2] However, as it usually cannot be proven that an applicant has been rejected because she wears a

[2] Ruling of the European Court of Justice in 2017. See e.g. www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2017-03/eugh-kopftuch-verbot-arbeitsplatz-urteil
This study focuses on the hijab, which is most common among Muslims and was worn by the participants. Other types of headscarf like the niqab, which cover more of the face and are banned in public in some European countries, are not considered.

headscarf, access to work is beset with obstacles for hijabis. Rommelsbacher writes that the discrimination of Muslim women on the labour market is founded on the assumption that they

> are traditional and family oriented and therefore incapable of developing professional ambition. In contrast, German women are seen as emancipated; as this is identified with intelligence and professional competence, they are chosen in preference to other women (Rommelsbacher, 2009).

The lifeworlds and backgrounds of Muslim women living in Germany are heterogeneous and there are many different reasons for wearing a headscarf. For many, the decision to follow religious rules plays an important role. The wishes of the family or husband, peer group orientation or fashion trends are also reasons for wearing – or not wearing – a headscarf. Empirical studies on the attitudes of hijab-wearing women contradict the assumption that they are generally 'repressed' or 'not emancipated' as understood in western thinking. For the women who wear them, the headscarf has a number of different meanings, such as: a symbol of their religiosity, a sign of their belonging to the Muslim community, a symbol of their femininity, an expression of their humility, a sign of their abstinence before marriage, their non-availability to men and protection from their gazes[3] (Mirza & Meetoo, 2018). The headscarf has different meanings in different contexts. In countries where the headscarf is obligatory, such as Iran, not wearing one can represent an act of resistance, symbolic liberation and self-empowerment for women. For young Muslim women in western societies, however, wearing a headscarf can represent a confident expression of their own religiosity, an act of self-empowerment. In spite of resistance in society and – in some cases - the family, many young Muslim women in western countries wear a hijab as a sign of their religiosity and belonging (cf. Rommelsbacher, 2002, Thon, 2004, Şahin, 2013, Hoque, 2017).

'Neo Muslims' are usually second or third generation immigrants. Youths and young adults of second-generation immigrants are often described as holders of 'hybrid identities': they enclose a sense of belonging to various ethnic, cultural and national places. With the culture of origin of their parents, their multilingualism, socialization in German educational institutions and local and transnational cultural reference frameworks they have a diverse identity reference system that they can draw upon. 'Hybrid identities' describe the simultaneity of multiple affiliations to various social roles. This means, for example, that a person can be an athlete, legal practitioner, homosexual, female and politically conservative at the same time. The pressure to assume one clear identity at the expense of another is disappearing in post-modern societies. This simultaneity of various identities is likely to be denied to migrant and post-migrant youths. They have multiple affiliations which, according to the validity claims of large parts of the so-called majority society, are mutually exclusive: simultaneous national and cultural affiliations often exclude each other in a viewpoint that is based on nation-state tradition and cultural homogeneity: a person cannot be Hessian and Anatolian, German and devout Muslim. At the same time, persons labelled as migrants, i.e. persons who phenotypically, on grounds of their clothing, their name or accent are recognized as not belonging to the German so-called majority society, are denied this status of 'being German' by the othering discourse, experiences of othering and everyday discrimination. In post-migrant societies where a struggle takes place on the issues of integration, identity and the 'recollection' of an imaginary, supposedly homogeneous identity from a time before immigration, 'macrosocial negotiation processes continue in the personal interior of holders of hybrid identities' (Foroutan, 2013: 86).

[3] There is a certain controversy on the last issue in the Muslim community since not all Muslims follow the interpretation of 'protection' from men

> The game of affiliations (to another country, another culture, another region) between self-experience and ascription […] as well as the constant negotiation and the self-thematization […] of their own identity in this spectrum can be described as core elements of hybridity. In the biographical core narrative, different reference systems play a role which become relevant at different moments, and this gives the hybrid subjects […] a situational and transitory identity' (Foroutan, 2013: 91)

Neo-Islamic identities can be a match of these hybrid identities if they include an open and participative development of the individual in society. They can be seen as an attempt to form new frames of reference beyond identification with the parents' culture of origin and the affiliation to an ethnically homogenous German culture, in which being German, being Muslim and the accommodation of different cultural practices are compatible in everyday life. Those who hold hybrid identities are constantly challenged to 'negotiate their loyalties, question their affiliations and come to terms with the crossing of boundaries' (Foroutan & Schäfer, 2009). With their potentialities of multilingualism, capability for empathy, negotiation mentality and ambiguity tolerance hybrid identities afford opportunities for meeting the challenges of changing post-migrant societies.

Against this background we chose young Muslim women, who have consciously chosen to wear a headscarf and who are actively involved in society, as the target group for this case study. We want to present how and where conflicts in the lifeworlds of these young people arise, and how they deal with these conflicts. We set out from the hypothesis that, as outwardly recognizable Muslims in a climate of increasing Islamophobia, the young women experience conflicts in their everyday lives in the form of rejection, animosity and other types of discrimination. Furthermore, we assume that the headscarf is a cause of conflict when choosing a career or looking for employment or training. Their active involvement in society is regarded against the backdrop of their self-positioning as visible Muslim women. In the context of their 'hybrid identities' we can see the young women's negotiation processes with their families, their peers and in some cases with their migrant or religious communities concerning their lifestyles, values and religious practices.

2. Methods

During the empirical research we interviewed a total of 15 Muslim women individually and visited 16 events[4]. We wrote seven field diaries with participant observation and documented some, predominately public, events photographically. The 15 individual interviews were conducted face to face in line with the interview guideline and tape-recorded. The interviews lasted between one and three hours. The average length was 100 minutes (overall interview minutes: 1524). A number of personal and telephone conversations were held with experts and at events, which were not recorded on tape. These included two academic experts and a journalist and blogger. Additionally, although not documented as such, we regularly took note of blogs, home pages, Facebook pages, Instagram pages and tweets of various Islamic (youth) groups and hijab-wearing activists on issues relevant to our research for information purposes and used them only in part for documentation purposes. This includes the websites or Facebook pages of Islamic girls' organizations, an Islamic students' organization, an Islamic network on Muslims who are socio-politically active (*Zahnräder*), Muslim youth associations, the Ramadan event and the Young Islam Conference and the twitter accounts and websites of the bloggers Kübra Gümüşay, Mervy Kay and Betül Ulusoy. Furthermore, we consider a recording of a conference on Islam and feminism entitled `feminislam´ which took place at the Young Islam Conference in Berlin 2017, and a written documentation of a conference on Muslims' social engagement organized by the *`Zahnräder´* network, also in 2017.

The recorded interviews took place face to face. Approximately two thirds of them are held at the office of the CJD. Other interviews took place in cafés, at the researcher's or interviewees' homes. The interviews took place in three North-German cities. The women selected for the interviews are not representative of the Muslim women living in Germany and they are very heterogeneous at the same time. They are characterized by their above-average level of school qualifications. Their educational ambitions correspond with the image of the `neo-Muslim woman´ described above. All of them had attained a university-entrance level of qualification – the German *Abitur* – or were just about to. Common to them all is that the Islamic faith plays an important role in the way they live their lives. They incorporated various practices of their faith in everyday life, such as praying, fasting or wearing a headscarf. Ten of the young interviewees were born in Germany to second-generation immigrants and a further four immigrated as young children. Only one interviewee immigrated as an adult. The of origins of the families, in descending order, are Turkey, Afghanistan, Tunisia, Iraq/Iran, West-Africa and South-East Asia. The sample includes the children of former `labour migrants´ as well as women whose parents arrived as refugees. The women were aged between 18 and 35 years old, with the average being 23.6 years; two thirds of the women were aged between 18 and 22. At the time of the interviews eight women were at university, two were in full-time employment and one was still at school (more details in appendix).

For this study, we looked for young women who had chosen to wear a headscarf and were actively involved or wanted to be actively involved in society. The acquisition of interviewees and access to the field turned out to be long-winded and more difficult than originally expected. Some websites and groups, such as *Styleislam* - described by Dinç as a neo-Islamic fashion producer – and the *Cube Mag* magazine have ceased production or are temporarily inactive. Many attempts to contact Islamic groups were protracted or simply failed. Emails to a local contact person at the

[4] 3x Islamic girls' planning meeting in mosque, 4x weekly women's class in mosque, 1x Islamic women's action meeting in community centre, 1x youth boxing in sports hall, 3x Ramadan encounter event (2x planning meeting in community centre + 1x public event itself), 3x Islamic academics' networking meeting in library, mosque and community centre, 1x poetry slam event at a school.

Young Islam Conference were left unanswered, but we did manage to contact the federal office. A multiplier in an Islamic women's network did not `have the time´ to disseminate to stakeholders or possible interview partners; other queries were also left unanswered by associations. Two experts who were asked to be interviewed (journalist/blogger and academic expert) turned us down due to `a lack of time´. Contact with an Islamic girls' group was successful thanks to the institutional contacts of the CJD to the group's Islamic funding association. At an event eight women gave their e-mail address and let us know that they were interested in taking part in the interviews. Six of them did not answer the subsequent e-mail, so only two interviews resulted. We spoke to several women at events. In five cases they signalled their interest in an interview. This was later withdrawn and the loosely arranged interview was cancelled on grounds of `lack of time´. Furthermore, three other interviews were cancelled at short notice. Reasons were Reasons were` lack of time´. The 15 interviews that did take place and were tape-recorded came about as follows: direct approach by the researcher at events (2 women), volunteering at Muslim youth groups, at a mosque event and the Ramadan Encounter Event after the researcher had introduced the project (5 women), private contacts by the researcher (1 woman), professional contact of the researcher (1 woman) and six women were approached by the interviewees themselves in the 'snowball' system.

We can only speculate about the reasons why many institutional and private players hesitated to take part in PROMISE. Two of a number of reasons given by institutional players are 1) young Muslims are currently being over-researched in the context of conflict and 2) a mistrust of players from the so-called majority society, as Muslims fear being `misrepresented´. In this respect, one associational representative told of how media reports had used photographs of young Muslim women in their association as imagery in a report on radicalization. A sense of mistrust felt by some members of the community towards Non-Muslim players for fear of misrepresentation could be a reason why several women, who had signalled interest in the project when first contacted, withdrew their interest after a few days – perhaps after speaking to relatives or friends. This theory is supported by the fact that a relatively high number of interviews came to fruition via the Muslim interviewees themselves when they acted as disseminators. The researchers themselves were not Muslims. This was described as an obstacle to participation in field access by Muslim members of the NPPN. 12 of the 15 interviews were conducted by a female interviewer. The difference in identity between the researchers and the interviewees – religion, age, gender, ethnicity – was thus reduced by one category. The opportunity, as a woman, to participate in women's groups was a positive one, as there is strict gender separation at Muslim events which take place in mosques.[5] With one exception, the Christian researcher was the only woman not wearing a headscarf in the women's group at the mosque. It was very helpful that individual contacts had taken her there and were very welcoming, which made her feel that she was not a `stranger´.

The interviewees gave feedback after the interviews and emphasized how important the issue of the engagement of young people in general, and young Muslims in particular, was to them. When asked their opinion about the difficult acquisition of interview partners, they speculated: a lack of time; the feeling that it was pointless; mistrust in the unknown institution of the majority society; bad experiences in the community; shyness of the young women.

[5] Gender separation also takes place in mixed-gender Muslim groups, such as in student meetings. Women and men sit on different sides of the room, whereby there's often a kind of mixed area in the middle where couples sit together (cf. Nökel, 2002).

All of the interviewees gave their consent in writing. We did not include field notes on groups which were private (i.e. upon invitation) when not all participating individuals were informed of our `mission´ as researchers. No other ethical issues arose.

All interviews were transcribed and coded in NVivo in a total of 298 nodes. The material was analysed in accordance with the PROMISE themes. The links between mosque associations and initiatives with other domestic and foreign-based political players, the so-called `political Islam´ and internal Islamic differences (e.g. between Sunnis and Shiites) were not broached in the interviews and are not part of the analysis.

3. Key findings

3.1 Hijab-wearing as a social practice of identity

The majority of the young women we interviewed were between 11 and 19 years of age when they started wearing the hijab. There were only two exceptions: one of them - a first-generation immigrant from the Maghreb – had first begun to wear a headscarf in her late twenties after being in Germany for several years. Another young woman did not wear a headscarf at the time of the interview, but intended to start doing so upon getting married.

For these young women donning a headscarf represented a part of a process. For the majority of them thinking about wearing a headscarf and then finally deciding to wear one came at the end of an intensive examination of their religiosity. The interviewees came predominantly from families that pursued religious practices such as praying or fasting. They had experienced this as children with their parents or grandparents and often went to the mosque with their parents. The only exceptions were Mara, 31 and Madiha, also 31. Mara told us that her father was explicitly non-religious and that after the family migrated from Turkey to Germany he banned her mother from wearing a traditional headscarf. For her, the decision to wear a headscarf meant a rejection of her father's ban. Madiha grew up in Tunisia with her Muslim family. She explained that she had seen her grandmother praying, but beyond that, religion had had no bearing on her family life. When she was growing up in Tunisia, wearing a headscarf was prohibited. All of the other interviewees described in different ways, how they had experienced religious socialization in their birth family. When in their youth, religious practices such as praying and reading the Koran 'becalmed' them, took away their 'inner unrest' or did them 'good'. This positive effect on their well-being strengthened their ties to their religion and deepened their analysis of it. This analysis took place, for example, in Koran lessons, in the mosque, by reading the Koran, through books and Youtube videos of various Imams. In their search, some of the interviewees tried out several mosques, looking for answers to their questions and the approach to their religion that felt harmonious to them. For some young women it was important that lectures in the mosque were given in German. There were diverse reasons for this: Selma, 21, would have liked to take along peers from her 'multicultural circle of friends'. She was not able to as the lessons in her first mosque were taught in Turkish. For Banu, 21, her religion only became comprehensible and plausible when she started to read books and watch videos in German about it. Amira, 22 years-old and from Indonesia, enjoyed going to a large Turkish mosque, as the lectures there were in German and therefore accessible for her.

Some had already felt the desire to wear a headscarf at age 10 or 11 - years before they actually began to wear one. It was often the parents who advised them to wait until they were 'mature' and 'confident' enough to wear a headscarf. One exception to this was the now 26-year-old Teslime, who began wearing a hijab at 12, as she wanted to emulate her big sister.

> Well then my sister started wearing [one], then my mother, and then me … and okay I was a bit early, but my parents disapproved. They said wait till you're 17 or 18, at an age when you're really mature, when you understand what it's all about. Thinking back, really I only wore it because it was fun or fashionable. I liked it; my sister wore it, my role model, and my mum, too. […] In retrospect, of course, I could have waited a year or two. Perhaps, although I don't regret it, but it is good, you're mature, you understand more. But it was left up to me, my parents said, fine, if you want to take it off, if you want to put it on. You can at any time. (Teslime, 26)

For many young women who had already begun to wear a headscarf at school or when in vocational training, their decision was also a means of asserting their own convictions over their parents. Approximately half of the interviewees stated that at least one of their parents advised them to wait before wearing a headscarf when their daughter informed them of their decision. Many parents feared that if their daughters wore a headscarf, they would be discriminated against by their teachers or would have difficulties entering into employment. In addition to the fear of discrimination, the parents also doubted whether their daughters were ready to accept the restrictions that a headscarf would bring and deal with any difficulties that may arise.

> The funny thing is: my mother wears a headscarf as well, [but] in the beginning she was against it. […] my mother [wanted] to be a nurse, but wasn't allowed to at the time, because of her headscarf. […] that's why she said 'you should really do your training course first, start working and then do it'. I said 'mum, when I've finished my training and I start work, they'll tell me not to do it then, too'. And so [we'd] already had a bit of a discussion about it then, too. But after about a year, when she saw that I was really serious about it and that I had also found some peace of mind and was no longer so rebellious, a bit calmer […] and […] my lifestyle had not taken a 180 degree turn, I hadn't become extremely withdrawn or anything, which does happen. She then realized that it was a good decision. And I think that was the moment where she began to be proud of it. (Selma, 21, began at age 19)

> I wanted to start wearing a headscarf much earlier. I was only in class 5 (year 7) at the time. […] But my parents were against it. They said, 'no, you're still too young. It would cause you too many problems'. And so I wasn't allowed to wear one. It wasn't until I was in class 8 (year 10) that I said 'mum, but now I really want to', she said, 'okay, it's your decision. Do what you think is right for you.' (Melek, 19, began at age 14)

> My father was all for it, but he […] said: 'Find a training course establish yourself in a job and then sometime, when you're 25 or 26, you can still decide to do it. But not right now, at such a crucial time at school.' I listened, of course, and thought it over, but still did it. And I think that's also a part of growing up, when you decide which direction you want to take in life. (Banu, 21, began at age 16)

As such, donning a headscarf represents an important turning point on the way to becoming an adult, assuming responsibility and making one's own decisions. In deciding for the headscarf, the

young women were expressing agency. By wearing a headscarf they were deciding to make themselves visible as devout Muslims and face the challenges that this would bring within and outside of the Muslim community. In the eyes of many others, wearing a headscarf in public made them 'representatives of the religion' (Selma) and therefore exposed them to the resulting judgments (see below). They made their decision knowing they would be faced with difficulties, discrimination, obstacles and prejudices. This step was a courageous one. In contrast to these implications of wearing a headscarf, which are present in their own environment and extend into the whole of society, for these young women the decision is primarily a personal one. The realization that practising their religion raised their sense of well-being, led many to feel the desire to follow the commandments, including the interpretation of the sura, which explains the reasons for wearing the headscarf. The decision for the headscarf was described as an 'inner' process […] which is visible from outside' (Emine, 20), 'like a tattoo. It's an inner decision. I would like to have one, you convince yourself. It's also something that stays on your skin all your life that people see' (Banu, 21). Emine expressed feelings of being 'more complete' in a headscarf. Madiha described how she felt:

> Before I wore a headscarf I was still a devout Muslim. The headscarf was taboo in [my country]. […] Since coming to Germany, I have experienced so much in life […] I was also at an age, where I said […] what's important for me and what's not […] important for me, […] the first reason [for the headscarf] was to see if I have the courage to follow a path that the others haven't taken. […] Of course it's only a piece of material, it doesn't change my character or my attitude to life from before, but it is a sort of step, a proof: Okay, when you take such a step, then you're strong enough to achieve other things, so to speak. (Madiha, 31)

The headscarf had various meanings for the interviewees[6]: Many of the young women described how, as a result of wearing a headscarf, they felt 'more confident' and 'stronger' to overcome the challenges of life in other areas, too. Some said they were 'proud' of themselves for not taking off their headscarf, in spite of the hostilities and difficulties they were faced with. The headscarf was also a kind of 'protection': for some this meant protection against men and against sexual harassment by men (cf. for example Necla, Marvie, Melek). Some found that when they wear a headscarf they are treated with more respect by some boys and men. Mara does not agree with the interpretation of the hijab as protection from men and asserts 'if men have a problem, they should start with themselves, not with the woman'. Selma and Necla understood protection also a form of self-control: protection from oneself, inappropriate aggression 'so you didn't just freak, like you did when you were a teenager' (Selma) and protection in order to give up certain behaviours (such as going out at night). Wearing a headscarf also expresses their belonging to the Muslim community. Alina, 19, told us that she had already begun to wear one at age 11, because as a West-African she had 'always' been taken to be a Christian, of which she 'had enough', and said to her mother: 'No, mum, I want to start, I want everyone here to see that I'm a Muslim. The Muslim headscarf serves as a distinguishing mark for other Muslims, too, that connects them with other women who would otherwise be complete strangers[7], 'you see each other, greet each other

[6] At this point, it is important to emphasize that the meaning of the headscarf was different for individual interviewees and that they did not share all the viewpoints expressed by them.

[7] Simultaneously with its function as a connecting element the headscarf can also symbolize differences, as the various Muslim groups have differing styles of tying the headscarf. The classic Turkish headscarf is tied in a completely different way from Arab or African ones. This means that the headscarf wearer can be assigned to a particular ethnic group. In addition, there is the semiotic aspect of various outfits, such as the modern jeans style or orthodox items of clothes such as the chador and other clothes. For more on this see Sahin, 2013.

and say: I am also one of you' (Marvie). For these women of 'multiple nativity' ('*Mehrheimigkeit*') (Foroutan, 2013, see also Foroutan & Schäfer, 2009) donning a headscarf represents an affirmation of the Muslim part of their identity – which does not mean, however, that they feel any less German (see below). Selma explained,

> Then I started praying, i.e. tried to pray five times a day. [When praying] you put on a headscarf and […] long clothes […] Then, [after two or three months], I thought 'have I got two personalities at the moment?' At prayer and during ceremonies I somehow feel completely different from when I'm outside. Because I've always been like that, all or nothing, I then left wearing short clothes. […] It was like I had a bit of a conflict inside me. And then I made a decision and said 'Okay, I'll put on the headscarf as protection for me, as a symbol for me, of my honour and pride and self-confidence' (Selma, 21)

Furthermore, our interviewees believe that putting on a headscarf signified a departure from a fixation on outward appearances. For some of them it represented a conscious dissociation with the pressure on women to comply with a particular ideal of beauty, to consume particular beauty products and to subject their body to its evaluation by others. They felt the idea of being judged more according to their words and their character instead of their appearance, their clothes or their figure as satisfying and empowering.

3.2 The school experience

For almost all of the interviewees, putting on a headscarf signified a turning point. Almost all of them reported that the reaction to the headscarf of people in their environment ranged from irritation to rejection. Of the eight women who had already started to wear one at school, six described the reactions and behaviour of individual teachers towards them as hurtful, degrading or stigmatizing. Four women reported that on the first day they wore a headscarf at school, some teachers had asked them if they had been 'forced' to wear it. The women reacted to this question differently, which appears to depend on the context and their personality. Amira, 22, was 17 when she started to wear a headscarf and when asked by teachers why she was wearing one and if she had been 'forced' to do so, she explained her motivations, the teachers expressed their understanding and their relationship had remained positive. Ermine, 20, who started wearing a headscarf at 15, felt hurt by the question, because the teacher 'knew that my parents were such really lovely people. […] She didn't ask me at all why *I* had chosen to wear one and stuff'. For Selma and Banu the question was the expression of a knee-jerk viewpoint: 'If I had been forced to, then not at 19, but at 11, 12, or, I dunno, 13' (Selma), '[my teachers] actually didn't understand at all that a 16-year-old could also choose to of her own free will' (Banu). The attention of the teachers was perceived more positively when the interest as to 'why' was expressed openly compared with when there was an insinuation of force. Many interviewees felt the need to distance themselves from the idea of 'force'. Five of the young women outlined situations in which they were devalued, humiliated or marginalized by some teachers because of their headscarf. At the same time, it must be pointed out that the interviewees often received support from other teachers or the head of the school, who defended them against discrimination and provided assistance. Two of the women, who had already been wearing a headscarf at school, experienced no problems with authority figures there at all.

> [I wore my headscarf on the first day and we had theatre club. I was supposed to play a part in the first scene] and then, in front of the whole class, […] and with such an

> undertone, she just said: 'Well, we're in the theatre here, not in the house of Muslim women.' And I was just so shocked in that moment, because it was just so, pfff, directly aimed at me. I was […] a good pupil […] and popular with the teachers. It was just so unheard of for me, that a teacher would speak to me like that. […] I was really hurt by it. (Banu, 21)
>
> [I said to the teacher] can you say that again, because I didn't understand, then she just said, 'well, take the headscarf off, then you can hear better,' for example. That was it then for me, as far as that teacher was concerned […] (Mara, 31)
>
> Then in a politics lesson we talked about how I could say 'no' to IS and how I didn't have to join up with them, although it was clear anyway that I don't speak for that group, […] but my teacher thought it important to broach the subject with me in front of the whole class. […] [My other teacher said] that I had to take my headscarf off once a month, because I had to give him the freedom to see my hair. (Melek, 19)
>
> I had many, many problems […] with my teachers. I came back to school after the summer holidays wearing a headscarf. I didn't quite know at the time, how to combine the two things. I wore a pink skirt […] and a pink headscarf and my make-up was subtle. […] [We had breakfast together], my teachers came in and at first just looked at me. 'Cause I'd always been this sassy chick ('*Tussi*') who used to brush and braid her hair in class. […] They looked directly at me, my teachers, and said: 'What's all this then? Well, really […] And I […] thought to myself: Eh? What are they talking about and then they said: 'Take it off!' I said: 'I am not going to take it off! I've chosen to wear it myself'. And honestly, for two or three days they gave me funny looks and when I put my hand up, they just ignored me. They never said hello, never said goodbye. Completely and utterly different. And I'd always been really, really good with my teachers. I […] never regarded them as teachers, but as friends. […] [After three days] we wanted to take photos of the class. And then [my teacher] said to me: 'You don't fit in with the class image.' And that was that was the moment, where I had to bite my lip, because I thought to myself, okay, don't get aggressive. I'm a very, very cheeky person, I openly admit that […] [but] I had such a lump in my throat that I nearly had to cry. (Necla, 19)

The women were irritated by the often perceived assumption that since wearing a headscarf they had 'suddenly' changed – the headscarf was for them primarily an externally visible symbol of an inner process. Some described their irritation and disappointment that the teachers, 'who do actually know me' (Melek) had changed their attitudes towards them, no longer said hello to them, or ignored them altogether. Furthermore, in the experience of the interviewees headscarf wearers are perceived to be less capable. Banu and Necla found that their school grades went down after wearing a headscarf at school. Both requested a performance review. Necla was given the support of the head of the school and was put into the parallel class, so that she could 'have some peace', Banu had previously been the best pupil in German and after donning a headscarf, slipped into mediocrity until she spoke to the teacher -

> And then at the next grade review she actually said: 'Yes, I've paid a bit more attention to you and this time I've given you the best grade of all […]' And then I thought: […] Why now and not before I raised the issue with her? So that showed me, that without

> this headscarf she would have kept a completely different image of me in her mind. (Banu, 21)

3.3 Professional expectations

The interviewees see no conflict between being a working woman and their religious beliefs. Almost all of them have specific professional goals: the students and graduates want to be doctors, architects, psychologists, social education workers, lawyers, engineers or go into development cooperation. Those who already have jobs work in the health sector, in the software industry and in social work. Only one of the women would like to be a housewife and mother and be involved in voluntary work. All of the respondents are aware that wearing a headscarf makes it more difficult to enter into a profession. The fear of rejection on grounds of the headscarf goes hand in hand with the uncertainty of not knowing whether or not the headscarf is the reason for not being offered an interview after making a written application.[8] This fear is based on the experiences of friends and relatives, as well as `hear-say´ from women who have been rejected or bullied because of their headscarf. Several respondents had stories of their experiences to tell: when applying for a part-time or holiday job or training course they were rejected on the grounds of the hijab respectively were offered the job on the condition they do not wear it (vocational training in a sports centre, sales in cosmetics and clothes shops). A common reason given was that the headscarf may irritate customers. The comment made by one of the respondents that the headscarf could also be a signal of acceptance for Muslim customers did not convince the boss. In some cases, unspecific criticism by the line manager about wearing a headscarf placed the criticism on the behaviour of the woman wearing one: The question `Do you really have to?´ or the comment that the `attitude´ did not fit in with the company call in to question the decision-making capacity and conduct of the headscarf-wearer. The interviewees felt that other reasons for rejection were based in their view on imputations that were, however, not made explicit. These included the assumption the headscarf wearer was not capable of working in a team, not up to everyday working practices, `didn't speak to men´ (Madiha), were `repressed and can probably only do what their parents say´ (Marvie), were not trustworthy, were politically suspect or wanted to impose their own religious convictions on others. These are all prejudices and ascriptions that are being circulated in current Islamophobic discourses. The fear of the `Islamization´ of other people is evident above all in pedagogical occupations.

> I worked in a *Kindergarten* and lots of kids suddenly wanted [the headscarf] for a short time to put it on, try it out and stuff. When that happened I was scared stiff, because I thought, oh, no, please not that. Not that I wanted people to come and say I told you so. But with children you can't do it any other way – it was just like, 'yeah, I want to do it too, now'. The thing is, they just liked me […] so I think, if I'd had my hair plaited at the time, they'd probably have wanted to plait theirs, too. (Banu, 21)

On the other hand, the interviewees spoke of line managers who explicitly tolerated headscarves, strongly rejected discrimination and protected the women from the scepticism of customers or other staff. Entry into the world of work and acceptance as a headscarf wearer is therefore accompanied by uncertainties, whereby the women affected do not know if they will be rejected

[8] In Germany it is still usual to include a photograph with a written job application. As described above, women who wear a headscarf have to write three to five times as many applications as women with a German name who do not. Applications without a photograph are on the increase, but the interviewees are sceptical about this as they want to be accepted with a headscarf and this would be visible in the interview anyway.

because of their headscarf or not. The respondents try to rationalize the rejection they expect to receive in order to increase their chances of predicting success. This does not succeed as the ban on headscarves is not based on logic and there are no clear patterns: in some cases involving customers headscarves are tolerated, but in others they are not; the respondents believe that the reasons for their rejection do not make sense. This leads to a sense of insecurity and the expectation of discrimination: `there might be other reasons for turning you down. But you think it had something to do with the person. Or because you wear a headscarf (Selma).

Not wearing a headscarf is a difficult option: `You have to choose between religion and the job´ (Amira). The feeling of not being accepted for the person you are creates an obstacle and a reason for not taking a job that demands that you take off your headscarf, for `there's also an identification process behind it. […] when I […] know I am only accepted and respected because I've taken it off, then for me it also means they don't really respect me´ (Banu). The knowledge that they, as headscarf wearers, have to `perform better´ gives some of the interviewees the feeling that they want to `prove´ that they can achieve their goals *with* the hijab. This narrative is supported by success stories of women whose employer was at first sceptical, but whose performance ultimately dispelled these doubts and made a career possible. This meritocratic view places the individual at the centre and hopes that individual performance can overcome structural discrimination and prejudices. Personal success stories are indeed very motivating for the young women, but do place a great responsibility on the individual to fight social prejudice.

3.4 Discrimination in public places and transport

Hijab-wearing women face multiple discrimination: as visible Muslims they are affected by the constructions of foreignness and current terrorism discourse as mentioned in the introduction. As women of Islamic faith, they are regarded as the unemancipated embodiment of a `non-European´ gender inequality. As people labelled as immigrants, they are stigmatised as `foreign scroungers´ and rejecting integration. In addition, they are potentially subject to racism on account of their skin colour. These multiple stigmatizations are often reflected in rejection and animosity in public spaces and on public transport. Eleven of the women we interviewed said they had had such experiences. These ranged from hostile looks, insults and abuse to actual physical attacks (attempts at pulling off the headscarf, spitting). The abuse often takes the form of sexist insults regarding their headscarf (`headscarf slut´) or racial abuse regarding their skin colour. Furthermore, some women had experienced being called `terrorist´ or overheard being referred to as extremists or assassins. Several women experienced people on public transport making loud derogative and stigmatizing comments about `foreigners´ or `Muslims´ while looking in their direction without directly speaking to them: `The Muslims don't want to integrate at all, the typical stuff, […] they're backward and always so aggressive´ (Selma) or `they all want to get their hands on our money´ (Necla).

> Outside the Jobcentre, sometimes I have to pass through or pass by, I hear it all there: 'No surprise to see her here'… [The thing is] I work [in the Jobcentre] and I'm not one of those who [receives benefits]. (Mara, 31)

> [I was 13 years old] and alone in a train carriage. And there were three drunken people […] they were right next to me, […] the man was just drunk, so I don't take it seriously anymore. But it was a really threatening situation, because I was just so young. […] [The drunken man] said: `I suppose you think you look prettier like that? I don't think

> so. I think you're just as ugly in it.' […] And then the man opened the door with the train still going and threatened to throw me out to see if God would protect me. (Marvie, 18)
>
> An old lady sat [at the bus stop] and was talking to some small children […] I stood there beside them [and waited for the bus] […] 'They're only here for our money, they just want to rob us. And why do they wear a headscarf? It looks so ugly.' [And then I said]: 'Listen. You can say it to my face; you don't have to prattle on to twelve-year-old kids.' […] And then she said she didn't understand. So I said: 'You don't need to understand. I'm the one wearing it, not you! I understand and that's all that counts.' – 'Yes, but when I look out of my window I see masses of headscarves', she said. 'But that's great. Then you see colourful heads […] so what's the problem?' And she just couldn't say what the problem was and at some point she didn't know what to say anymore, so she spat at me and got on the bus. (Necla, 19)
>
> I know that it is difficult, because many people still don't understand that you can be a free person and wear a headscarf. […] I'm absolutely not doing anything wrong. I'm not depriving anyone of their liberty. So why do people want to take my liberty away from me? (Melek, 19)

The aim of discrimination and debasement is often to deny affiliation to the autochthonous society. With comments such as `go back to your own country´, `what do you want here´ and `in Germany you don't stand on the cycle path´ the recipient is being denied affiliation to German society. This contradicts the feeling of being `just as German´ (Necla) as those being discriminative. Necla, who described herself as a former 'sassy chick' ('*Tussi*'), reported by far the most insults and hostilities of all the interviewees. She told us that she was insulted `four, five or six times a week´, which had become `normal´ for her. Her mother, who started to wear a headscarf after her daughter did, is virtually never insulted. Outwardly, Necla appeared very fashionable, striking and figure accentuated. Whereas the others dressed in long, baggy clothes, in a casual jeans look or classic chic with modest make up, Necla wore very fashionable clothes, jewellery and striking make up. It is possibly the combination of headscarf and glamorous look that `disrupts the image' and gives rise to even more `irritation´ than the `simple´ headscarf to potential aggressors.

3.5 Young Muslim women between expectations and ascriptions

Further areas of conflict arise for the young women from the diverse role expectations and attributions that are ascribed to them by various actors. Restrictions on female behaviour are based on stereotypical gender ascriptions and traditional conservative or patriarchal social order systems. The young interviewees have had to fight against the ideas heaped upon them, such as `a young Muslim woman […] should not box´ (Selma), young women should not travel without male accompaniment or a lower level of education would be sufficient for a woman (Fieldwork diary, 16 March 2018). As headscarf-wearing Muslims the women have traditional conservative lifestyles and family models ascribed to them. When they do not fall in line with the expectations and, for example, are not married by a certain age or categorically reject the provider-marriage model, they cause irritation for both Muslims and Non-Muslims.

The generalization that headscarf-wearing women less `emancipated´ and `independent´ than women without a headscarf is an important basis for discrimination at the workplace and an

important basis for the above-mentioned assumption that women are `forced´ to wear a headscarf by a man, i.e. father or husband. The notion of headscarf-wearing Muslims being subordinate to men in a hierarchical gender model influences actual gender relations. When women put on a headscarf, they experience a change in the role expectations that men place upon them. Gender-hierarchic ascriptions can also cause conflict in partnerships.

> I also noticed that with young men from my Arab environment […] that the men view me differently now. That I'm somehow this woman who doesn't say boo to a goose, the typical Muslim woman – the idea that very many men have – who doesn't have an opinion in life, nods her head and says 'yes' – and I can't be doing with that. That's not what I wanted to achieve. That's just not me. (Madiha, 31, has been wearing a headscarf for two years)

> [People think] when she wears a headscarf, she expects to have children and stay at home and is a housewife. A woman can choose to do that, of course, that's not the problem – the problem is that this is the assumption. […] it's clearly a challenge for because it suits such a lot of men, it's just easier for them and they think that we've accepted it, but they don't know how we really think. And that's also the reason why so many Islamic marriages fail. A huge number fail, because Muslim men haven't come as far as Muslim women. (Mara, 31, has been wearing a headscarf for 16 years)

The interviewees believe that the fundamental equality of men and women is also corroborated in their religion - accordingly the Koran describes the equality of man and woman before God, but on account of their biological differences ascribes complementary roles to them. Islamic duties apply equally to men and women. The experience of the interviewees was, however, that they, as headscarf-wearing women, appeared to have the duty of correct religious practice ascribed to them. Patriarchal and sexist structures favour women being subjected to stricter rules than men of the same age. The demands for the same freedoms and duties for their daughters present a huge challenge for the generation of parents, some of whom come from a patriarchal rural environment where women were `a bit like servants´ (Selma).

> I think it's sad that boys say: 'That's right, as a girl, a Muslim girl, you can't have a boyfriend, but we can, 'cause we're men.' There's no mention of that anywhere in Islam. It says women *and* men aren't allowed to. […] but they just don't understand. I think it's down to their culture. (Necla, 19)

Not just for the majority society, but also for their community, the Muslim woman in a headscarf both embodies and represents her religion. If she does anything wrong, this is immediately associated with her religion. As the journalist and blogger Kübra Gümüşay put it, `when I go through a red light, Islam goes through a red light´ (Fieldwork diary, 16 March 2018). In their own communities, women are also subjected to social controls and the policing of behaviours deemed to be wrong in the dominant discourse of the community. The headscarf necessitates an increase in self-control.

> With a headscarf on you have to be careful with your opinions. Because opinions always sort of [get judged], 'ah, the one in the headscarf. They're like that.' (Madiha, 31)

> I walked through the amusement district after dark with my husband and received a few looks. As if to say, 'what's she doing here at this time of night in a headscarf?' […] Okay, the Germans didn't say anything, they looked at me too, but our people had other things going through their minds. They were thinking, 'she's up to something, no doubt about it, she's not just passing through.' They're just so prejudiced. (Teslime, 26)

The interviewees also experienced conflicts with people who interpret religion differently, for example, when they encountered Salafists. Also, in their day-to-day social engagement liberal and conservative religious ideas had to be negotiated in organizational matters, such as the separation of women and men in rooms. It is also interesting in the context of this case study that two interviewees reported that their work in their independent established Muslim youth association was described by authority figures of the local Mosque associations as `haram' – i.e. prohibited. Their association was labelled as a `sect´, which was unfathomable to the young women. They described their interpretation as `Islam of the Middle Way´. It was important to them that their work in the association was compliant with Islam.

3.6 Coping Strategies and supporting agents

The women we interviewed cited their family – above all their parents and husbands – as their most important supporting agents. Relationships with their parents were largely free from major conflicts and they spoke with about their families love, appreciation and respect. Many of the women saw their parents as role models as regards their career plans, their commitment, or when dealing with conflicts. The young women's friendships were mostly characterized by diversity – for the younger ones especially, the diversity of their school friends was akin to the diversity of their peer group at school. Overall, the friendships described were supportive and open-minded and were an important source of strength for the young women. Friends and fellow schoolmates with diverse backgrounds – Atheist, Muslim or Christian – sided with them in situations where they were subjected to discrimination. Friends and schoolmates `spoke out´ against discrimination.

> For instance, when they're in a group of young people or even older ones and someone suddenly starts saying bad things about Islam and Muslims in Germany, I know I can count on my friends [Susan] and [Charlotte] to stand up and tell them they're talking rubbish. Our best friend is also a Muslim girl. (Melek, 19)

The teachers, lecturers and other authority figures (e.g. sports trainers, school heads) that accepted and encouraged them are also contexts and agents of support for the young women. They described positively their experience of an open, tolerant and non-discriminatory environment at school or at university. Moreover, they attached great importance to individual encounters with acquaintances, fellow students, colleagues or strangers. If there was an element of understanding in these encounters and they felt they were viewed as individuals, could break down prejudices, or had the feeling there was understanding for their religious practices. These encounters served as confirmation for them for their fundamentally positive attitude towards society.

In the context of everyday discrimination and hostility in public places, the women employed various coping strategies which helped them to reduce the burden of these experiences: they tried not to take unfriendly treatment personally (Banu), `laugh about it later´ […], rationalized incidents and viewed them in a differentiated way (`there are bad people everywhere´, Serpil) and told

themselves that others had it worse, who `cannot change the colour of their skin´ (Emine). People who changed seats on the bus, looks, and `funny comments´ were described by some of the interviewees as `normal´ and they played down the significance of the incidents.

> This daily discrimination, for example, where you're insulted or called a bloody foreigner or something like that, yeah, just like anyone. (Morsal, 22)

> I've sort of noticed that people, well, that some people always give me such funny looks or that they don't want to sit next to me on public transport, for example. But in the end, I don't get wound up about it. It's just sort of a bit like: 'Okay, why do you do that?' I just find it a bit odd, but really, I suppose, it does get to me a bit, but not to the point where it bothers me [that much]. (Amira, 22)

In some cases the negative experiences led to a kind of defiance not to let to let things `get them down´. Especially after the first few months of wearing a headscarf and enduring the accompanying difficulties the women felt a sense of pride, belief in their own power and an increase in self-confidence. The knowledge that they themselves had made the choice – calling up one's own agency – helped the women to endure the discrimination. By refusing to assume the role of the victim, they retain agency. An important resource for the young women is their faith. As a meaningful conviction, it involves, amongst other things, the idea of divine justice which means that `in the end evil loses and good wins´ (Mara). Painful experiences can be reinterpreted as tests, thus making sense of negative incidents. For some of the interviewees, their social engagement was directly linked to their desire to act against prejudices. By doing so, they wanted to show that `not all Muslims are the same´. Their engagement was consequently a form of `taking action´ against discrimination (see below).

3.7 Self-identification as a young German Muslim

The interviewees went through identity negotiation processes in which they sought to unite their cultural, national, religious, local and family affiliations in one harmonious construct. As described above, the headscarf was an element of these affiliations and an affirmation of the Muslim part of their identity. The vast majority of the interviewees felt `happy´ and `at home´ in Germany and above all in the city where they lived. Although they had feelings of belonging to their parents' country of origin, they saw their future in Germany and wanted to help shape society as German Muslims. Overall, they were satisfied with their current life situation and had a very optimistic view of the future. They described life in 'here' as full of opportunities `to work, to study, to become involved´ (Selma), `network with people who think the same as you do´ (Morsal) or `to test yourself in different areas. To find yourself, what you would like to do, an ideology of life that you would like to follow´ (Melek). `For young women in particular […] so that people no longer have that typical man-woman way of thinking´ (Selma). They made comparisons with other countries and with previous times and in this context appreciated the political situation and the freedom from which they, as young people, profited. The respondents who lived in a large city furthermore valued its `cosmopolitan attitudes´ and the `multiculturalism´ of the area in which they lived. The local and Islamic identities form a backdrop against which hybrid identities are constructed[9].

[9] Alienation and othering are also facilitated by the recurrent symbolic statement that `Islam is not part of Germany´. On day after it was stated by the new Home Secretary that 'Islam is not part of Germany' we visited a women's group

> [I am a] biogenetically Anatolian [daughter of this city]. (Serpil, 35)

> My parents, for example, […] they still want to go back to Turkey, because they still don't feel so comfortable living here, because they don't feel accepted. And I think if I'd been born earlier, it would have been the same [for me], because these people had loads of problems here. […] Yeah, I mean I'm really free, I feel very comfortable in Germany (Marvie, 18)

> My parents were born in Turkey. I haven't got a Turkish passport, but I would still describe Turkey as my homeland. I mean, my roots are there, but I still wouldn't consider returning at any point in time, because I believe we're needed here, especially us young Muslims, because there are so many misconceptions. (Melek, 19)

> I don't feel like an Afghan at all […] I simply feel I'm completely German. […] I would also stay here forever. […] Everyone is just so free here, as free as they want to be. […] I can go out when I want […] go where I want to. I don't feel any battle between nations. If I were in Afghanistan now and was friends with an Iranian girl, I would get stared at. And that just doesn't happen here. […] in Germany you can stay young, you can be free; you can enjoy your youth. […] (Necla, 19)

In a diverse peer group the opportunity arises in a best case scenario to experiment with various aspects of identity and to experience affiliations which are understood as dichotomous in the public discourse. The young women experienced no ongoing conflict with regard to their affiliations with their parents. Although the parent-child relationships experienced some friction and negotiation processes, it usually did not extend beyond puberty. In the opinion of the interviewees, conflicts of affiliation are more when likely parental attitudes are not compatible with participation in German society. Living `between two worlds´ (Serpil) is more difficult for those, who do not have `open´ parents (Emine). Conflicts become more intensive when individualistic views are confronted with come face with collectivistic ones.

> The life of the `Bio-Deutsch´ (native Germans), put it this way, has a lot to do with individuality, you know. […] nobody can tell you what's what. You're free. [For us] it's more a case of the family and it's more group centred. It's just the way we are. [And] when you've got parents who, let me put it like this, are not like mine, who are not so open-minded, then you've got, how can I put it, a much bigger problem with identity. (Emine, 20)

Their relationship to the social media and the associated technologies is ambiguous: the interviewees firmly believe that it is almost impossible not to participate as daily social interaction patterns are permeated by social media and smartphone usage. Two of the interviewees are themselves active users of Instagram. Necla wants to use her presence as a confident and fashionable Muslim woman to increase the self-esteem of other young women. The other respondents use social media primarily for information purposes and organizing activities, but tend to be sceptical of the prevalence of social media among their generation. They regard self-presentation on Instagram as a youth peer pressure in which young people compete about appearance, followers and the possession of consumer goods. They believe that the goal of many youths is only `superfame on Instagram´ (Morsal). The interviewees criticized the adoption of

in a mosque. This issue was being discussed there and it caused a lot of anger: `For as long as I live here, Islam will be part of Germany´, asserted one respondent (Fieldwork diary 16 March 2018).

opinions and behaviours from the social media and the pressure to take part for fear of missing something and of not belonging. Morsal believes that youths lack the support of adults who inspire them to go their own, new way in life. She and Selma would like to see adults taking young people and their ideas and views more seriously and being less patronizing towards them.

3.8 Social engagement

Almost all of the women we interviewed are involved in different kinds of voluntary work. They would like to see young people in general, but young Muslims in particular, to become involved and play an active part in society. It is exactly their generation, the young second generation migrants who `were born and grew up here, gained their qualifications here and want to stay here´ that they regard as the ones who should be moving society forward, improving the position of Muslims and migrants and fighting for the reduction of prejudices. The generation of parents often do not believe `that it makes any difference´ (Melek). The parents feel they were not `accepted´ in their youth and they were scarcely able to `react to prejudice – maybe they didn't even understand what prejudice is´, because their German was just too poor (Banu). The respondents were involved in various areas: most activities are connected to national mosque associations and Islamic communities (e.g. IMGM) or are run by organizations which are part of networks of the major Islamic communities. Only two of the respondents are involved in an explicitly Islamic association – it does, however, act independently of the mosque associations. The association's goal is to activate young Muslims as professional players in German society. The activities supported by the traditional associations include working with groups of young girls in the mosque, people-to-people events with Non-Muslims, and thematic youth events and workshops. In addition, the interviewees are involved in associations founded by themselves that provide support to refugees (Selma, Amira). There is also the `Young Islam Conference´ initiated by Humboldt University and financed by the Mercator Foundation, civic youth forums and voluntary work in the football club. The activities carried out by the women in their voluntary work are diverse: they provide information to interested non-Muslims about their religious practices, organize and oversee (Muslim) youth events, advise Muslim girls about everyday matters, give language lessons for refugees, organize charity concerts, give boxing lessons to youths, and take part in rounds of discussions and poetry slams. Approximately half of the respondents are involved in more than one area of voluntary work.

On account of the diversity of their engagement it is difficult to classify their objectives. None the less we would like to highlight two objectives pursued by the women in their activities. These are:

(1) To reduce prejudice and promote social cohesion
(2) To improve solidarity, the sense of identity, and counselling among Muslims
(3) Being a role model and promoting engagement and agency of others

3.8.1 Reducing prejudice and promoting social cohesion

The dialogue between Muslims and Non-Muslims and co-operation in projects should reduce prejudice and promote social cohesion. Many of the interviewees attach very high importance to changing the public image of Muslims. They also want to show that they are `not all like […] the media portray us, […] like these odd [Salafist] brothers with beards and stuff, who insult everybody´ (Necla). They are also involved, for example, in a public Ramadan celebration with the

aim of inviting Non-Muslims to learn about the religion, provide them with information, reduce prejudice, and `remove the fear of Islam´ (Fieldwork diary 25 February 2018). The event is organized by a mosque community and run predominately by youth volunteers involved in various clubs. The respondents spoke of individual encounters and conversations at the last annual event in which there was a good exchange of ideas and understanding. Although the interviewees were disappointed that so few Non-Muslims attended the event, thus reducing the exchange of ideas to a level lower than they had hoped, the individual encounters as well as breaking the fast were a success.

In another Europe-wide action called 'I'm Muslim, pleased to meet you.' (`*Gestatten, Muslim*') predominately young Muslims hand out roses and flyers to passers-by. The flyer provided information on in which Mohammed as the 'prophet of compassion'. This annual people-to-people action is organized by the Islamic community Milli Görüs (IGMG[10]) and is viewed as `a readily-accessible opportunity for the people to talk to us. […] The aim of the action is to begin a dialogue with fellow citizens, and break down mental barriers and prejudices´ (IGMG website[11]). At this point, we do not want to speculate about the possible motives of the IGMG for this annual action – such as improving their image or the mobilization of youth – as this is not part of this study. Many Muslim youths participated through their local mosques, who are partners of IGMG. The two young women who took part in the action through their mosque communities described it as an action for understanding, `against hate and for love´. However, they were disappointed with the level of success, because many of the passers-by did not take a rose and very few conversations took place.

The reduction of prejudice between Muslims and Christians or between the various Muslim groups is the stated aim of further people-to-people events, such as open-house days in the mosques and shared mosque-community actions, where for example Turkish and African mosque communities collaborate. The aim of the individual encounters is to break down generalized ascriptions at the micro-social level.

> There's always girls in the [Islamic girls' organisation] as well, who say: 'Yeah, he's like this, or they're like that. The teachers are all the same. The Germans are like this.' I don't think that's right. […] And right now we want to talk to other communities, […] starting with other Muslim communities, because unfortunately they also have people there who say, oh, the people from so and so community, that community is no good at all. The people there are this or that. There's that as well and I just don't get it. So the first thing we want to do is show them, we're people and we're all equal. And we all just want to get along with each other. (Marvie, 18)

The focus on the micro-social level, on individual encounters through which prejudices are to be reduced, can also be understood as a reaction to the generalized labelling of Muslims in the media. For the respondents, `the media´ are the main culprits when it comes to negative social ascriptions with regard to Muslims. Many of the interviewees expressed understanding for

[10] The IGMG is still considered controversial, as it was for many years under surveillance by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution for suspicion of Islamistic and anti-democratic stances. The association, which was founded in the 1970s, has in recent years become more active in activities focusing on social work and dialogue. See www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/verfassungsschutz-milli-goerues-koennte-aus-der-beobachtung-herausfallen/11990882.html

[11] www.igmg.org/gestatten-muslim-strassenaktion-gegen-vorurteile-erreicht-200-000-menschen/, access on 11.5.2018

prejudices that form in people's heads as a result of media discourses, when the people themselves have no contact with Muslims. The bias of media discourses about Muslims, the lack of positive everyday images of Muslims, the portrayal of Muslims and Islam as foreign, and the debates about Islamism and refugees all contribute to the formation of prejudices. The interviewees believe that people who have no contact with practising Muslims are particularly susceptible to this stereotyping.[12] It is therefore logical that the interviewees opt for personal encounters with Non-Muslims in order to confront these prejudices with another reality – their own – and to disprove them. At the same time the focus on individual encounters and their successes can also be understood as a reaction to the situation in a society where the acceptance of the headscarf is stagnating and Islamophobic sentiments are on the increase, rather than decrease.

> You can always achieve something, even in small steps, and it's enough when someone takes something with them or when you can help someone. (Alina, 19)
> In the sense of us, as Muslim girls, gaining more acceptance and more understanding, I don't know if I can say that that's really happening. From individual people, yes, […] but on the whole we get precious little. We even have
> the feeling that it's not really taking us anywhere, except backwards. (Melek, 19)

Some participants took part in the `Young Islam Conference´. The annual national and regional conferences comprise workshop events and regards itself as a 'forum for dialogue' which unites young people of different faiths to discuss and confront social issues for a 'constructive living together on equal footing' (*Junge Islamkonferenz* website[13]) Reyhan, who participated in the conference, describes her experience there and as a poetry slammer:

> [It's this idea of] I need to become part of a group and the others are the outsiders and they're the bad ones. And I wanted to sort of criticize that [with my poetry] because people can be quick to start seeing things as black and white and say: Yep, I've got my community, my group, or whatever. We're right and you've got it wrong, you're the outsiders. [At the Young Islam Conference I'd like to] show people […] that it can work. I mean, there's a lot of us and we're very different from each other. But together, regardless of our religion or where we come from or whatever, we can still get something off the ground. [I want to] get that across so that people understand it.

3.8.2 Muslim community: belonging and identity formation

The *Umma*, the `Islamic Community´, unifies all Muslims. For many Muslims the local mosque is where they feel this sense of belonging: `a place to meet people, of contemplation, joy, sadness, peace and cohesion´ (IGMG, 2017). Muslim are youths – as are Non-Muslim youths – searching for identity, belonging and direction. Muslim youth groups address these needs. Approximately on third of the interviewees were involved in their Muslim community in girls' or women's groups. The groups usually meet once a week in the local mosque. Together they organize future events and plan trips. They organize an annual 'Hijab Day' which includes talks about the headscarf and a fashion show. According to the interviewees, they organise events relatively independently with ample freedom regarding form and content given by the mosque authorities. A number of times during this study we visited a women's group in the local mosque whose main concern was lifeworld and religious education. The group meetings and events for girls and women serve as

[12] Andreas Zick how prejudices are fostered by the media by a lack of positive imagery of Muslims (Zick, 2017).
[13] www.junge-islam-konferenz.de/

leisure-time activities, religious and lifeworld orientation and the creation of community. In the girls' group the young women experience a sense of belonging and enjoy interacting with other girls who share their experiences of being a Muslim girl in Germany. In addition, they can work through conflicts and everyday problems together, for which in certain circumstances the parents have little understanding: `She's in love. She wears a headscarf. She's not on a training course. She's not doing work experience. […] But how's a mother supposed to help, when she knows nothing about these things?´ (Serpil). In the groups, lessons, and talks in the mosque and at the events organized by Islamic and mosque associations, youths and young adults receive information about their religion and the meaning of religious practices and laws, guidance on the meaning of religious values in everyday life and advice about problems. Events specifically for youths deal with the issues arising from their lifeworlds. In the community, the youths learn that `you can be how you think´ (Marvie, organizes girls' groups). The religious education raises self-confidence and conveys the idea `you are valued […] in Islam´ (Necla, attended Islamic youth courses).

Many of the interviewees, who participate in the girls' groups as 'big sisters' and organizers, had themselves been socialized in similar groups at age 12 or 13. Feelings of community, connection, belonging and togetherness are central aspects of the Muslim community, which they also find in religious festivals such as the joint celebration of Ramadan. The women's group that we visited was characterized by togetherness and warm-hearted exchanges. The women called each other `sister´ in accordance with the Muslim understanding of sister, embraced each other when meeting, touched each other on the arm, back or shoulder. The researchers were quickly welcomed into this warm community atmosphere. While sitting on the soft carpet in the mosque, the women handed round the food they had brought with them. During the group discussions, they spoke of `very personally and emotionally moving things […] of successes and failures that had moved and left their mark on them not only as Muslims, but also as people´ (Fieldwork diary, 16 March 2018). The groups offer mutual support, practical help in daily life and the opportunity to make friends. They are a safe space for the women, in which experiences can be shared with like-minded people.

3.8.3 Being a role model and promoting engagement and agency

For many devout Muslims, `doing good things´ and helping other people belong to their religious self-image. To work for the good of all people is a part of a life which is pleasing to God: ` [our] prophet says the best person of all is […] the one who is most useful to others´ (Emine, active in Islamic girls' group), as Necla so casually put it, `sins are extinguished´ by acts of charity. The respondents draw a significant amount of motivation for their engagement for other people from their faith.

> God does say that everything we have and what happens to us always has a sense and a purpose. […] I was born in Europe for a reason, live in a country where a woman has many opportunities […] The meaning of my life lies in continually learning and using this knowledge to help other people [in other countries, too], benefit them. (Morsal, 22, Muslim engagement)

It became apparent in the interviews that the border between engagement and the private becomes blurred: through their active involvement as Muslims, they want to make a change in society. They want to convey a positive image of Muslim women, bring people together in everyday life in order to help improve understanding between Muslims and Non-Muslims – for example by patiently informing others about their religious practices -, or be(come) advisors and

role models for other Muslim women. Through her poetry slams and Instagram platform, Necla would like to share her experiences as a headscarf-wearing Muslim and therefore support others in being true to themselves. She gives insights into her inner life and expresses her subjectivity. On her Instagram platform she wants to reach as many `followers´ as she can, share her travels, fashion and her hoped-for occupational successes, then `it motivates others´ because they think 'well if she can, then so can I'´ As a sports trainer, Selma would like to be a role model for children of the 'confident woman' and broaden their ideas of the role of Muslim women: `Because they see, 'hey, she looks like my friend's mum, but she doesn't just stay home'´. As a solicitor, Seda hopes she can be a role model for other young Muslims, Marvie wants to become a doctor and would like to show `you can do it. [That others also see] that I'm […] not a repressed woman, that I can be independent, study what I want […] and maybe work as a doctor´ (Marvie). Banu would like to show that `Muslims actually do something about concerns affecting us as a society´. She sees herself as a mediator and would like to have a leading position in the social sector and help to improve the inclusion of migrant families in disadvantaged low-income neighbourhoods. Alina hopes that that she will never `just be [interested] in myself´, but `that I will always have this awareness and this feeling of duty also to do something for others´.

The aim of several of the young women's activities is the promotion of the agency of others. The target groups for the activities were in particular people with whom they shared elements of their own hybrid identities: migrant and Muslim youths, women and refugees. Many were engaged in refugee assistance work with language lessons, sport and swimming courses for women and support in everyday situations (e.g. dealing with authorities).[14] Through their engagement for disadvantaged youths they would like to help them in their personal and professional development, increase their confidence and inspire them to follow their personal and professional dreams. One association in which two interviewees were actively involved has the mission to motivate young Muslims to active societal participation: to shape society and strive for leadership positions. In their independent association they invite speakers of various backgrounds to give talks on topics such as female leadership and visionary thinking. They focus on a young Muslim public, to invite them to unite their self-image as devout Muslims with engagement in society.

> A lot of Muslims have potential, but keep themselves very much to themselves. […] Many say Islam is just about praying and reading the Koran and that's it. But we Muslims – above all because we live in a country where life is really good – can make great use out of what God has given us. I mean, for society. (Morsal, 22, Muslim engagement)

Similarly, the journalist Kübra Gümüşay would like to see young Muslims braking free of their role as 'explicators' of Islam in order to become 'storytellers' themselves. Gümüşay suggests solidarity with other marginalized groups (*Zahnräder* conference 2017). The fight against stigmatization and stereotyping prevents young actively involved Muslims from pursuing their own and personal interests in society. Looking back on her own career as a public figure and the challenges she faced, Gümüşay would like to see more own agenda-setting of young Muslims instead of reaction to stigmatising discourses.

[14] According to a Bertelsmann study, in 2016 approximately 44 percent of Muslims in Germany were involved in voluntary work for refugees. Their engagement in this respect is therefore two to three times higher than that of Christians (21 percent) and the non-denominational (17 percent) (see www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/es/presse/pressemitteilungen/pressemitteilung/pid/fast-jeder-zweite-muslim-in-der-fluechtlingshilfe-aktiv/)

4. Conclusion

To some extent, the young women we interviewed as part of this case study correspond with the stereotype of the Neo-Muslim woman described above. They see no contradiction between their religious way of life, their career aspirations and their self-image as independent female players. On the contrary, in their understanding of religion they see confirmation of their educational goals and gender equality. They had experienced a phase of intensive engagement with their religion, which has resulted in their choosing to follow religious practices such as wearing a headscarf. In many of the contexts they described, donning a headscarf can be understood as an act of self-assertion and expression of agency. The headscarf is an element of self-constitution and self-positioning, which can be incorporated into the construction of a hybrid identity. Their religiosity is a resource from which they personally draw energy and which motivates them to take an active part in shaping society.

The process of the young women's `self-Islamization´ (Nökel, 2002) is described as a largely inner process of finding and development. The young women derive individual meaning from this. Nevertheless, this process has a great outward influence. Especially by wearing a headscarf they experience different types of stigmatization, essentialization and ascription. The young women's engagement is characterized by their position as (visible) Muslim women in a Non-Muslim society. In their descriptions, they use individual-centred discourses of choice and freedom. The motif of individual choice is contrasted with the motif of `force´ from which the interviewees explicitly distanced themselves. The crucial thing for them is `the question of being recognized as subjects who are willing and able to shape their authentic self and to act according to it´ (Nökel, 2002: 20). They `fight´ (Melek) to be accepted as visible Muslims and regarded as individuals. They would like to break through ascriptions and portray Islam as `peace-loving´ (Necla), Muslim women as not repressed. They themselves want to incorporate this. They take up a discursive position in relation to the prejudices in circulation and make use of explanatory models of personal choice and self-realization. Nökel describes this as

> the logic of the Non-Muslim other, or a rationality which, an aspect of the idea of choice, demands a plausible explanation for certain behaviour patterns´ the women therefore find themselves `duty bound to act´ […], to clarify and construct the difference in the existing semantics. (Nökel, 2002: 56)

They are under pressure to justify themselves, to make themselves legible within dominant discourses.

Unlike in Sigrid Nökel's study, the interviewees in this study – at least during the interviews – there was no recognizable doubt cast on religious authorities or rejection of the established male-dominated mosque associations. Religious instruction took or takes place in the mosque. However the aspect of the `choice´ of the right mosque played a role for some respondents. Two of the interviewees were involved in an independent Islamic association, but at the same time they were participants in one of the Muslim groups with close links to the IGMG and ensured that in their own association, a religious authority would be consulted if controversial religious questions arise – which has not yet happened. This lack of distance to male-dominated associations and religious authorities, as the interviews suggest, can have various reasons. Firstly, we should ask ourselves if we can clearly differentiate between the `neo-Muslim' woman and the `classic associational

Islamic identity´ - a stereotypisation suggested also in recent classifications (Dinç, 2014). Furthermore, it is feasible that the scepticism towards and distance to religious associations were simply not mentioned, as this was not focus of the interviews and/or the young women did not want to speak negatively of their religious community. Another reason could be, that there has been actual change regarding the inclusion of girls and girls' issues in the established associations. Nökels interviews were conducted twenty years ago and since then there has been a change in leadership in the established associations from the first to the second generation migrants. This was partly accompanied by modernization, an increased commitment to German society and integration of the interests and life realities of the trans-migrant and post-migrant Muslim youth population. This was reflected in the services of associations (el-Menouar, 2017). Whereas the religious education for the neo-Muslims interviewed by Sigrid Nökel took place in private 'sister-meetings', the Islamic girls' groups and sister-meetings investigated in this study have rooms, as well as financial and moral support from the mosque communities. We can therefore speak – at least concerning our respondents - of an *institutional incorporation* of the process of self-finding of their (neo-)Muslim identity.

Engagement in Muslim associations is also an expression of the search for belonging, exchange with like-minded people and an environment in which they are not reduced to the Muslim part of their identity and to their headscarf. As a result of their multiple affiliations to various identity reference systems, the women become holders of hybrid identities. As such, they `sit between the chairs, or on a third chair´ (Foroutan & Schäfer, 2009): they are under pressure to adapt from different agents. They reject strongly the labelling they receive on the grounds of certain characteristics and affiliations that are denied or ascribed to them. Hybrid identities are laden with conflict, because they cause aggression among those who demand clarity. From the point of view of holders of non-hybrid identities, the `this as well as that´-identities of the young women give rise to contradictions: devout and science-oriented, German and Turkish, hijabi and boxer, feminist and Muslim, divorced and pious, headscarf-wearer and fashion blogger – to give just a few examples from the sample from the interviews. They reject the demands for clarity and one-sided loyalty. The conflicts can manifest themselves in racism and discrimination faced in everyday life. For post-migrant youths of the second or third generation it can lead to a problematic multiple non-affiliation: on the one hand they are not recognized as Germans, on the other, the parents' or grandparents' culture of origin creates an imaginary affiliation to a country which they hardly know. In this respect the holders of hybrid identities may be faced with re-ethnicization and self-ethnicization, which can also result in a neo-Islamic identity. Naika Foroutan and Isabel Schäfer describe how this, depending on the circumstances, can also lead to disintegration, non-participation and the rejection of German society. For them `neo-Islam´ therefore includes `both the tendency towards a politically open, participative personal development, as well as the possibility of radicalization and withdrawal depending on which influences and which group structures neo-Muslims turn to (Foroutan & Schäfer, 2009).

In the last few years the change to the second generation in the large Muslim associations, who run girls' groups and people-to-people projects to reduce prejudices, has resulted in an increased commitment to German society and lobbying activities to be recognized as equals in the shaping of society. The identity politics of the associations aim to improve the position of Muslims in society, to fight marginalization and discrimination and to offer Muslim youth positive identification patterns. In identity politics there is always the danger of re-essentialization, whereby other differences such as class, ethnicity or sexual orientation are disregarded and multiple affiliations neglected. Empirical studies have shown many instances of the desire for social change which goes beyond personal interests. The interviewees value cooperative projects,

which, for example, bring different ethnicities or Christian and Muslim youths together. In the new alliances – such as between different groups of women who are the victims of violence on the streets – mutual reservations are removed and prejudices counteracted[15]. The blogger and journalist Kübra Gümüşay hopes to see `more young Muslims who believe they can change something and want to make the world a better place for everyone´ (Fieldwork diary, 16 March 2018). In the position of `Islam-Wikibear´ young Muslims feel wedged between `racists and fundamentalists´. When pushed to explain Islam, a large symbolic construct is placed on the subject and the `radical right to be "me"´ is placed in a charged relationship with the `you´ (*Zahnräder* Conference 2017)[16]. The young women we interviewed cited many examples in their discursive descriptions of how they transcended and augmented identity categories and recognized multiple affiliations as well as differences. Their actions often had a humanistic approach. They wanted to see the definition of identity categories relaxed, the (over)loaded significance of the headscarf to be put into perspective and society shaped jointly along shared goals and interests.

> [At the Ramadan encounter] a new awareness of 'we' and 'us' is generated when people simply talk [to each other]. Then the 'we' refers to those who like to cook for instance, Muslims and Christians, […] I always found that really, really important. Yeah, to show we're *all* [this city]. (Banu, 22, Ramadan encounter event)

> Well I once saw a picture, a picture of the world. And the caption read: 'There are no They'. So there is no 'they', only a 'we'. And that totally inspired me, because we always speak about the others, even though we're all just people. This text was a result of this inspiration (Reyhan, 19, poetry slam)

> When you describe someone, you shouldn't say, this person is a German, this one is a Turk. When I describe this person, I can't describe them according to where they come from, because they can't choose where they're born. I can of course say, okay, this person is Muslim, but that shouldn't be the main thing. When I describe a person, I should describe them as confident or, I dunno, timid or reserved, I mean, that's the kind of thing you can say to describe people. But not something which places them in a group. (Marvie, 18, Islamic girls' group)

Young second or third-generation Muslim women often grow up with multi-ethnic peers in group situations in which they can negotiate, play and try out roles. At best they experience the tolerance of ambiguity and the acceptance of multiple affiliations there, which are not always shown to them by the members of the majority society and of their own ethnic or religious community. The recognition of hybrid identities and multiple affiliations creates opportunities for the development of the whole of society. Multilingualism, flexibility, empathy, mediation skills, transnationality and ambiguity tolerance are characteristics which are ascribed to holders of hybrid identities as positive resources. These make them pivotal actors in the shaping of post-migrant societies. If they were to relinquish them, this would lead to assimilation on the one hand, or to disintegration on the other. In the light of this,

[15] One example is a neighbourhood project involving a Muslim women's group which, with other groups, was concerned with fighting violence against women. Both prostitutes and hijabis were affected by this in the neighbourhood. In a round table the actors jointly developed a manifesto of demands to improve the safety of and respect for women.

[16] www.zahnraeder-netzwerk.de/zahnrader-podiumsdiskussion-2017-engagement-von-muslimen-in-deutschland-zwischen-chancen-und-grenzen/

Naika Foroutan would like to see society as a

> resonance space of multiple resources, identities and integration strategies, into which the resources of hybrid identities enter equally […] For there are precious few powers of decision over someone who does not want to integrate, but very many destructive powers regarding those who are have for long been inside, but are continually considered as 'outsiders' (Foroutan, 2013: 99).

5. Future analysis

Several themes of this case study can be identified which would be interesting for future analysis in a cross-case perspective in the PROMISE project. This includes both themes elaborated in this report and themes which were only touched upon here. An important theme is the issue of belonging and community and the interplay of individualism and community. There is particular relevance for stigmatized young people who find belonging and self-confidence in a group. How does the common denominator of the group influence their individual self-perception and identity? In relation to hybrid identities: How do new identity patterns emerge in the interplay of stigmatization and the invented and `ascribed´ group identities? How are hybrid identities challenged by conflicts experienced with those who demand `clarity´ or those who deny them belonging for other reasons? Furthermore, of interest is the role of peers and the family in this identity construction and conflict/support matrix.

Two topics which were only touched upon in this case study but may be elaborated in a cross-case analysis, are issues of gender and gender roles, and of media and stigmatization. The issue of gender roles includes gender expectations, which the respondents assign to themselves and those assigned to them by various other players. Self-regulation of the body and of behaviour and their regulation by others are the consequences. Female bodies and female behaviour are most affected by this regulation. The supposed private bodies of headscarf wearers become the focal point of identity discourses and therefore lose their privacy. The private decision in favour of the headscarf lifts the body out of its sphere of privacy and places it in social, religious and political discourses about the meaning of the female body.

The next issue, the role of the media in `stigmatization processes´, includes the question of how media discourses influence the individual's self-perception and their positioning in society as a stigmatized individual. This may lead to an individual reaction against this stigma – as in the case of many of the interviewees here – or to a withdrawal from society and resignation. Seeing the media as the source of stigma can be understood as a coping mechanism, as it helps individuals to explain stigmatization by others as a result of `ignorance´, their negative coverage, and their lack of real contact with Muslims.
The issue of how and where marginalized and/or stigmatized youth become active is cross-cutting in the case studies. In cross-case analysis it would be interesting to compare the experience of being young with a focus on positive/negative understanding of opportunities as a young person, reaction to stigma and construction of agency and their self-positioning in current youth media practices (e.g. Instagram).

The above themes can be found in the following nodes (level 1/level 2): Activity benefit/community & benefit/self-confidence, activity experience/community, Agency/active in society & creating encounters, barriers to social involvement/all, context of conflict/community & challenges to belonging, Identity gender/all, experience of being young/all, wearing hijab/force and choice & protected from men, Muslim identity/all, hijab/all, stigmatization/media.
Most interesting for the triangulation of the quantitative data is how the experience of discrimination, religious affiliation and the desire for social change are linked. A core question is, which conditions and factors support the agency and social participation of stigmatized young people and which factors support them in establishing a positive identity construction and social participation (in contrast to disintegration).

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7. Appendix: Respondent data

File name	Age	Gender	Education	Employ-ment	Residen-tial Status	Family Status	Ethnicity	Country of birth	Religion
B01 [Selma]	21	female	at university (f/t)	p/t	Lives with husband	married	2nd generation of Turkish descent	Germany	Muslim
B02 [Melek]	19	female	Completed A-levels	no	Lives with parents	single	2nd gen. Turkish descent	Germany	Muslim
B03 [Banu]	21	female	at university (f/t)	no	Lives with parents	single	2nd gen. of Afghan descent	Germany	Muslim
B04 [Necla]	19	female	School (f/t)	p/t	Lives with parents	single	2nd gen. of Afghan descent	Germany	Muslim
B05 [Marvie]	18	female	completed A-Level	no	Lives with parents	single	2nd gen. of Turkish descent	Germany	Muslim
B06 [Serpil]	35	female	A-levels, left university	no	Lives with grand parents	single	2nd gen. of Turkish descent	Germany	Muslim
B07 [Emine]	20	female	at university (f/t)	no	Lives with sibling	single	2nd gen. of Turkish descent	Germany	Muslim
B08 [Amira]	22	female	at university (f/t)	no	Flatshare with student (f)	single	immigrated as child	South-East Asia	Muslim
B09 [Teslime]	26	female	at university (f/t)	p/t	Lives with husband	married	immigrated as a child	Iraque	Muslim
B10 [Madiha]	31	female	A-levels	p/t	Lives with parents	Single	immigrated as adult	Tunisia	Muslim
B11 [Mara]	31	female	A-level	f/t	Lives independently	divor-ced	immigrated as a child	Turkey	Muslim

B12 [Morsal]	22	female	Currently at university	no	Lives with parents	single	immigrated as child	Afghanistan	Muslim
B13 [Alina]	19	female	at university (f/t)	no	Lives independently	married	2nd gen. of West African descent	Germany	Muslim
B14 [Seda]	26	female	graduated from university	yes	Lives with parents	single	2nd gen. of Turkish descent	Germany	Muslim
B15 [Reyhan]	19	female	Completed A-levels	no	Lives with parents	single	2nd gen. of Turkish descent	Germany	Muslim