

MAINSTREAM MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF MUSLIM WOMEN IN GERMANY - A CASE STUDY OF AUDIENCE RECEPTION OF MUSLIM AND NON-MUSLIM WOMEN





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Cover photos

Top Picture: 'Verhüllte Frauen sind sehr divers, jede von ihnen bedeckt sich anders?' (2017, November 5). Retrieved from <https://editionf.com/shades-of-persistence-interview/>
Bottom Picture: SPIEGEL ONLINE, Hamburg, Germany. (2018, April 21). Das halten Muslime vom Kopftuchverbot für Mädchen. Retrieved from <https://www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/schule/kopftuch-verbot-fuer-maedchen-was-muslime-davon-halten-a-1203726.html>

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Abstract

This thesis analyses *what influences the audience reception of representations of Muslim women in German mainstream media by Muslim and non-Muslim women in Germany and what the possible consequences resulting from it are*. Hereby, I draw on the cultural studies approach to media; focusing on analysing the content and audience side. The thesis is based on a variety of theories, such as inclusion & exclusion, social construction of gender, victimhood/agency, and intersectionality, with a main focus on the veil and the creation of Muslim women as the 'Other'. The data was collected by conducting narrative interviews with 20 female participants (10 Muslim and 10 non-Muslim women). All women are Germans and all Muslim women from the 3rd generation of Turkish descendants. The interviews were a mixture between group and individual interviews.

Concluding, as of right now the mainstream media has a too narrow, one dimensional view of Muslim women and represents them as such. The research shows that a representation of Muslim women by Muslim women is of importance, including all varieties of Muslim women which is often times neglected in the mainstream media. This might become even more important in the future, when the number of Muslim women coming from different backgrounds than the Turkish community, increases. The depiction as it is right now often depicts the Muslim women as a victim in need of help while at the same time representing her as something different. The research shows that participants can be put into three different categories when it comes to how they are taking in media messages, which are dominant or preferred reading, oppositional reading and negotiated reading. Most participants belonged to the dominant and oppositional reading, which is a mixture of rejecting and accepting mainstream media beliefs. This group has been comprised of both the Muslim as well as the non-Muslim group. Active participation with media coverage is of importance, while many of the respondents often participate passively.

Moreover, audience reception cannot be seen as a one-way model but can also be vice versa; meaning that not only the dominant representation of Muslim women by the mainstream media influences the interpretation by the audience but interactions of said audience with Muslim women can also shape the narrative of the dominant representation of Muslim women by challenging it. The findings on whether or not more contact leads to less prejudice can neither be supported nor negated in this research due to lack of significant data that would support this theory. Though one can say the more contact non-Muslim women have with Muslim women in a more intimate setting, e.g. close friendships, the higher their likelihood is to challenge mainstream media coverage by making up their own minds and not just accepting the dominant message. Thus, the closer an individual is towards the group that is being presented in the media, the easier they can build their own opinion. This was indeed only the case with three non-Muslim women, and thus cannot be seen as an affirmation of the contact theory in this context. Moreover, active participation is also essential. One cannot make up their own mind without actively thinking about it or communicating with their Muslim friends about what has been seen.

Keywords: Muslim, non-Muslim, women, headscarf, cultural studies approach to media, media representation, audience reception, Otherness

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Problem statement

This research deals with the question of what do we see these days when watching mainstream media in relation to Muslim women and specifically the ones wearing a headscarf and how this affects our interaction with and towards Muslim women. Before I started this research I had this image of what the dominant picture in mainstream media is and I can say that my previous image was indeed affirmed but I also found alternative representations to the dominant one, which I have also analysed in this chapter.

Owing to labour migration in the 1960s and several waves of political refugees since the 1970s, Islam has become a visible religion in Germany, with the majority of Turkish descendants. Therefore, mainstream media often refers to the Turkish community when talking about Islam and Muslim women. The portrayal of women in the context of the Muslim community within the mainstream media in Germany has been increasingly more negative in the last two decades, especially in relation to the veil. The beginning of the establishment of the Alternative for Germany on 06.02.2013 which is right wing political organization and has gained a lot of power in recent years as well as the opening of the German borders in the summer of 2015 for refugees, seem to be catalyst for a rise in mainstream media presence of Islam in Germany and Muslim women. The mainstream media often uses the veil as a signifier to illustrate the ‘clash of civilisation’, as it depicts the women’s oppression in Islam, which according to the authors of this ideology cannot be combined with Western values, which pride themselves on being freedom and equality for both genders (Bilge, 2010). Therefore, the question within this debate arises, whether this concern for Muslim women is actually about the individual or used as a way to justify the increasing anti-Muslim prejudice (Fernandez, 2009).

Furthermore, this ‘clash of civilisation’ is often depicted by using images of Muslim women veiling, such as the Niqab, Burka or Burkini. An emphasis with these images of veiling has been on the representation of Muslim women overwhelmingly being that of ‘oppression’ and ‘victimhood’, thereby, failing to recognize women’s agency and their ability to make decisions for themselves (and/or others) (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Ruby, 2006). The codes of gender by Goffman (1978) assigns women the role of being subordinate, while simultaneously attributing men dominant traits. Muslim women are dealt with pity and seen as in need of help, without thinking of alternatives of their own agency. This leads to how Western audience perceive them and themselves and their ability to help the ‘oppressed’ Muslim women (Abu-Lughod, 2002). This has been analysed using semiotics, which can be defined as oppressive or liberating, such

as the hijab (McGratty, 2007). In doing so creating the notion of the white saviour, while reducing Muslim women to one dimensional characters, which is only comprised of the symbol, the headscarf they are wearing (Abu-Lughod, 2002).

Hence, in this research I will analyse the development of this phenomena in current mainstream media, such as news articles from two online magazines the *Spiegel* and *Stern*, as well as short video clips, which will be taken from mainstream media. How does the mainstream media portray Muslim women and the veil? Is there a perception of solely being a victim or are women seen as agents themselves? How is this related to their practice of religion? What would happen if certain veils would be banned? How would Muslim and non-Muslim look at the enforcement of such a ban? Is it really about supporting women's rights or rather a way of controlling women's bodies by telling them what they can and cannot wear? Moreover, is there a distinction between Islam as a religion and the Turkish culture? What alternative representations might be depicted in mainstream media?

I will look into how this creation of "a Muslim woman" by the mainstream media is perceived and accepted by Muslim and non-Muslim women in Germany and whether the representation influences possible interaction between these two groups, as Becker and El-Menouar (2012) have found that there is an increasingly wide spread notion, suggesting a failed integration and a living next to each other rather than together by Muslims and non-Muslims within Germany.

To answer these questions, the following research question and its corresponding sub-research questions have been derived.

1.2. Research Question

What influences the audience reception of representations of Muslim women in German mainstream media by Muslim and non-Muslim women in Germany and what are possible consequences resulting from it?

1.2.1. Sub Research questions

- a. Mainstream media representation of Muslim women (Content):

How have Muslim women been represented in current media texts in online mainstream media, such as newspaper articles and visual segments in mainstream media?

Sub- question a will be analysed in chapter 5 by looking into German mainstream media online newspaper articles from the *Spiegel* and *Stern* as well as short video clips, which have been chosen after the media analysis and contain three important topics which have been derived from it. First, headscarves for Muslim girls; second a headscarf ban in schools, specifically for teachers; and third alternative representations of Muslim girls. An emphasis will be placed on what the mainstream media includes and what might be excluded in the representation of Muslim women. A focus will be placed on the veil and its depiction in the media. This focus has been chosen after an initial enquiry of mainstream media and what is being depicted about Muslim women. Herby, an overrepresentation for this topic has been found in the mainstream media as many articles have been written about the different types of veiling, especially the headscarf but also the Burka and Burkini. This sub-question will help to create a basis for the thesis and in turn the interviews with the participants as it gives a guidance for what will have to be brought up and discussed during these in order to generate the audience reception, which in turn will allow for an analysis needed to answer the main research question.

- b. Audience reception:

What are the differences and similarities in perception and acceptance of mainstream media representations of Muslim women between Muslim and non-Muslim women in Germany?

- *What do young Muslim women living in Germany think about the mainstream media representations of Islam in general and Muslim women in particular over the past few years?*
- *How do young non-Muslims perceive the media coverage about Muslim women in mainstream media?*

- c. *Do the differences in audience reception of mainstream media ideology of Muslim women in Germany influence the interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim women and vice versa?*

Sub-question b will examine the differences and similarities of how the media representation of Muslim women has been received by both Muslim and non-Muslim women. This will help to identify the audience reception, which will be analysed in chapters 6 & 7 and create the data needed to answer the main research question. Furthermore, I will look into whether possible interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim women has an influence on the audience reception of mainstream media ideology of said participants with sub-question c.

1.3. Thesis outline

The thesis is divided into 8 chapters, starting with the introduction in chapter 1, in which the topic of this thesis is elaborated by using literature dealing with the topic and some main themes. Afterwards the chapter 2 is used to 'set the scene' with existing research articles. Chapter 3 and 4 deal with the theoretical framework and the methodology respectively. Here the research context and the methods which were chosen are presented. Then I introduce the field by specifying participant selection, access and ethical implications. After presenting how this methodology was combined with my own choices and position in the field, I outline the data analysis as well as the limitations of the research. In chapter 5 I will analyse the mainstream media messages about Muslim women and the veil by using examples of online newspaper articles from the magazines *Spiegel* and *Stern* as well as short video clips. Chapter 6 and 7 analyses the findings from the interviews and in the last chapter 8 I will discuss these findings and answer the research question.

Chapter 2. Setting the scene

2.1. Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to briefly introduce Muslim migration in Germany to the reader, providing a short historical background to the thesis. After all, a good understanding of today's dynamics can be achieved only by tracing events and ideas back to their origin and by analysing their evolution over time. Afterwards, I give an overview of the media discourse of Islam in Germany (and Europe). Then I will look into whether the media discourse of Muslim "women" is one of oppression or if there are alternative representations. Next I will dive into the representation of Muslim women by mainstream media. The veil and its meaning, legislation

of the veil and women's bodies, Muslim women's identity and whether alternative representations to the dominant mainstream representation of Muslim women exists, will be analysed from the works of various scholars. I will end this chapter by examining how interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim women can influence the perspectives and opinions towards another.

2.2. Background information of Muslim migration in Germany

Due to mainly immigration, but also conversion, Islam is today the fastest growing religion in Europe as well as in the U.S. It is the second largest religion in France and the third in Britain, Germany, and North America (McGratty 2007). In 2002, Turks were the largest group of immigrants in Germany with 2,5 million Turkish residents (Goldberg, Halm, & Sauer, 2002 in Mueller 2006). The Turkish population in Germany consists of first, second and third generation residents (Mueller, 2006). The first generation are the workers who came in the 1960s, which were recruited by the German government in order to fulfil the gap in labour shortage at that time.

Next to Muslims of Turkish origin (approx. 2,5 Million), other Muslims living in Germany come from Southeast Europe (approx. 550,000), Middle East (approx. 330,000), North Africa (approx. 280,000), Southeast Asia (approx. 190,000), Middle East (approx. 80,000) and many other countries (Becker & El-Mino, 2012). Additionally, there is also a number of German converts, however this number is difficult to calculate. According to Becker and El-Mino (2012) numbers vary between 13,000 and 100,000.

Looking at the education and socioeconomic status of the Turkish population in Germany their opportunity levels are still highly different from the average German population. This is said to have an effect on the ongoing debate/discourse about integration. Residents of Turkish origin (the first generation coming to Germany) are most likely to be less educated than Germans. The second and third generation have a higher possibility of being unemployed, with almost double the chance as the average German population. "According to the classical assimilation theory of the 'race-relations cycle,' immigrants should improve their adaptation to the host society with every generation" (Becker & El-Mino, 2012, p.11). Hence, the third immigrant generation should have integrated and gained equal access to the opportunity within the given society. However, research contradicts these assumptions and suggests a tenacious gap of social and cultural inequality between migrants with a Muslim background and the German

population. Moreover, studies suggest that this has led to an increase in RE-Islamization¹ by the third generation.

“A recurring survey carried out among residents with a Turkish migration background between 2000 and 2006 demonstrates a steady increase of people expressing that they are quite or very religious” (Becker & El-Minoa, 2012, p.12). Typically, older people tended to state that they are more religious than the younger generations but in this study the existing age effect on religiosity has been lessened to the degree that there is no significant difference between migrants of the first and migrants of the third generation (Becker & El-Minoa, 2012, p.13).

So how has the migration from the past influenced how the mainstream media represents Islam in Germany (and Europe) and for this research especially, Muslim women living in Germany? The following paragraphs will be analysing the portrayal of Muslim women in German mainstream media, with a focus on the veil.

2.3. Media discourse on Islam in Germany (and Europe)

There have been multiple articles written about how Muslim migrants are integrated into German society. Marx (2008) states that the Islam gets more attention in the political and media discussion about immigration and integration in recent years. The Muslim community and their so-called culture has been established as an adversary of the West in recent decades, especially, taking into consideration 9/11 in 2001 and the following wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

In 2012 Becker and El-Menouar wrote an article analysing various articles from the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*². They found out that three dominant topics emerged from their analysis; “first, the oppression of women; second fundamentalist indoctrination in mosques and in Quran schools; and third the overarching issue of the formation of so called ‘parallel societies,’ i.e. the formation of ethnically and culturally homogeneous neighbourhoods” (p.12).²

“Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, German media has paid increasing attention to Islam” (Becker & El-Menouar, 2012, p.12). This is particularly interesting as Muslims have been living in Germany since the late 1960s. However, the integration of the so-called ‘guest workers’ into German society was not a major topic in public and media debate until 2001. In

¹ The Spiegel is a magazine, which can be compared to the Northern American Time magazine in terms of content and target audience.

² In this thesis ‘parallel societies’ has been neglected due to the fact that it has not been seen as relevant enough once it had been explained during the interviews, thus the importance of this term within the context of this thesis was insignificant.

fact the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) has conducted a wide based research to identify the divide between the majority and minority population and has stated that “most assessments of current situation come to the conclusion that Muslims see themselves confronted with an increased subliminal mistrust by the German population” (EUMC, 2002). Moreover, Muslims feel the need to repeatedly deprecate Islamic terrorism due to the societal pressure (Gamper & Reuter, 2008).

Thus a clear change in perspective of the media can be recognized. Nowadays, the current media discourse supplies information about “the apparent failure of integration” of Muslims into German society. Thereby topics such as honour killings committed by Muslim family members; political radicalization in mosques; veiled teachers in the classroom; identity problems of young Muslims; ethnic quarters in big cities; and the oppression of Muslim women are seen of most importance and depicted as such (Becker and El-Menouar, 2012).

Although one can say that media usually only focuses on newsworthy events to increase revenue, Becker and El-Menouar (2012) found out that in the media coverage of Islam that is enhanced disproportionately. The media picks stories that “fit and fuel” their narrative about the integration of Muslims into German society (p.13). After 9/11 the number of articles written about Islam has quintupled with an abruptly increase right after the incident. At the beginning most articles only dealt with the question of Islamist terrorism, leaving out aspects of integration into German society.

This usage of discourse, though, has not only been used in Germany but also many other countries in Europe. For example, from 2000 to 2008 media images of Islam in the United Kingdom has been predominated by associations with terrorism, religious and cultural difference and extremism (Mythen, Walklate and Khan, 2009 & Marx, 2008). The common discourse used has been Islam/Muslims to threats or problems in newspapers in Britain, using nouns such as ‘terrorist,’ ‘extremist,’ ‘Islamist,’ ‘suicide bomber’ and ‘militant’ (Mythen, Walklate and Khan, 2009). Another example is the Netherlands, which used to be multicultural pioneer in Europe, but has recently announced a similar tone next to the UK. With the beginning of the 2000s political and medial debates have been started about whether the Islam is compatible with the high tolerance of the Netherlands (Marx, 2008).

Becker and El-Menouar (2012) conclude their article by saying that most problems in Europe are increasingly related to and even intertwined with Islam in media discourse, even if its relevance is merely marginal. However, the interrelation between them stays often vague in

those articles. Furthermore, how to assess Islam with occurring problems are also depicted ambiguous. Established links, which the media uses, often cannot be traced back and explained to the extent of being truthful. Moreover, the frame of the discourse has been repeated by mainstream media so continuously that these ideologies seem to be embedded with German society now and thus appear natural to the readers, hence shaping the general public discourse exponentially. This has created, as Becker and El-Menouar (2012) define, a problem of culture rather than just a political one with the failure of integration as its main core aspect.

Next I will look into how not only Islam is represented in media but more specifically the target group of this research, Muslims women. As a starting point is the suggestion of Fernandez, which exclaimed that “anti-Muslim prejudice is increasingly subsumed and hidden behind a concern for women” (2009, p.5).

2.4. Media discourse of Muslim women’s oppression vs. alternative representations?

2.4.1. Representation of Muslim women by mainstream media

In the mainstream media, many scholars such as Abu-Lughod (2006), Bilge (2010) and Jacobsen & Stenvoll (2010) have noted, Muslim women’s oppression is the predominant way of how Muslim women are presented. However, this presentation of their subordination is a one dimensional and can lead to many misconceptions about them, their religion and culture (Abu-Lughod, 2006; Bilge, 2010; Jacobsen & Stenvoll, 2010).

Although there are many negative aspects depicted by the media about Muslim women’s submission within their religion and culture, such as honour killing and forced marriages, this thesis will focus mainly on veiling as it is a powerful cultural ‘signifier of otherness’ used in debates over migrant/Muslim integration across the West (Bilge, 2010). Afshar (2008) describes the current climate of Islamophobia ideology has exponentially increased the burden of women who cover, generating additional problem in their daily life. In addition to that Fernandez (2009) notes that Anti-Muslim prejudice is nothing new to the West, but rather it is deep-rooted in the history of the West. Polarizing differences between various cultures and thus creating the strange and deviant ‘Other’ as opposed to the reasonable and civilized West has been done for so long, that such prejudice is imbedded in our society so deeply that it became normalized. Moreover, due to the lack of media’s ability to create and distribute information, which would debug the myths about different veiling options, such as the hijab, they reinforce

those misconceptions and thus creating “a modern-day form of Orientalism that objectifies the women who cover and otherizes them as oppressed, perhaps exotic and possibly dangerous” (Afshar, 2008, p.9).

Jacobsen and Stenvoll (2010) illustrate that the “Islam” came to fill the vacuum of the ‘Other’ against to the liberal West after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This development was then reinforced and strengthened after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States (Jacobsen & Stenvoll, 2011). Hirji (2011) analyses that the media has had a longstanding fascination with the Muslim woman but this appears to have grown during the war in Afghanistan. Hereby, the Muslim veil is used by the media as a signifier to illustrate the ‘clash of civilisation’ as it depicts the women’s oppression in Islam, the fundamentalist peril and the pitfalls of multiculturalism (Bilge, 2010). This portrayal has become an icon within the debates of Islam. “Paradoxically portrayed both as a victim (passive) of her oppressive patriarchal culture/religion and male kin, and as a threat (active) to Western modernity and culture of freedoms, the veiled Muslim woman has been turned into an allegory for undesirable cultural difference” (Bilge, 2010, p.4)

As Helen Watson had already indicated, “the image of a veiled Muslim woman seems to be one of the most popular Western ways of representing the ‘problems of Islam’” (1994, p. 153). However, MacDonald (2006) adds that this association, although not being invented after the 9/11 attacks, has become intensified after this date. Hirji (2011) adds that the depiction of Muslim women is more regressive and with a negative association as being backwards now than a decade ago, on 9/11, thus not evolving and staying with the portrayal of one dimensional personalities of submission. In the context of violence and Islamophobia in the post 9/11 and 7/7³ era Muslim women have found themselves at the centre of contestations about their identities, their nationalities, their faith and their commitment, or lack of it, to global feminist movements (Afshar, 2008).

2.4.2. The veil and its meaning

In this part I looked at how scholars have described the veil and its meaning, which will be used later as a starting point when looking at how mainstream media deal with this issue in their coverage.

As the Qur'an is seen as a basis of this newly formed Islamic feminism, Ruby (2006) analysed the verses wherein women's dress code has been described:

³ 7/7 notes the terror attacks in London on the 7th of July in 2005.

1. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty. . . And that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. (24: 31)

2. O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): this is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested. And God is oft forgiving, most merciful. (33: 59)

Ruby (2006) points out, using El Guindi research (1999) that in Arabic the word hijab has no single equivalent such as veiling. Thus, it is of importance to not oversimplify the use of the word and differentiate between the various terminologies. However, this is what is often lacking in the discourse in the media. The term veil is often used synonymously or interchangeably with the word hijab in the debates surrounding the hijab. Moreover, researchers such as Fernea and Fernea (1979) and Roald (2001) have indicated that regional and global terms differ in classifying the diverse articles of women's clothing, whereby the word hijab varies from culture to culture. The practices of head- and face covering suggests a relation characterised by differences of class and ranking than sexes (Macdonald, 2006).

Furthermore, it can be added that the veil has not originated in, nor is it unique to, Islam. Rather the veil has been seen in various cultures and regions all over the world in past times. For example, "the veil had been adopted in pre-Islamic Arabia, Greece, Assyria, the Balkans, and Byzantium, and featured in particular Jewish and Christian communities. In Christianity, St. Paul instructed women to cover their heads in the presence of God (1 Corinthians 11), and veiling in church has been a longstanding practice in Roman Catholicism.", according to MacDonald (2006, p.15). Additionally, an explicit exhortation in the Qur'an that women should veil cannot be found, but is rather a code for modesty for both men and women. However, veiling is generally associated with women (MacDonald, 2006).

2.4.3. Legislation of the veil and women's bodies

Within Islam religious modesty applies to both men and women, which means that believers of both men and women are required to dress and behave modestly according to the Quran. However, there is a lack of consensus of what that entails, e.g. whether women must wear the hijab. This lack of clear guidelines leads to open interpretation possibilities for both advocates and opponents of the hijab. Although Islam dictates modesty from both men and women, an

emphasis is predominantly put on female modesty. This narrative is then intensified, as Piela (2010) puts it, by radical traditionalist Islamic sects, such as the Salafi.

At the moment European politics is fixated on the dress code of a small minority of Muslim women, with bills banning veiling of the face (known as the so-called ‘burka bans’) being discussed in many different countries within Europe. Such bills have already been passed in Belgium in March 2010, and in France in September 2010, “despite the fact that only a very small number of women actually wear face veils. For example, according to the French Direction ‘Centrale du Renseignement Intérieur’ (DCRI) only 367 women wear a face veil in France. Societies in other European countries debate whether veiling should be banned” (Piela 2010, p.8). Thus Piela (2010) critically questions the need for using funds spend on a topic which relates to only a few. This however, might tell us about the enormous importance in cultural politics.

According to the governments the reasons vary from enabling them to protect its citizens from possible ‘terrorist threat’ over to restrain patriarchal oppression within Muslim communities (Piela 2010). “Linking of terrorism to niqab (headscarf) was particularly strong in the Swiss poster promoting a ban on minarets – a woman wearing a niqab was shown against a background of minarets looking like missiles planted on the Swiss flag” (Piela, 2010, p.7). These depictions are supposed to explain to audiences what a niqab (a face veil) is, but it merely underlines the problem of separation.

Although, there are no plans to ban the niqab, the narrative surrounding it within the media is comparable. In German media coverage, the veil is seen as a symbol of oppression of Muslim women. The veiling discourse was intensified in a debate of whether Muslim teachers’ had the right to wear a veil in the classroom (Becker & El-Menouar, 2012). Eight of Germany’s 16 states banned hijab for state employees but not for public school students (Byng, 2010).

However, a large number of feminist studies (from the ones I have reviewed) analysing the meaning of the hijab and women’s motivations to wear it, suggest that it has been reframed by Muslim women as a sign of resistance, religious obligation, a concept interlinked with ethnicity, a cultural artefact, a symbol of identity, a human right, and a concept related to gender relations (Piela, 2010). According to the study of Becker and El-Menouar (2012) the discussion of whether to ban the niqab in school is not based on legal aspects, but rather deals with the political interpretation of Islam, women’s rights, and questions the degree of integration of Muslim women and girls.

2.4.4. Muslims women's identity

Within the context of Muslim women's identity the veil raises some "fundamental questions about citizenship, nationalism and diasporic meaning-making, as well as conceptions of freedom and emancipation that are hegemonic within Western feminist imaginaries, interplaying with national imaginaries" (Bilge, 2010, p.6). According to Bilge (2010), there are two dominant readings of the Muslim veil, as a symbol of women's subordination to men, or as an act of resistance to Western hegemony. Korteweg (2008) noted that the debate demonstrated two notions of agency. First, Muslim women's agency as their ability to resist domination, meaning that they wear a veil to demonstrate their own agency as an act against Western mainstream ideology, rather than the veil being a symbol of their religion (Islam). Second, the portrayed agency is embedded in intersecting social forces of domination and subordination, which means that Muslim women constantly have to renegotiate their space and agency within the social sphere (Korteweg, 2008).

Moreover, a growing feeling on the part of Muslim women that they no longer wish to identify with the West, and that reaffirmation of their identities as Muslims requires the kind of visible sign that the adoption of traditional clothing implies. In these situations the hijab is not seen as a symbol of tradition but rather they choose to embrace the hijab as a marker of their Muslim identities (Ibrahim, 1999). In accordance to the hijab as an identity symbol in the global context, one of Ruby's participants said (2006) that if she sees a woman in the hijab she immediately knows she is a Muslim, which creates a sense of belonging and community in this particular situation, which has been described as a positive, 'nice' feeling. Mahmuda and Swami (2010) add that the hijab or head-cover is used as a visual identifier among Muslim women, even though it's a highly sensitive topic.

However, wearing the hijab is not the only way in which participants defined their ability to create a modest appearance, which is an important aspect of not only the hijab but within their religion as a whole. In her article Ruby (2006) argues that the hijab can be seen as a possibility for Muslim women to negotiate spaces within not only the Muslim community, but also in the dominant western culture. Byng (2010) adds that veiling can help bridging various identities, such as in her research in the USA, in which the daughters of Muslim immigrants used the veil in order to formulate a Muslim and American identity. Thus veiling can help creating a mixed identity from two different cultures by combining them (Byng, 2010). This stands in contradiction to the mainstream media, which often portrays the hijab as a symbol of women's oppression and a restriction to their mobility (Ruby, 2006). Again Muslim women express that

the hijab is a form of empowerment in various ways: making their identities distinct; taking control of their bodies; and giving them a sense of belonging to a wider Muslim world (Ruby, 2006).

2.4.5. Alternative representations of Muslim women to mainstream media representations

Aligning to this Ruby (2006) describes how immigrant Muslim women in Canada perceive the hijab quite differently to the narrative often presented by mainstream media. She found out that the hijab is not universal and has diverse meanings embedded in it. Moreover, Ruby (2006) explains that there is a gap between the dominant stereotyping of the hijab by Western society as a symbol of Muslim women's oppression, compared to what Muslim women participating in the study describe as a feeling of self-expression. Hence, the Muslim women depict the wearing of the hijab as a positive experience in their lives. The difference in both expressions leads to many misunderstandings between both parties. There is a divide among the notion in the continuing debate of the hijab between its oppressive (e.g., as a means of seclusion and containment) and liberating (e.g., as a means of asserting one's cultural and social identity) associations (Mahmuda & Swami, 2010).

This can of course also be applied to the German context, as Kaweh (2006) found out in her research that especially the younger generation has found a new meaning of the headscarf for themselves. The emphasis is being put on free choice and agency when it comes to maintain traditions, such as chastity or female virginity or the headscarf. Moreover, acceptance and tolerance of others is highlighted, though expecting the same from the other society.

During Ruby's study (2006), she found out that female Muslims confirm their religious identity by wearing the hijab. By doing so they have the opportunity to take control of their lives as it offers them the status of a respectable person. This is in line with the statement of one of the participants of McGinty's study (2007), which describes her experience as following: "through her newly acquired self-image as a modest, veiled Muslim woman she (the participant) explores an alternative femininity without feeling as if she has to renounce her feminist ideas" (p. 12). Thereby the respondent felt like creating a new sense of femininity, which is an alternative to the discourse of the mainstream opinion. Indeed it is an alternative view to the Western normative view of the ideal femininity, which according to the respondent is highly objectified and disrespected (McGinty, 2007).

Abu-Lughod (2002) wrote that Hanna Papanek, an anthropologist, described as an example of liberating aspects of veiling that burqas in Pakistan can be seen as a "portable seclusion", in

which women can “move out of their segregated living spaces while still observing the basic moral requirements of separating and protecting women from unrelated men” more than twenty years ago (p. 7). For Abu-Lughod (2002) that was a new start of thoughts, seeing these ‘portable seclusion’ as “mobile homes”, which signifies belongingness to a certain community and a certain way of life, including morals. However, she questioned that if these women had the morals according to their religion at home why would that change when they left that home. Why would the public sphere alter these women’s respectability? Thereby she asked whether the purpose of these “mobile homes” is not to bind women to their morals because they would lose them but rather adhere men to the standards of these morals by showing them that the women are still in said private sphere through the veil, while moving in the public sphere. As men are also subject to this ideology one might call it gendered division of moral responsibilities. She compared the veil to other appropriate dress codes which have been socially institutionalized in our society, e.g. formal dress codes for certain occasions and events like a wedding or funeral. We know what society expects us to do without thinking about it, because it has become conventional, which is what she ascribes the usage of the burqa within the society of Pakistan.

Furthermore, Abu-Lughod (2002) notes two important points. First one cannot reduce a complex issue of veiling to a simple good or bad, naming it “unfreedom” because we, the mainstream Western society, see it as an unfit construction in our opinion of female agency and hence it should not be allowed. By doing so, we undermine the meaning of freedom itself to choose for oneself. As a second point, the diverse situations and attitudes of millions of Muslim women to a single item of clothing should not be merged into one single, universal understanding, as it would limit the different perspectives on it. Hereby, it is also of importance to not think and act in a sense of superiority of Westerners. In fact, following Mohanty (1988) viewers’ identity construction might tell us more about themselves, than the women they are talking about. That it is up to us to save these ‘oppressed’ women from their ‘victimhood’. Concluding, Abu-Lughod (2006) notes ‘the danger of pity’, which can easily occur with such depictions of Middle Eastern or Muslim women, saying that these images are dangerous, as it enables many of us to imagine that these women need rescuing by us, as a Western society or by our Western governments. In this research, the creation of Muslim women as a victim in the mainstream media could influence the audience reception to accept this portrayal, even if it is not the case in reality.

2.5. Interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim women

Lastly, I want to look at how the relations between Muslim and non-Muslim women are influenced by various ideologies, in order to change possible prejudice, which might be shaped by stereotypes represented in mainstream media. Prejudice through the depiction of stereotypes in mainstream media might also be enhanced due to a lack of interaction between the two groups. To analyse this the *contact hypothesis* (Allport, 1954) will be used. Social psychology made major advances in understanding the complex dynamics of intergroup relations. What was originally proposed as a modest “*contact hypothesis*” has developed into a complex and longstanding theory. The contact hypothesis suggests that intergroup contact under appropriate conditions can effectively reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members.

Several scholars have written about this phenomenon but the first one who proposed this hypothesis was Allport in 1954. According to Allport (1954) knowledge on its own, will not make people negating their prejudices and stereotypes, since they are very likely to accept only the information that fit into their preconceived schema of the world, so the best way to break down people’ stereotypes is by getting to know the other. Part of the appeal of the theory relies on its immediacy and simplicity: contact, under certain conditions, will create a positive intergroup encounter, which in turns will lead to an improvement in intergroup relations. When analysing the intergroup contact theory, the central question that comes is: how does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? As the original hypothesis did not specify about the processes by which contact changes attitudes, a number of different processes have been proposed and tested in the research literature: in the next section, I will consider the four processes proposed by Pettigrew (1998). The four processes are: (i) learning about the outgroup, (ii) changing behaviour, (iii) generating affective ties, and (in-group reappraisal. These will be explained in more detail in chapter 3 the theoretical framework, providing a more in-depth understanding of how and when contact works.

However, the theory also received some critiques due to its simplicity. Brown et al. (1981) for example questioned the generalization of effects between interpersonal and intergroup phenomena. They doubted whether positive effects from getting to know an outgroup member (interpersonal) could affect attitudes about the outgroup (intergroup). Following this reasoning, Hewstone et al. (1986) theorized that contact effects generalize to the outgroup only when group membership is salient. When group saliency is low, the situation is interpersonal and no intergroup effects should result. Only when the members perceive the other as a group

representative, the contact generalize to the outgroup. This point is crucial for this thesis and will be later discussed more in-depth.

In the following chapter 3 the concepts will be explained which have been chosen in this research. Hereby, the four processes by Pettigrew (1998) will be explained in more detail as well.

Chapter 3. Cultural Studies Approach to Media

3.1. Introduction

In order to answer the main research question and its sub-questions various concepts have been chosen to analyse the data, which has been gathered during this research. This section is divided into four parts. The first part deals with the concepts concerning gender in general, whereas the second part is the cultural studies approach to media which is divided into three parts: production, content and audience reception. In this research however, I will focus on only two of the three parts, the content and audience reception. In the second part of this chapter I go into depth on how the gender theories are applied in the two chosen sections, the content and audience reception. The third part explains the previously mentioned contact theory in more detail and the fourth part explains the reception theory by Stuart Hall (1980).

3.2. Gender

When considering gender within this research the concept of *patriarchy*, which is a power system organized around male authority, is of importance. This concept does not suggest that women are continuously oppressed, rather that it is enacted in a particular moment and at a particular place. Here, it should be noted that both men and women participate in the production of patriarchy and that even some women support it, mainly the ones who benefit from it (Bryant & Pini, 2011). In the example of the hijab, mainstream media often suggests that wearing a headscarf signifies the oppression of female Muslims, while Islam is seen as a religion based on patriarchy in which men have the most power and rights based on how the system is organized. According to this thinking, men in Islam have more privileges and possibilities compared to women. Hence some might say that wearing a headscarf reinforces that system of

male dominance. However, focussing on this depiction alone one leaves out possible alternatives for the reason Muslim women wear a headscarf, for example (Ruby, 2006).

This can be linked to the next two topics, *social construction of gender* and *agency*. Looking at the *social construction of gender* can help understand in which way Muslim women can exercise *agency* on the one hand and submission on the other hand. For example, the debate of whether wearing a hijab is a symbol for oppression or liberation and its relation to modesty for women in the Turkish community in Germany should be looked at (Oberhauser, Mandel & Hapke, 2004), as the Muslim veil can be seen as a symbol of women's subordination to men, or as an act of resistance to Western hegemony (Bilge, 2010). The struggle of *agency* of Muslim women outside of their gendered sphere can be linked to Lind's concept of paradoxes in which "women's survival and struggle occur within the culturally constructed boundaries of the 'public' and 'private', sometimes challenging or transgressing these boundaries, other time reinforcing them" (Lind, 2004, p. 421). On the one hand the veil can be seen as a way for female Muslims to enter the 'public' sphere without the fear of loss of modesty on their part. On the other hand the veil can also reinforce the notion of the need for the division of the two spheres, in which women should be predominantly in the 'private' sphere (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Ruby, 2006).

However, one can also not combine all Muslim women in one homogeneous group. Henceforth, the concept of *intersectionality* is important as it emphasizes the significance a person's behaviour and attitude towards certain aspects in life are dependent on various factors such as gender, age, class, race or ethnicity and not just simple on the fact that one is a woman or a man (Mohanty, 1998). This rethinking of "universalized women" has led to an introduction of the concept of *intersectionality* on which many feminists focus now-a-days (Nightingale, 2011). Thus the concept of intersectionality apprehends race, gender, class and ethnicity as interdependent and interconnected social categories rather than heterogeneous which are inseparable from one's personal life. Hereby the notion of power distinctions between different social relations should not be overlooked (Nightingale, 2011).

Concluding, the power relations between the mainstream media and the people who are presented in them, in this case Muslim women, is of importance. Who, what and in which way is included and excluded and who decides to do so is based on power relations, which needs to be analyzed as well.

3.3. Cultural studies approach to media and gender

The principles of media literacy is a 21st century approach to education, which provides a framework to access, analyse, evaluate and create messages in a variety of forms - from print to video to the Internet. "Media images help shape our view of the world and our deepest values: what we consider good or bad, positive or negative, moral or evil." (Kellner 2011, p.7). In accordance to that Lind (2004) says that we live in a mediated society, in which "much of what we know about, care about, and think is important is based on what we see in the media" (p.1) and moreover, media research indicates that "what we see, read, and hear does have some effect on us" (p.2). The cultural studies approach to media consists of three focal points; production (creation and distribution of the mediated message), content (what the mediated message entails) and audience (the receivers of the mediated message) (Lind, 2004). This research will only focus on the latter two, the content and audience.

Moreover, media stories provide us with information using symbols, myths and other resources through which our communication and culture is shaped in a specific area. Thereby it has specific influence on certain aspects of our life (Kellner, 2011). Lind (2004) examines that the facts which are presented in a given news story are selected by the production part, as such they should be seen as a telling story rather than as presenting 'information', although founded on factual elements. Thus the knowledge of how to analyse media images through media literacy to enable one to understand and recognize the role of media in society critically and subsequent how it influences individuals on a daily basis is of highest importance to be aware and possible counteract this cultural environment.

How do these concept relate to the media and how might people be influenced by certain depictions and images of Muslim women? What could be the problem with such a narrow storyline? According to Kellner the media is a source of cultural pedagogy, in which it contributes to "educate" us on "how to behave and what to think, feel, believe, fear, and desire – what not to" (2011, p.7). Thereby, it also teaches us gender specific norms, on how to be men and women (Kellner, 2011).

In media literacy the *codes of gender* (Goffman, 1978), in particular the codes of femininity and masculinity must be introduced. The Codes of Gender applies the late sociologist Erving Goffman's ground breaking analysis of advertising to the contemporary commercial landscape, showing how American popular culture reflects, and in turn shapes, normative ideas about masculinity and femininity. Within the concept of codes and gender the hegemonic masculinity is represented as the "culturally dominant form of masculinity in relation to femininity and in

relation to subordinated masculinities (e.g. homosexual men, family men)” (Goffman, 1978, p. 5). Men are usually presented as a strong, powerful and assertive, being aggressive and ‘perpetrators’, whereas women are often viewed as passive, dependent and even weak, thus seen as the ‘victims’. This depiction of male and female attributes has been divided as the ritualization of domination (male attributes) and the ritualization of subordination (female attributes), which creates a dispute within (Goffman, 1978). Within the integration debate in Germany the relations between men and women in Muslim migrants’ families is seen as a fundamental aspect, as multiple scholars have been debating about the living conditions of oppressed Muslim women in Germany. Even though there are notes that living under problematic conditions and oppressive circumstances this is not the reality overall.

3.3.1. Textual Analysis (Content)

Textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world (Fürsich, 2009). It is a method used to describe and interpret the characteristics of a recorded or visual message. Its purpose is to describe the content, structure, and functions of the messages contained within a given text (Frey et al., 1999). A textual analysis is valuable in research because it allows researchers to understand meanings and ideas expressed through written words. Within the textual analysis the text is “understood as a complex set of discursive strategies that is situated in a special cultural context” (Fürsich, 2009, p.8). It is therefore, seen as an effective way of assessing, comparing and understanding media texts (Fürsich, 2009).

Textual analysis is generally a type of qualitative analysis that, beyond the manifest content of media, focuses on the underlying ideological and cultural assumptions of the text. Hence, textual analysis enables us to understand mediated discourses (Fürsich, 2009). Within this research the mediated discourses, which had been recognized through literature review, are *codes of gender*, *Orientalism* and ‘*victimhood*’. Moreover, the concept of *semiotics* (sign-signifier) will be used within the textual analysis to identify possible signs which depict Muslim women’s agency or the lack thereof.

Moreover, due to the lack of media’s ability to create and distribute information, which would debug the myths about different veiling options, such as the hijab, they reinforce those misconceptions and thus creating “a modern-day form of Orientalism that objectifies the women who cover and otherizes them as oppressed, perhaps exotic and possibly dangerous” (Afshar, 2008, p.9).

An emphasis has been on the representation overwhelmingly that of ‘oppression’ and ‘victimhood’ failing to recognize women’s agency and their ability to make decisions for themselves (and/or others) (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Ruby, 2006).

Moreover the depiction of *victimhood*, especially in relation to Muslim women is often used in mainstream media. Muslim women are portrayed as subordinate towards their male counterpart but through this one-sided depiction one could argue that the media is strengthening and reinforcing this idea of victimhood within the Muslim community and thereby inadvertently ‘support’ it. According to Kellner “the system of production determines what sort of artefacts will be produced” by having to stay within the limits of its own structure (2011, p.8). By creating limitations as to what can and cannot be said and shown within the media the information is ‘scanned’ and examined on how it may affect the audience (Kellner, 2011).

This can be linked to the next two topics, *social construction of gender* and *agency*. Looking at the *social construction of gender* can help understand in which way Muslim women can exercise *agency* on the one hand and submission on the other hand. For example, the debate of whether wearing a hijab is a symbol for oppression or liberation and its relation to modesty for women in the Turkish community in Germany should be looked at (Oberhauser, Mandel & Hapke, 2004), as the Muslim veil can be seen as a symbol of women’s subordination to men, or as an act of resistance to Western hegemony (Bilge, 2010). This means that on the one hand the veil could be viewed as a symbol of the Muslim woman’s oppression when she is forced to wear one. On the other hand the veil can also symbolize an act of agency, more specifically an act of defiance if the Muslim woman wears it to contradict the dominant Western values of not covering up.

However, one can also not combine all Muslim women in one homogeneous group, which suggest that they are all absolutely the same and with not variety. Henceforth, the concept of *intersectionality* is important as it emphasizes the significance a person’s behaviour and attitude towards certain aspects in life are dependent on various factors such as class, race or ethnicity and not just simple on the fact that one is a woman or a man (Mohanty, 1998). This rethinking of “universalized women” has led to an introduction of the concept of *intersectionality* on which many feminists focus now-a-days (Nightingale, 2011). Thus the concept of intersectionality apprehends race, gender, age, class and ethnicity as interdependent and interconnected social categories rather than heterogeneous which are inseparable from one’s personal life. Hereby the notion of power distinctions between different social relations should not be overlooked (Nightingale, 2011).

However, also the power relations between the producer and consumer side of the media is of importance. Who and what is included and excluded and who decides to do so is based on power relations, which needs to be analysed as well. In this research the focus is not on why the producers omit certain depictions but rather whether the participants notice or question if there are differences, maybe even knowing about alternative representations of Muslim women compared to the dominant images.

Concluding, the struggle of agency of Muslim women outside of their gendered sphere can be linked to Lind´s concept of paradoxes in which “women´s survival and struggle occur within the culturally constructed boundaries of the ´public´ and ´private´, sometimes challenging or transgressing these boundaries, other time reinforcing them” (Lind, 2004, p. 421). On the one hand the veil can be seen as a way for female Muslims to enter the ´public´ sphere without the fear of loss of modesty on their part. On the other hand the veil can also reinforce the notion of the need for the division of the two spheres, in which women should be predominantly in the ´private´ sphere (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Ruby, 2006). It will be interesting to see in how this will be depicted in mainstream media messages, which will be analysed in chapter 5.

The concept of patriarchy does not suggest that women are continuously oppressed, rather that it is enacted in a particular moment and at a particular place. Here, it should be noted that both men and women participate in it and that even some women support it, mainly the ones who benefit from it (Bryant & Pini, 2011). In the example of the hijab mainstream media often suggests that wearing a headscarf signifies the oppression of female Muslims, while Islam is seen as a religion based on patriarchy. Hence some might say that wearing a headscarf reinforces that system of male dominance. However, focussing on this depiction alone one leaves out possible alternatives for the reason Muslim women wear a headscarf, for example (Ruby, 2006). In this research the headscarf has been used mainly as an example in relation to Muslim women and veiling because it is the predominant veiling method for Muslim women in Germany.

Nevertheless, most articles within Becker´s and El-Menouar´s research (2012) focus solely on the problems. Women are depicted as “victims of their traditionalist and religious husbands and families” (Becker & El-Menouar, 2012, p.3). Hereby, Becker and El-Menouar (2012) found out that several topics are often illustrated that reinforces such ´victimhood´: the confinement to the own home/lack of social environment, physical and sexual violence and forced marriages. Moreover subtopics such as the meaning and legitimacy of the veil and the issue of the so called ´honor killings´ are processed (Becker & El-Menouar, 2012). For this research a textual analysis

will be conducted, to identify *signifiers*, e.g. such as the veil which are used by the mainstream media to support their own narrative. Barthes (1972) explained that *semiotics* is the study of meaning-making by analysing signs and signifiers of processes and meaningful communication. Hereby, Barthes stressed the importance of language in constituting social relations. An example for this is the linking linear linking of terrorism to the headscarf, which has been done particularly in Switzerland, while advocating for a ban on minarets. Therefore poster had been produced showing a women wearing a niqab (headscarf) against a background of minarets looking like missiles planted on the Swiss flag. Hereby, the actual women portrayed did not have a say to explain their meaning behind the niqab, which could help understanding why she would wear it to people who are not familiar with the reasons behind wearing the veil (Piela, 2010).

3.3.2. Audience Reception

Audience reception is defined as following; the meaning of a "text" is not inherent within the text itself, but rather the audience is given meaning to it based on their individual cultural background and life experiences (Kellner, 2011). Therefore the research is based on the interpretivism approach, which consists of *emic*, "the insider view" where a culture is explained and understood through the studied people themselves (Smith, 1998). Hereby the theory of *intersectionality* is of importance in order to find out what factors different responses of recipients towards media images (Nightingale, 2011). Understanding such a "text" is thus not universal but depends primarily on the recipient themselves. Differences in the meaning of the message between different recipients can occur due to their social, cultural and political background and this theory helps to analyse to find out the factors that enable these differences (Kellner, 2011). According to Kellner class as a factor of such differences is often "downplayed", however there is also the risk of underrating the significance of other variables such as gender or ethnicity (2011, p.14). This is of importance as the literature suggests that Muslims in Germany on average have lower income jobs and less opportunities than the rest of German population (Kellner, 2011).

Furthermore, the media message needs to be deciphered by the audience in order to receive the messages. Hereby, the encoding/decoding model of communication by Stuart Hall (1973) can be applied. In simpler terms, encoding/decoding is the translation of a message that is easily understood. When you decode a message, you extract the meaning of that message in ways that make sense to you. Decoding has both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication:

Decoding behaviour without using words means observing body language and its associated emotions. For example, some body language signs for when someone is upset, angry, or stressed would be a use of excessive hand/arm movements, red in the face, crying, and even sometimes silence. Sometimes when someone is trying to get a message across to someone, the message can be interpreted differently from person to person. Decoding is all about the understanding of what someone already knows, based on the information given throughout the message being received. Whether there is a large audience or exchanging a message to one person, decoding is the process of obtaining, absorbing, understanding, and sometimes using the information that was given throughout a verbal or non-verbal message.

Hence, the audience, the recipients of the message, do not just receive information passively but are actively involved, often unconsciously, in making sense of the message within their personal and social contexts (Kellner, 2011). *Decoding* of a media message may therefore be influenced by such things as family background, beliefs, values, culture, interests, education and experiences (Hall, 1980). Here, Kellner (2011) argues that the theory of the “active audience” can also lead to and underestimating the power of media when it comes to steering and manipulating its audience to their narrative. Additionally, it can be noted that the theory of active audiences has been increasing due to new media, such as Facebook, Youtube, and other social network sites. These sites give the audience a forum to post their opinion as simple as with a click (Facebook emoji’s) (Kellner, 2011).

By using e.g. *semiotic* symbols, such as headscarves, the media creates an association with such and creates a stigma with certain topics, thus enabling viewers to relate more easily and frequently with the topic (Jhally, 1990). In this way the mainstream media can perpetuate their own hegemonic *ideology* to the audience, reinforcing it by over representing it. An example of this could be the Burka because even though it is just a small percentage of women who are wearing it, the amount of articles which have been written about it is substantially higher in numbers, making it seem like it would be a bigger issue in Germany than it is in reality.

Moreover, the depictions which are supposed to explain to the audiences what a niqab (a face veil) is, merely underline the problem of separation. Often these stories are published without a comment of a person who would actually wear them and their reasons of doing so, thus lacking the much needed explanations to understand. However, Switzerland is not alone, Piela (2010) research shows that ‘serious’ news outlets, including the ‘New York Times’, ‘Washington Post’, and the ‘Los Angeles Times’ were doing similar description. Hereby, the lack of commentary from a single Muslim woman can be found as well. Piela (2010) notes that such a depiction

underlines the narrative of *Orientalism* and *Otherness*. The concept of Orientalism and Otherness is used to create a diversion between two or more parties. It is supposed to reinforce the 'Us' vs. 'Them' mentality (Tajifel, n.d.) which is part of the social identity theory. Said This mentality of differentiation comes from what Tajifel (n.d.) described as the *social identity theory*, in which an individual's self-concept is derived from a perceived membership in a relevant social group. Thus, this theory explains the intergroup behaviour which can be found through one's own social identity. Attaching a stigma to certain topics and its depiction can create and/or reinforce the aspect of the *social identity theory*. By doing so the main narrative, which is linked to the popular ideology, can be reinforced and strengthened. Hence, creating a mentality of *Us vs. Them*, which is often done by using signs that signify *Otherness*. Hereby, the contact hypothesis by Allport could be of importance which suggests that intergroup contact under appropriate conditions can effectively reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members.

3.4. Contact theory

Allport (1954) presented the first outline of the *contact hypothesis* claiming that true acquaintance between groups lessens prejudice. He believed that knowledge alone will not make people negating their prejudices and stereotypes, since they are very likely to accept only the information that fit into their preconceived schema of the world. In fact the best way to break down people' stereotypes, according to Allport (1954) is getting to know the other. Part of the appeal of the theory relies on its immediacy and simplicity: contact, under certain conditions, will create a positive intergroup encounter, which in turn will lead to an improvement in intergroup relations. In the following section, I will provide a more in-depth understanding of how and when contact works.

When analysing the intergroup contact theory, the central question that comes is: how does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? As the original hypothesis did not specify about the processes by which contact changes attitudes, a number of different processes have been proposed and tested in the research literature: in the next section, I will look into the four processes proposed by Pettigrew (1998). The four processes are: (i) learning about the outgroup, (ii) changing behaviour, (iii) generating affective ties, and (iv) in-group reappraisal. The first process, learning about the outgroup, has been held as the major way in which intergroup contact reduce prejudice: when new learning corrects negative views of the outgroup, contact should reduce prejudice.

The first process, learning about the outgroup, has been held as the major way in which intergroup contact reduce prejudice: when new learning corrects negative views of the outgroup, contact should reduce prejudice. In other words, contact between members of different groups is expected to improve the attitudes of the in-group towards the outgroup by replacing the in-group ignorance with knowledge that disconfirm in-group stereotypes towards the out-group members (Pettigrew 1998). The second process, changing behaviour, is related to the idea that optimal intergroup contact creates new situations that require conforming to new expectations. If these expectations include the acceptance of outgroup members, this behaviour is highly likely to produce attitude change (Pettigrew 1998).

The third process, generating affective ties, emphasizes the role of emotions in the process. Continued contact reduces anxiety and empathy for a stigmatized outgroup member- a woman with AIDS, an individual with disabilities or a homeless man- can improve attitudes towards the whole outgroup (Batson et al, 1997). Intergroup friendship can also be pivotal. The fourth and last process refers to in-group reappraisal. Optimal intergroup contact provides insight about in-groups as well as outgroups: with contact, people realize that in-group norms and customs are not the only ways to manage the social world. This new perspective can reshape the in-group view and lead to a less provincial view of outgroups in general (Pettigrew 1998).

Another question that needs to be addressed is: when does contact work? Allport (1954) suggested that certain conditions need to be present during intergroup encounters for contact to effectively reduce prejudice: “Prejudice [...] may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional support (i.e. by law, custom or local atmosphere), and provided it is of a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups.” (Allport, 1954, p. 281)

Therefore, contact between groups would be more likely to reduce prejudice if four conditions were met: (i) equal status among individuals, (ii) intergroup cooperation, (iii) common goals and (iv) institutional support. In this research I will look into the different types of interactions the participants have encountered. I estimate based on my own perspective and experience⁴ within the research that the following three will come up: *colleagues/teachers/close friends*.

⁴ Which will be elaborated on more in chapter 4 methodology

3.5. Reception theory

In addition to the contact theory by Allport (1954), the reception theory from Stuart Hall (1980) will be used to identify which can be applied for the participants in this research when they deal with the mainstream media messages about Muslim women. The theory includes three different cases of how a person reads or watches a media message; the dominant, the oppositional and the negotiated reading.

Firstly, the *dominant or preferred reading* includes how the producer of the message wants the audience to view the media text. Secondly, in *oppositional reading*, the audience rejects the preferred reading and creates their own meaning for the text. Lastly, the *negotiated reading* is a compromise between the dominant and oppositional reading, where the audience accepts parts of the producer's views but has their own views on parts as well. These three will be used in order to recognise which one is most applicable in this research and what influences a person to be one or the other.

The following chapter 4 will deal with the methodologies which have been selected to conduct this research.

Chapter 4. Methodology

4.1. Introduction: Data collection

To answer the research question: *What influences the audience reception of representations of Muslim women in German mainstream media by Muslim and non-Muslim women in Germany and what are possible consequences resulting from it?*, various methods have been used, such as textual analysis of media coverage as well as group and individual interviews.

4.1.1. Data collection for Analysis of Media Texts

In order to prepare for the group and individual interviews and to add insight into the thesis topic news articles and visual segments (video clips) were investigated using textual analysis (content analysis & qualitative analysis/discourse analysis). News articles and visual segments were chosen via an initial contact with the research participants, in order to figure out which media to use from sources they would look at. The timespan of the textual analysis of newspaper articles and visual segments is around the last two to three years; from the beginning of the

establishment of the Alternative for Germany (06.02.2013. – right wing political organization, which gained a lot of power in recent years) and the opening of the German borders in the summer of 2015 for refugees. These two dates have been chosen, as they are perceived as an interception point of media illustration of Islam and for the age group due to its closeness of today more appropriate than 9/11, which has been 18 years ago by now.

Most of the respondents had stated in advance that they use the *Spiegel* and *Stern* as well as Turkish newspapers. I could imagine that a different hegemonic representation of Muslim women could have been found there due to the culturally different mainstream media in the Turkish context compared to the dominant German one. However, due to a lack of Turkish or Arabic language skills I was not able to analyse the latter. In these cases I spend some more time focussing on what they actually see in media news concerning Islam and “themselves”. English translations were unfortunately not given on these websites and the possibility to ask one of the respondents to translate a certain amount of articles from one or two online newspapers were not feasible due to the amount of data, as looking through the last two to three years. Moreover, translations could have been too subjective by the translators own positionality and thus changed the outcome of the data considerably. Therefore, I have to see the fact that they might have foreign or national, but in another language, as their main source of news output as a limitation for this research.

Keywords, which were identified through the literature review, were used to find articles within the data bases of the magazines, *Spiegel* and *Stern*. These keywords include: “Muslima” (Muslim women), Veil („Vollverschleierung“), headscarf („Kopftuch“), Burka, Niqab, Victimhood, Gender role and security risk/terrorism. In the various articles gender roles came up a lot in connection with the Turkish community, hereby a distinction between Islam (the religion) and Turkish traditions were often not made.

Nevertheless, these methods haven been chosen to build a basis for the interviews in order to understand the audience reception model within the research topic.

4.1.2. Audience reception

The main method conducted in this research to analyse the audience reception has been group and individual interviews with some of the participants, including Muslims and non-Muslims participants, in order to understand how the media coverage of topics, such as Islamic terrorism

and the role of women within the religion of Islam and its possible differences compared to the mainstream German society influences the life of Muslims living in Germany.

In total 20 participants have been interviewed (10 Muslim and 10 non-Muslim)⁵. The interviews have been conducted either in groups of two or three in person or individual via skype. The initial idea of focus groups containing five to six participants had to be revised due to logistical reasons. I was just not able to get this amount of participants to come together due to their timelines and spatial constraints.

As the research question deals with the possible changes in the life of an individual through the outside, *narrative interviewing* has been chosen as it comprises storytelling which is most suited in this research because one can go in-depth into the participants' minds with this method (Adler & Clark, 2011). Using storytelling the participant can tell you about their life and express feelings towards certain aspects. Using this technique the interviewer will only use general questions to guide the interview but mostly let the respondent decide which stories to include. Hereby, the interviewee's individual experiences, the reasons for certain behaviours and the feelings which accompanied these actions have become more understandable. Another advantage of this interview setting is that the interviewee are encouraged to deliberate topics related to the research, which might have been of sensitive nature and thus not have been discussed in the focus groups (Adler & Clark, 2011).

The interview was set up as following: first a short introduction into the research topic of my thesis, followed by showing the short video clips. I chose those specific videos after the literature review and an initial textual analysis of the two mainstream media magazines, *Spiegel* and *Stern*, looking for videos which were depicting the topics I had found in my desk research. Initially all three clips were supposed to be shown in consecutively, however in the first interview it could already have been seen that it was making more sense to show one clip, talk about it and ask questions and then go on to the next one, thus creating a nice flow in the interview and creating a conversational style, which I believe made the participants rather comfortable, even given some of the more difficult topics.

The interview questions were semi-structured and consisted mainly of open-ended questions⁶ and possible statements to facilitate flow in the discussion and can be found in the appendix. This provided focus on the direction of the interview, but still allowed a degree of freedom and

⁵ A table of the participants list can be found in the appendix 1.

⁶ The questions can be found in appendix 2.

adaptability in the third phase in getting the information about the participants' individual experiences, the reasons for certain behaviours and the feelings which accompanied these actions from the respondents. Additionally it also enabled me the opportunity to probe or ask follow-up questions to verify certain topics or aspects.

The interview in person were set in a familiar setting for the respondents, in hope of increasing their comfort, e.g. in their own homes and inherently their personal space. The smaller groups also helped facilitate to get more personal answer about certain aspects of the research which might not have been able to be addressed in a larger setting, thus gaining more in-depth knowledge of the participants. Moreover, I had given the participants a timeframe of approximately 90 minutes for the interview but in the end the interviews with more than one participants took around double that time, due to the more conversational style of the interview.

The interviews with the Muslim respondents were conducted first and then the ones with the non-Muslim respondents. Due to that order I was able to include information on answers and/or quotes from the Muslim groups in order to enhance and stimulate the discussion within the non-Muslim group.

After the completion of the initial data collection which has been recorded with a voice recorder, they were transcribed in the conducted language (German) to be prepared for the analysis of the material.

4.2. Sampling

Henceforth, the subject population of the research, which is analysed in this article, are on the one hand German Muslims women and non-Muslim German women. Hereby, 'German' does not necessarily mean being born in Germany but rather having been grown up here and spent most of their life in Germany. The age range of the female participants has been from 18 to 28. The sampling of the respondents has been a mixture of convenient sampling and snowball sampling. Hereby, the convenient sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique, has been selected as I chose the first participants, which I know personally (Adler & Clark, 2011). It is also a snowball sampling as I asked my friends to introduce me to some of their friends and colleagues, who might be interested and fit the criteria. Moreover, I got in contact with my local Muslim community centre, which I have contacted with via my mother's colleague.

These sampling techniques have been chosen because one is unable to access a wider population due to time or cost constraints.

4.3. Data analysis

4.3.1. Textual analysis

Textual analysis uses the perspective of the writer of a document to interpret the data, which includes “taking into account the purpose of the text, the time period in which the text was written and the audience for the text” (Fürsich, 2009, p.9). Various ways to conduct a textual analysis are present in existing literature. For example, “a researcher can count the number of times certain phrases or words are used in a text, analyse the author's narrative technique or dissect and interpret meanings in a text” (Fürsich, 2009, p.9). The content of the mainstream media messages are analysed in chapter 5 using the theories from the conceptual framework.

4.3.2. Group interviews and individual interviews

The Thematic Analysis strategy has been used, which emphasizes on the content, “what” has been said rather than the “way” it has been said (Adler & Clark, 2011). The data for the thematic analysis has been derived from the group and individual interviews, which have been recorded and transcribed in the spoken language (German). The results have then been analysed with deductive and inductive coding (Bryman, 2008). Hereby, deductive coding means that codes are constructed with the help of the existing literature or other desk research, in this case the textual analysis of news articles and news clips. Nevertheless, some aspects which might come up in the interview have not been reviewed beforehand and thus inductive coding will be used to create themes on the basis of the primary data collected in this research (Bryman, 2008). In addition, Grounded Theory (Adler & Clark, 2011), which consist of open and focused coding, has been used to analyse the data. Open coding involves writing initial memos down and selecting themes. This must be carefully accomplished as it can be highly subjective as initial memos come with many connotations. Focused coding is about zooming in on these themes. This will help to put data in different and significant categories and thus create codes from them. With the results, different codes can be created from the categories to show a link between the different themes and assist to answer the research question as well as the sub questions (Adler & Clark, 2011). This helps to narrow down initial thoughts and findings to create more concrete categories, which will help to be more specific when explaining the outcomes of the research.

The results of the various methods will be used to create the audience reception model, which in turn will help answering the research question. All the choices for the methods have been made to ensure reliability of the data.

4.4. Limitations

It is important to know how the data was obtained as it influences the results of the research and, consequently, the conclusions drawn from them. However, not only the research methods have to be presented, but a reflection of their limitations is also needed. Each research method has its limits, however, making use of multiple data collection methods and data sources increases the credibility of the data (Baxter & Jack, 2008) and can be used to overcome some of these limitations. A mix of data collection methods was achieved by conducting a textual & video analysis, semi-structured interviews and participant observation.

That being said, the limitation that I do want to highlight here is the scope of the research itself. With only 10 participants in each group, and in turn 20 in total, how can I derive data from this as each and every Muslim woman is different and thus has a different view or experience? Other circumstances that have not been applicable in this group may influence another.

However, in turn this is exactly what makes this research valid as representation should be more diverse, ensuring that the receiving parts understand that there are indeed differences which are not counteracting each other but rather supplementing the portrayal of Muslim women in Germany. Also one can question in how far I have influenced the interviews by choosing these specific videos⁷ and pictures. A different video might have led to different points talked about during the interviews within this topic but in the end the videos were chosen as they depict important and highly debated themes within the mainstream media representation of Muslim women. Moreover, how much did I steer the conversation into the direction of what I have been finding out with my secondary data?

4.5. Reflection on positionality and ethics

In addition to the limitations, it is important to reflect on the positionality of the researcher. According to England (1994), the researcher is not a dematerialized or disembodied entity; rather, we are all formed by our own personal histories and lived experiences. Consequently, our personal background plays a role in how we perceive and interpret things. I, being a German non-Muslim woman has surely influenced my research. I was thus a part of half of the research population, having an emic, from within the social group (from the perspective of the subject) perspective partly. Besides determining the way I interpret things, my positionality has played a role in gaining access to certain people.

⁷ I chose those specific videos after the literature review and an initial textual analysis of the two mainstream media magazines, looking for videos which were depicting the topics I had found in my desk research.

I had very close Muslim friends when growing up, and even though we did not talk a lot about the issues which I analysed in this research and are presented nowadays in the media I feel like I am more open to the opportunity of it being different than what is depicted due to my previous relationship with said friends. This could be a reason on why I put an emphasis on the contact theory in this research because I truly believe that the more closely one knows a different group the more one is inclined to not just believe the representations but rather make up one's own mind.

Lastly, I end this reflection by remarking that a researchers' positionality is not only important within the field but through all aspects of a research. In addition to influencing how a research is conducted, it may also influence how the research is written, as "it is the researcher who ultimately chooses which quotes (and, therefore, whose "voices") to include" (England, 1994, p. 250). Some difficult choices were especially with the non-Muslim group, in which I had three participants which were very vocal in their interviews, starting certain topics all by themselves whereas I had to direct others into the direction of specific topics I wanted to discuss. In turn, I chose to include a lot of their quotes in the findings sections, rather than the participants I had to steer into the direction of discussion. Personally I found these more valuable as they come up with the topics all by themselves instead of having to be guided to them. In any interview, regardless of any sensitive issues having been discussed or not, I would always begin by explaining my research and stating my intentions, assuring people that I would handle what they told me with care, and guarantee them that they would remain anonymous.

So what does the mainstream media indeed depict and how does this represent Muslim women in Germany. As mentioned earlier the next chapter, chapter 5 deals with the analysis of mainstream messages of a few selected online magazines. Therefore, I have conducted desk research, before the field research, by analysing articles and video clips from popular newspapers, which were chosen based on the respondents regular reading habits.

Chapter 5. Analysis of mainstream media messages

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter the results of a textual analysis are presented. This was done to identify important themes of how Muslim women are represented in mainstream media in order to get a basic structure for the interviews with the participants, which will be elaborated in chapter 6 and 7. Hereby the following sub question will be answered:

How have Muslim women been represented in current media texts in newspaper articles and visual segments in mainstream media, such as the Spiegel and Stern?

Therefore, I look at how Muslim women have been represented in current media texts in online newspaper articles and to what extend a coherent narrative about Muslim women in relation to 'victimhood' exist in current textual and visual Medias. This chapter is divided into eight different parts, starting with the introduction of the textual analysis, which online newspapers have been chosen and why and which limitations may have occurred. Then the debate of whether students and teachers should be allowed to wear a headscarf in schools is analysed. Afterwards the ban of the Burka as well as the Burkini has been examined. The next part is about the differences in veiling options and the last part is dealing with alternative narratives to existing ones.

For the textual analysis, two major German online newspapers, *Stern* and *Spiegel*, were chosen to analyse in order to look into the mainstream media information given about Muslim women in Germany. These two online newspapers have been chosen due to their widespread recognition within the participants, both for reading certain articles as well as recognizing the importance of both online newspapers in the context of German mainstream media as a whole. Therefore, keywords, which were identified through the literature review, were used to find articles within their data bases. These keywords include: "Muslima" (Muslim women), Veil („Vollverschleierung“), headscarf („Kopftuch“), Burka, Niqab, Victimhood, Gender role and security risk/terrorism. In the various articles gender roles came up a lot in connection with the Turkish community, hereby a distinction between Islam (the religion) and Turkish traditions were often not made.

Before the analysis starts I will quickly look at what kind of reader demographic the online *Spiegel* and *Stern* magazines have.

5.1.1. Reader demographic of the *Spiegel*⁸ and *Stern*⁹

Starting out with the research this part was supposed to be more of a rough answer as a starting point in order to help me prepare for the interviews but working on it I quickly realized that that would not be the case.

In this part I will look at the demographics of the two online magazines that I have chosen for this research, the *Spiegel* and *Stern*. The *Spiegel* has a readership of around 30,45 Million people and the *Stern* has around 25,3 Million readers. Around 5,64 Million readers (*Spiegel*) and 5,75 Million (*Stern*) are over the age of 14 years old per edition and around half are women (*Spiegel*: women: 51% & men: 49% & *Stern*: women: 38% & men 62%). The range from 20-29 years old inhabit circa 710 000 readers (*Spiegel/ Stern*: not able to find data) which is indeed the smallest group in the statistics. In fact the readership of the *Spiegel* as well as the *Stern* is growing older, however, a reason for that is not stated. It could be that this statistic does not take into account single articles but only full editions into their estimation. After talking to my participants and my own experiences it seems likely that the age group of my participants, to which I also belong with my 28 years, is very selective in what we are reading, thus only looking into certain articles, which might be predominantly shared over social media networks instead of buying full editions of the magazines. Moreover, the *Spiegel* as well as the *Stern* have an education readership, having a higher educational level, like an school leaving examination of an A-level¹⁰ (*Spiegel*: 58% & *Stern*: 42%) or a university level (*Spiegel*: 38% & *Stern*: n.d.).

The two chosen online newspapers, *Spiegel* and *Stern* give the illusion of being better more sophisticated more important more right, which is why I found it interesting to use them even though they are not completely read by my target group according to the statistics presented above. However, I did indeed asked most participants (some were last minute interviewees found with the snowball method) before the interviews were conducted, if they are familiar with these two online magazines, how they write their articles and have read them before. Unanimously both participant groups said yes, while the Muslim participants immediately elaborated on the vibe the magazines gave up, which is a more negative one, according to them. Even though I also found quite a few positive articles about Muslim women these two

⁸ Auftakt zur MEEDIA-Serie "Leser-Check": Wer liest den Spiegel? Das Magazin in der detaillierten MA-Analyse. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://meedia.de/2019/01/24/auftakt-zur-meedia-serie-leser-check-wer-liest-den-spiegel-das-magazin-in-der-detaillierten-ma-analyse/>

⁹ MEEDIA-Leser-Check: Wer liest den stern? Das Magazin in der detaillierten MA-Analyse ? mit Vergleich zum Spiegel. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://meedia.de/2019/01/25/leser-check-teil-2-wer-liest-den-stern-das-magazin-in-der-detaillierten-ma-analyse-und-mit-vergleich-zum-spiegel/>

¹⁰ A-level is the diploma from German secondary school qualifying for university admission or matriculation

magazines are as a whole viewed as more negatively, thus making them more interesting to analyse in this research.

5.1.2. Limitations

Although the keywords were specified for the German context while searching the different news websites, I also found some articles about Morocco or various other European countries. That means that the number of entries for each keyword may vary and hence the following figures are rather an indication on the number of articles including these topics than an actual number. The articles range from 2001 to 2018, however with the most recent ones from 2014 to 2018 being most valuable for this research, due to its proximity to today are mostly included. They are most relevant as they reflect the current situation (at the time of the interviews in 2017/2018) and atmosphere in the country the best.

Just a few examples: the *Spiegel* has 2951 entries for Islam in Germany, the *Stern* has 1170 entries. Furthermore, the *Spiegel* has 1833 articles about the headscarf and 522 articles about the Burka whereas the *Stern* has 529 about the head scarf and 260 articles concerning the Burka. However, I have no real measurement to see how widely the articles were read or the impact they had, due to lack of data, as I cannot determine how many times an article has been clicked.

5.2. Analysis of online articles

5.2.1. Introduction

The following 6 articles from the *Spiegel* and *Stern* have been chosen for analysis. I was able to pick them out according to their importance for the research in answering the research question, by using the keywords derived from the literature review.

5.2.2. Ban of the headscarf in schools part 1: students

Politische Debatte

Kopftuch für Mädchen verbieten - ja oder nein?

Ein Kopftuchverbot für Mädchen unter 14 Jahren: Politiker sind darüber genauso uneins wie Islamexperten. Es geht dabei um die Frage, was Kinder mehr einschränkt - das Tuch oder dessen Verbot.



Picture 1_Title: Banning the headscarf for girls- yes or no?¹¹

The title states “Banning the headscarf for girls- yes or no?” and the text says “a ban on headscarves for girls under the age of 14 years old: politicians cannot find a consensus in the debate just like experts of Islam. The question hereby is, which restricts girls more the cloth or the ban of it.”

The government of North Rhine-Westphalia started the debate by announcing the idea to examine a ban on headscarves for girls under the age of 14 years old in schools. Their argumentation, so the author of the article, is that children in that age group are not capable to make religious decisions and cannot decide whether they want to wear a headscarf or not. Therefore, the headscarf forces them into prefabricated gender roles, which in turn prevents them to lead a self-determined life. Hence, they want to establish a ban on headscarves for girls which are not in puberty yet, which should be invoked in kindergarten and primary schools. Moreover, they want to protect small children against discrimination as well as ensuring that they will be integrated in German society and not part of a parallel society, which might be

¹¹ SPIEGEL ONLINE, Hamburg, Germany. (2018, April 21). Das halten Muslime vom Kopftuchverbot für Mädchen. Retrieved from <https://www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/schule/kopftuch-verbot-fuer-maedchen-was-muslime-davon-halten-a-1203726.html>

established next to ours. However, the author notes that the people who advocate for such a ban neither do not know nor bring forward statistics on how many girls wear headscarves in kindergarten or primary school nor how many of these girls wear them under coercion.

Indeed the author argues that girls who wear headscarf on their own free will, will have taken their choice away by such a ban, which in turn will undermine what supporters of the ban work for. Islam scholar Michael Kiefer states that thinking that girls are always coerced is not a correct assumption because often girls choose do to so by themselves. Instead of a general legal ban, he says, teacher should seek out a conversation with the affected girl and her parents to try and determine whether she wears a headscarf. Other scholars express themselves more critical towards the ban like Kesici, who is a chairman of the German Islam council and states that headscarf coercion and ban both aim at one thing, to put Muslim women under tutelage. Contrary to this Toprak member of BAGIV, the organization of immigrants, welcomes the request for a ban in order to protect girls against “religious totalitarianism of their parents”. Though many scholars are more heated in the discussion concerning a ban of the headscarf for girls under the age 14, some are more neutral, such as the vice president for the German foundation for integration and migration Uslucan, which asserts than there is no religious reason for girls to wear a headscarf before puberty in Islam.

As this and the next part deals with a very similar issue I will discuss both articles together underneath *Ban of the headscarf in schools part 2: teachers*.

5.2.3. Ban of the headscarf in schools part 2: teachers

Muslimische Lehrerinnen

Kopftuchverbot - in jedem Bundesland anders

Dürfen Lehrerinnen im Unterricht ein Kopftuch tragen? Das ist immer wieder Thema vor Gericht - und wird immer wieder anders entschieden. Ein Überblick.



Picture 2_Title: Headscarf ban- different in every state¹²

In addition to this a ban for teachers has often been argued on the one hand as to not influence young girls behaviour towards the headscarf and on the other hand with the division of state and religion for teachers thus not being allowed to wear religious symbols in public schools. The article I chose as an example for this topic is the one in picture one with the title: headscarf ban- different in every state. It again shows how debated and divided between different parties this topic is.

It all started with a teacher in a primary school in Berlin who wore a headscarf and was thus exempt from work one day in 2018 and then transferred to a different secondary school under the reference of the neutrality law in Berlin which prohibits police officers, workers of the justice system and teachers to wear religious clothing and accessories. Three years prior to this the Federal Constitutional Court tipped a general ban on headscarves in schools by stressing the freedom of religion in Germany, stating that just wearing a headscarf does not immediately

¹² SPIEGEL ONLINE, Hamburg, Germany. (2018, May 9). Muslimische Lehrerinnen: Kopftuchverbot - in jedem Bundesland anders - Leben und Lernen. Retrieved from <https://www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/job/kopftuchverbot-an-schulen-so-unterschiedlich-sind-die-regeln-fuer-lehrerinnen-a-1206983.html>

create a higher danger of influence on students. Now a days every federal state in Germany has established a different regulation which has been quickly explained in the article.

Discussion

Due to the similarity of these two discussions, I opted to analyse them together. A ban of headscarves in schools for girls under the age of 14 years old and teachers has been a debated topic for a few years now. Quite a few scholars (names can be found in the analysis of the articles) have been talking about the issue, giving arguments for and against a ban.

For girls under the age of 14 years old it is supposed to be a protection for those who cannot freely choose whether to wear one or not. In the first article Islam scholar Michael Kiefer states that “thinking that girls are always coerced is not a correct assumption because often girls choose do to so by themselves.” Hereby, I am wondering where his data comes from. How does he define many and who did he talk to? The same as with the opinions before he is assuming for someone. One can question in how far the *agencies* of the girls are being supported if one speaks for them instead of letting them speak. I believe if they can decide for themselves whether to wear a headscarf than they should be able to speak for themselves and give reasons for it.

Moreover, is the headscarf a *symbol of oppression*, in which the girl cannot perform her *agency* by choosing whether to wear it or not? Or is there a more underlying problem at hand? For example, the debate of whether wearing a hijab is a symbol for oppression or liberation and its relation to modesty for women in the Turkish community in Germany should be looked at (Oberhauser, Mandel & Hapke, 2004), as the Muslim veil can be seen as a symbol of women’s subordination to men, or as an act of resistance to Western hegemony (Bilge, 2010).

In addition a ban for teachers has often been argued on the one hand with to not influencing young girls behaviour towards the headscarf and on the other hand with the division of state and religion for teachers thus not being allowed to wear religious symbols in public schools. There seems to be a fear especially for this religion that teachers will influence their students in one way, as other religions do not have such a widespread media coverage in this regard.

Another important aspect from the articles was that open communication is important between the girls, parents and teachers. However, if one truly believes that the girls are forced to wear the headscarf than I am unsure in how far a conversation with the teacher or school can help.

In that case only a ban in school would help to ensure that the girls would at the very least have a place where they could be free of the restraints of their *oppression*.

5.2.4. Ban of the Burka

SPIEGEL ONLINE SPIEGEL  Anmelden

Debatte über Vollverschleierung

Worum es beim Burkaverbot geht

Die AfD provoziert im Bundestag mit der Forderung nach einem Verschleierungsverbot. Lesen Sie hier die wichtigsten Fakten zu Burka, Religion und der Rechtslage in Deutschland.

Von Eva Bräth und Mara Küpper ▾



Picture 3_Title: What is it all about the Burka ban?¹³

Next to the debate of the headscarf ban many articles concerning the ban of the Burka can be found (*Spiegel*: 120/*Stern*: 100). For this part I choose the article depicted in picture 3, in which a person wearing a Burka can be seen sitting in front of a black background. The title says: “What is it all about the Burka ban?” and the caption states that the political party, “the AfD (Alternative for Germany) provokes with a demand for a prohibition of veiling in the Lower House of German Parliament. Read here the most important facts about the Burka, religion and the legal status in Germany.”

According to the author the backlash to this demand of the AfD does not come from other politicians being against a ban of the Burka, which indeed does have some advocates but rather the fact that the AfD acts like there are a group so concerned with women’s rights when in fact

¹³ SPIEGEL ONLINE, Hamburg, Germany. (2018, February 22). Debatte über Vollverschleierung: Worum es beim Burkaverbot geht - Politik. Retrieved from <https://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/afd-antrag-zu-vollverschleierung-worum-geht-es-beim-burka-verbot-a-1194929.html>

many of their statements are anything but supportive of them. In the following text the author explains what a ban of the Burka would actually entail and why some politicians see a need for a legislation.

The Burka ban aims to banish full Muslim face veils in the public sphere. According to some politicians (which are not further specified in the article) the full face body veil symbolizes the suppression and discrimination of women. Hereby words like “Verschleierungsgebot” (command of covering up) are used in order to describe it in a negative way. Moreover, the ban is often accompanied by reasoning that it serves as a way to protect the “individuals, free rights of the Muslim woman” while at the same time serving as the inner national security of the society living together.

The article goes on to describe the different types of veiling, specifically the Burka and Niqab, explaining that the type of veil may differ due to region and social class. However, the authors adds that the social debate about the topic equates the Burka with the covering up of the Muslim woman. Furthermore, the differences and reasoning behind it have been debated for centuries. Indeed, Islam scholars have not been able to reach an agreement because the Quran does not distinctively state which way is the correct one in its sura.

Additionally the article states that there are no statistics available (from any kind of organization) to determine how many women indeed wear a Burka. The author emphasizes that the legal situation of freedom of religion in Germany not only guarantees that a religion can be freely chosen and believed in but also exercised undisturbed, meaning that the belief can also be expressed freely. This includes carrying religious symbols and clothing, like the Burka and Niqab. It can only be limited when it is in clear opposite of the constitution or if it undermines basic rights of a third party, for example in case a women is pressured or forced to wear it. Nonetheless, there are some limitations in place; officials and soldiers for example are prohibited from veiling their faces during their work.

The EU does not have a general full face veil ban. France has been the first European country which has passed a law to ban the full face veil in April 2011. In case of violations a fine has to be paid. The European Court of Justice for human rights reassured the legality of the law after a lawsuit by a Muslim woman in 2014. How this will play out in the German context is not yet determined.

Discussion

Over two million Muslim women live in Germany but almost none of them wear a full face veil, still the debates about them are numerous and demands about banning the Burka are more frequently. The question is where does this come from? Is it fear of the unknown in our culture or a fear based on facts? It is interesting to note that the debate of the Burka ban has been overwhelmingly in numbers (*Spiegel*, 120/*Stern*: 100) even though statistics estimate the actual number of women wearing the Burka to be almost non-existent in Germany. It is indeed rather the Niqab which can be found here, next to the headscarf. The overwhelming number of articles written about the Burka and the following extensive discussion about a possible ban, thus seems to be illogical. However, this can be due to two reasons, such as the misuse between the meaning of the two different styles as interchangeable, leaving the reader uninformed to be able to build an opinion on the one hand and the possible incentive to create a form of *Otherness* (Piela, 2010) between the Muslim community and the rest of Germany on the other hand.

First, one has to add that one can find proper explanations about what is what in terms of different veiling styles, such as shown in the article I have chosen. However, the number of these articles is rather small (20-30 for both) compared to the number of articles covering the Burka ban (*Spiegel*: 120/*Stern*: 100). This shows than an emphasis is put on the opinion about it while lacking the explanation and reasoning behind the Burka. Hence, it is understandable that the readers might not be able to comprehend the complexity of the topic and might be more likely to just accept and repeat what they have read instead of building their own opinion based on facts.

Second, the persistence of occupying coverage for the discussion of the Burka ban might be due to the fact the Burka is a very obvious sign of being different in our society (Piela, 2010) and as the article suggests that people are easily distraught and afraid when thinking about the Burka in Germany. Furthermore, the article criticises that the mainstream media creates not only an association with *Otherness* by these depictions but also creates a stigma with certain topics, by using *semiotic* symbols, in this case the Burka, thus enabling viewers to relate more easily and frequently with the topic (Jhally, 1990).

The same or similar analysis can be made for the Burkini, which will be examined in the following part.

5.2.5. Ban of the Burkini

Sylvia Margret Steinitz: Emanzipiert

27. August 2016 08:27 Uhr

Burka gegen Bikini: Kampf der Kleiderkulturen

Der Streit um "passende" Badebekleidung für Frauen stellt eine Premiere für Europa dar. Und eine Chance: für eine neue Verhüllungs- und Enthüllungskultur.

Von Sylvia Margret Steinitz



Drucken



Picture 4_Title: Burka vs Bikini: Fight of the two clothing cultures¹⁴

Next to the headscarf and Burka ban, another discussion has been the ban of the Burkini in Germany. Within the articles it is debated whether or not the Burkini should be allowed for women to be worn in public pools, whether it is a sign of freedom or oppression for the women and how it influences the whole male/female interaction within the swimming area. To answer this I will look into the article from picture 4 and elaborate.

One article in particular caught my attention. It is a bit different than the other ones, as it is more of a statement piece rather than a news article. The author starts out with describing the scene that has started the debate about the Burkini on a bigger scale, namely the picture that had been taken of a woman who is been asked to take off a long-armed tunic by the police. She violated the ban of Burkinis according to them, which had been established by around 30 different French provincial towns. This however had been overruled by the French council shortly after. Nonetheless, it is still debated whether such a ban should be there and scholars and politicians argue about the self-determination of the woman, boundaries of tolerance, the

¹⁴ Burka gegen Bikini: Kampf der Kleiderkulturen. (2017, October 13). Retrieved October 28, 2019, from <https://www.stern.de/panorama/sylvia-margret-steinitz/burkini-streit--kampf-der-kleiderkulturen-7028380.html>

dominant culture (“Leitkultur”) in a country and what naked skin has to do with values. Hereby, the author criticises that the western society believes that veiling a woman’s body is backward.

In her analysis she argues that this is the first time that western society has been on the side of the unveiling. Up until the 20th century it was in fact the other way around. Little or no clothing was seen as uncivilized, wild and primitive. During the colonial times reports of “naked native people” or “exotic wilds” were written, showing the differences to the colonial superior people and their way of living. In fact nakedness was sexualized by many colonialists, calling them promiscuous and very open to sex due to their nudity.

This can be compared to how immigrants from “veiling” cultures now a days mock the “native” European women with their short trousers and open hair, according to the author. Now a days its European women who are seen as promiscuous and with no modesty and honour. In many Arabic and Asian parts of the world western women are considered “whores”, thus lewd comments and feeling someone up is considered okay, according to the author.

Just like in colonial times European women now a days do not know how to deal with this intrusive behaviour. The staring of Europeans must have felt obtrusive and backwardly for the natives just as we are feeling now with the gazes of men who see the female body in a different light. Western Europeans are starting just as their counterparts before to change their own behaviour by going topless less often to the beach or not wearing tops with spaghetti straps in order to not draw leering looks.

So looking back at history there has always been a confrontation between the cultures of disguise versus exposure. But not only men reinforce this concept, also women are a part of the enforcement of the clothing culture by supporting it. Religious motives are not always behind dress codes, often times social status demand a certain attire. The reason for women to support these dress codes and critic provocative clothing can have different reasons, for example the wish for approval, out of fear, jealousy or prudery.

The author ends the article by saying that we need to look at our own actions before putting blame towards only men. “The freedom to wear any kind of clothes is one of the most important achievements of human kind and needs to be protected by men and women together with respect and the awareness of our own responsibility for the overall good. Maybe it is a second premiere for Europe to understand that we do not live in a disguise or exposure culture but rather in a culture of self-determination. A culture in which neither the Bikini nor the Burkini is seen as a threat.”

Discussion

In this discussion one of the most important aspects is the *codes of gender* (Goffman, 1978), in which in particular the codes of femininity and masculinity are analysed. This needs to be done in order to understand the need of some women to wear a Burkini.

The complex thematic of the Burkini is reduced to a simple question by critics: “does your husband force you to wear a Burkini?” by doing so reducing the Muslim women to a victim confined into gender specific roles rather than looking at the larger context these women are in. Therefore, it is imperative that one should ask, in order to try and understand such a complex situation, whether the cultural environment, family, tradition, religious opinions, sense of an oversexualized society, own protection requirement, experiences with men, beliefs, ‘conservative’ value system forces one to wanted to hide your body from the views of others? Hence, one can argue that the former question is to singular and that a wider spectrum needs to be taken into account.

In a culture of disguise, as the author calls it, the Burkini can act as a way to obtain certain freedoms for the women. Thus, by wearing the Burkini Muslim women exercise *agency*. Hereby, Lind’s *concept of paradoxes* in which “women’s survival and struggle occur within the culturally constructed boundaries of the ‘public’ and ‘private’, sometimes challenging or transgressing these boundaries, other time reinforcing them” (Lind, 2004, p. 421), can be applicable. On the one hand the veil can be seen as a way for female Muslims to enter the ‘public’ sphere without the fear of loss of modesty on their part. On the other hand the veil can also reinforce the notion of the need for the division of the two spheres, in which women should be predominantly in the ‘private’ sphere (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Ruby, 2006). Concluding, the struggle of *agency* of Muslim women outside of their gendered sphere can be accomplished by them wearing the Burkini, thus in turn giving them freedom and a choice.

However, in our culture of exposure the same idea can be interpreted completely opposite. Here, the *oppression* of female Muslims is often described in mainstream media (also in some of the articles I selected), while Islam is seen as a religion based on *patriarchy*. Hence some might say that wearing a Burkini reinforces that system of male dominance. So instead of gaining *agency* by wearing the Burkini in this ideology it reinforces their *oppression*. The Burkini then can be said has been instrumentalized by the mainstream media as a *symbol* of loss for our own freedoms.

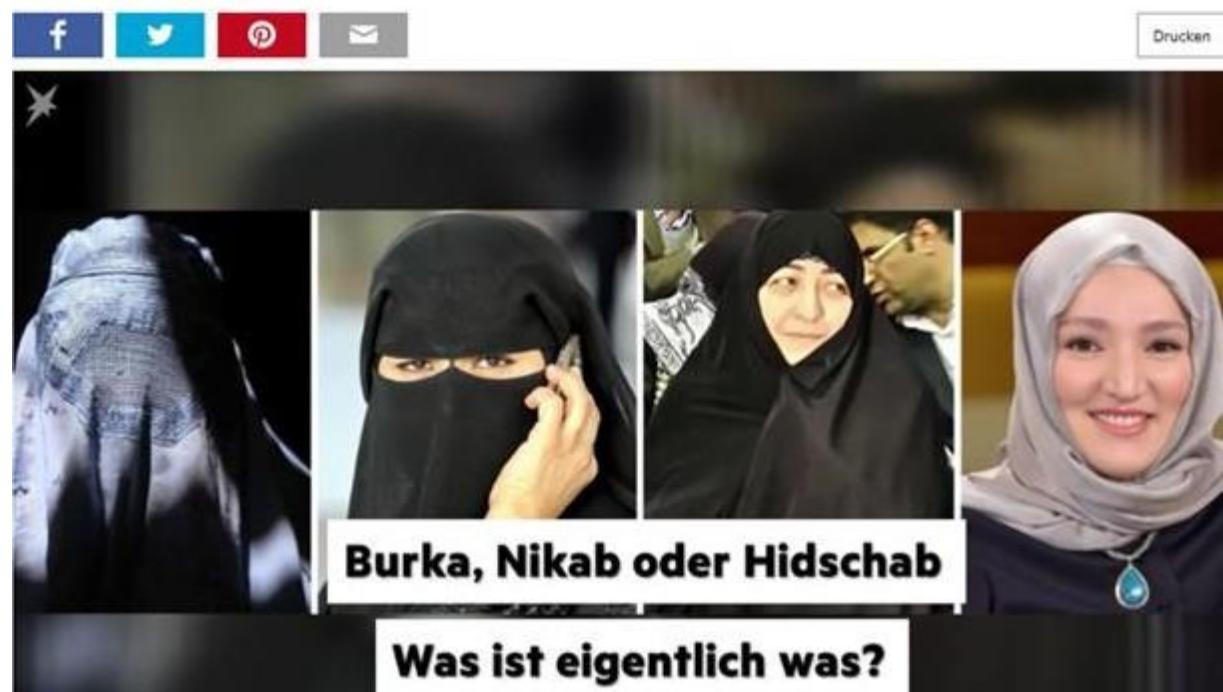
However, the author of this article made some important points in her argumentation and that is that the problem does not lie in the fact whether we are embracing a culture of disguise or exposure or in other words wearing a Burkini or Bikini but rather the fact that we adjust our concept of what is right and wrong again and again over time. We, as Europeans have been both in a culture of disguise as well as in a culture of exposure during our history. At the moment we are in a phase that is a culture of exposure so because of that the recurrence of the culture of disguise creates a fear of us losing our freedoms which we have fought for, which would then explain why some see the Burkini as a problem and a threat to us.

But what do people actually know about it and how does the mainstream media portray the veil and its differences? This will be examined in the following part.

5.2.6. Differences in veiling

Burka, Nikab, Hidschab - kennen Sie den Unterschied?

Die Burkadebatte hält an. Dabei wissen viele nicht, dass mit einer Burka nicht ein Kopftuch bezeichnet wird. Wie dieses tatsächlich heißt und welche anderen Verschleierungsformen es im Islam gibt, erfahren Sie hier.



Picture 5_Title: Burka, Niqab, hijab- do you know the difference?¹⁵

¹⁵ Burka, Niqab oder Hidschab - wie sich muslimische Frauen verschleieren. (2017, September 19). Retrieved from https://www.stern.de/politik/ausland/burka-niqab-oder-hidschab---das-sind-die-unterschiede-7016664.html#mg-1_1572101219297

There are many articles with pictures of women in a Niqab or Burka debating of whether this infringes on the woman's worth and if it should be allowed to wear in Germany. But what are these types of veiling actually and how do they differ? In fact there are more articles than I initially assumed about explaining the differences in veiling options and answering the question of why a veil is needed to be worn (the actual stats were a bit difficult because when putting in the keywords, like Niqab, Burka, headscarf, differences, explanation, etc. into the search engine a lot of none related articles showed up as well, nonetheless I would say for each side, Stern & Spiegel I saw between 20 and 30 articles which explained the differences). The article, I choose contains a short video clip explain why or how the Quran instructs its followers to cover up. It describes that not only women but also men are supposed to "*cover*" themselves in order to ensure being properly dressed to not increase sexual attention towards the opposite gender.

The Burka is often equalized with the covering up of the Muslim woman in societal discussion. However, there are many different veiling options available, depending on religion and social class. The Burka for example is a wide garment which masks the body and face of the woman completely. The carrier only looks through a micromesh out of textile and horsehair. This specific type is mainly worn in Pakistan and parts of Afghanistan, which was an obligation for women to wear under the Taliban. The Niqab is a facial veil which is mostly combined with a floor-length gown. To see through only exists a small slit. The Niqab is mostly worn for women in Saudi-Arabia, Yemen and other regions of the Arabic peninsula but also in Europe. A Chador is a traditional *cover up* in Iran. It consists of a large cloth, which is entwined around the woman's head and body and is mostly a dark colour. Hereby, the face stays free. Additionally, women all over the world wear the hijab, which is a combination of headscarf and a wide coat. With this version the face stays free, though hair, ears, neck and many times the shoulders are covered.

There are debates about the intensity of veiling and the interpretation of the passages revolving the *cover up* instructions within the Quran. Despite these debates, some say the Quran recommends a simple head coverage for women and due to cultural differences over the century's predominant Muslim countries developed various different clothing rules and regulations. Hence they seem to be regionally specific and cannot be generalized as how **the Muslim woman** is supposed to look and *cover herself up*.

Discussion

First off, I was surprised by how many articles there indeed were about the differences of veiling. Initially I thought that there were only a few cause often times these articles are neglected or put more into the background when it comes to news. It seems that these type of articles are less displayed during mainstream media coverage or less often used as references in debates, giving the impression that they are not well represented which is misleading. Nonetheless, they are still way less in numbers than e.g. the Burka ban which has over 100 articles in either Spiegel or Stern, whereas here I could only find 20-30 for both. Unfortunately, articles often leave out the part in which the idea behind the veil is explained by the Quran, thus simplifying a more complex issue of where and why differences in veiling occur and come from to a simple story.

The wording is of importance as well. Within this debate and in this article the word *full face veil* (“Vollverschleierung”) appears often. It means full coverage veil but it entails a rather negative connotation, compared to *cover* (“bedecken”) and *cover up* (“verhüllen”), which both means to cover up. Hence, articles using the word *full face veil* create a negative subtext for this topic from the beginning, subtly leading the reader to a conclusion of the topic predominant in the debate.

Moreover, what stands out when analysing these articles is the fact that the “actual” Muslim woman is rarely included as an active agent with a voice to be heard. From about 100 articles which I initially looked at to choose for the textual analysis I only found a handful of articles that included actual everyday Muslim women, who were not titled as experts. Rather, these articles are written about them, thus making them passive agents, which need to be spoken about. Even in instances such as trying to understand issues concerning their choices of why they want to wear a veil or not. Mostly, the radical and extreme voices of either active participating Muslim women (in picture 4, the woman on the left is a famous Muslim converter who is often present during debates concerning the covering up of Muslim women) or former Muslim women (e.g. Mina Ahadi) are actively voiced. Often to illustrate an extreme point of view of the religion and more specific in the case of veiling, having extreme arguments of pro or contra veiling. These are the instances in which Muslim women have an actual voice and including them in the process of mainstream media information.

Furthermore, the persistent constructions of Muslim women in need of help because of being oppressed in Islam, which is signified by them covering themselves with a veil, portrays their

victimhood according to the media. Hereby, the veil is a symbol of their oppression rather as they are seen of not being able to choose it themselves. Even though I was able to find various articles by the majority of written articles by the mainstream media which I found during the analysis try to show various viewpoints, various sides of the coin, did try to add nuance. Is that not your appreciation of them? For example, the article contrasting the cultures of exposure and of disguise- would you say that that in the end portrays Muslim women as victims and is primarily ,othering“?

Vom Kopftuch bis zum Ganzkörperschleier



Quellen: Globus, dpa

Picture 6: Title_From the headscarf to the full body veil¹⁶

Due to the many differences in veiling and the fact that not everybody might know exactly what each entails, I chose picture 7 to use in the interviews to help get for one get a clearer picture and second to see if the participants even know which one is for example a headscarf, Niqab or Burka (because these three are mostly talked about in the mainstream media messages).¹⁷

¹⁶ Islamische Frauenkleider: Burka, Nikab, Hidschāb: Wie heißt welcher Schleier? (2016, September 13). Retrieved from https://www.t-online.de/nachrichten/panorama/justiz/id_78631246/burka-nikab-hidsch-b-wie-heisst-welcher-schleier-.html

¹⁷ All are explained in the text above.

So do alternatives in the narrative exist? And if so how are they depicted? This will be analysed in the last part of the mainstream media messages analysis.

5.2.7. Alternative representation of Muslim women

"Meine Tochter soll selbst entscheiden"

Sollten Kopftücher für Mädchen unter 14 Jahren verboten werden? Hier erzählen muslimische Frauen, Eltern, Kinder und Lehrer, was sie von solch einer Regelung halten.

Von Heike Klovert und Julia Köppe



Picture 7_Title: My daughter should decide for herself.¹⁸

In this part I will talk about alternative depictions of Muslim women in mainstream media. The title of the article states: "my daughter should decide for herself" and the captions says: "should headscarves be prohibited for girls under the age of 14 years old? Here Muslim women, parents, children and teacher talk about how they feel about the new regulation".

This is a controversial issue also between Muslim people. Many resist against a national ban, because they perceive it to be placed under guardianship and trivialised. In the following, I included a few statements from the article.

¹⁸ SPIEGEL ONLINE, Hamburg, Germany. (2018, April 21). Das halten Muslime vom Kopftuchverbot für Mädchen. Retrieved from <https://www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/schule/kopftuch-verbot-fuer-maedchen-was-muslime-davon-halten-a-1203726.html>

Aziz Chabani, primary school teacher, Essen says: "It should be more important what goes on in their heads instead of what is on top of it." He believes that Muslim girls connect feelings to headscarves and one cannot prohibit feelings. "They wear it for example out of tradition on Ramadan or because their mother wears one. If you tell them not to wear it, that it is forbidden, than that signals them that their mother is bad as well. This can be very hurtful." Personally he thinks that it is important to support and strengthen children and a better way to do that would be to look for conversation with the parents and to build trust with them. A ban could mean that this trust would be lost because they feel like someone else rules over their children without them being a part of it.

Merve Kayikci, 23, Media and journalism student, Schwaben states that "girls, who freely wear the headscarf are punished unfairly." She did wear a headscarf in fifth grade, and adds that she was just as much of age or not of age religiously as her Christian friends who went to the communion." In fact her mother thought she was too young to wear one with 10 years old but she thought that her classmates and teacher would accept her more easily at her new school if they saw her wearing one immediately rather than a bit later.

Akif Sahin, 36, PR-consultant, Hamburg says "My daughter should decide for herself". For him the discussion about a ban for headscarf is generally wrong. His four year old daughter does wear one, but only in a mosque or her room but not because they want her too. In fact her mother forbid her to do so initially but my daughter thinks it is so beautiful on her mother and aspires to be like her. "Of course she is way too small to understand what the headscarf means, which is why I don't want her to wear it in public or in kindergarten. I don't want her to be discriminated because of it.", adding that no Islamic source states that girls have to wear one before puberty and if a girl is being forced it is more likely due to false understanding of Islam and a ban will not change that but rather education.

Cigdem Toprak, 31, Journalist and Blogger, Frankfurt states "a ban is a necessary intervention". She herself does not wear one, because she is a member of the Aleviten, who do not wear a headscarf for religious reasons. Therefore, it was never an issue for her but she has always been very critical towards it. She respects when women wear a headscarf but believes that young girls cannot make that decision yet because they are highly influenced by their parents and their community. "They might find it beautiful and want to emulate their mother but they cannot comprehend yet what it means to wear a headscarf at such a young age." A ban is a radical

option for her but an important nonetheless to ensure that the girls have the possibility to decide for themselves and their lives.

Fatima, 9, with mother Kamila, 30, Hamburg: "No one has looked at me strangely."

Fatima declares: "I wear a headscarf because I think it is beautiful and because I believe in Allah. I always wear it, whether on the street, in school or on the playground, even at home I do not take it off. I love my headscarf. Even though I am the only one in my class that wears one. But I don't think that is bad and no one has looked at me strangely yet because of it. If someone would ask me to take it off I would say no!"

Her mother, Kamila adds: "I always ask if Fatima wants to wear the headscarf and she always affirms this. Of course I am happy that she wants to wear it and that she shares our religion and values. I just want what is best for her. If she does not want to wear one anymore that is no problem. If there would be a ban on the headscarf than she would not wear one. For me that wouldn't change much but I believe Fatima would be sad."

Vanessa, 23, Hamburg says "a ban is discrimination and if my daughter wants to wear a headscarf than she should be allowed to do so, even if she is not 14 years old yet." She knows girls, age of 10, who wear one because they want to because they see their mother wearing one. Moreover, she sees no problem if they want to wear it for a day or a few hours and adds that not only Muslim parents make decisions for their children in regard to religion. Christians for example baptize their children at a young age and Jewish boys are being circumcised without being able to decide, questioning why these are not discussed to be banned. For her freedom of religion has a high ranking in Germany and that is how it should be, a ban of headscarves would be a discrimination.

Menerva Hammad, 28, Journalist, Wien says "I wouldn't care about a ban." She believes than a ban would not be applicable to most Muslims in their everyday life, thus she doesn't mind it. She adds that no one has a concrete number of how many girls wear a headscarf in kindergarten or primary school but believes that it cannot be that many. "Hence, you would prohibit something that does not really exist. I think that is stupid. Same with the ban of the Burka." She believes that there are more important aspects that need to be addressed such as discrimination, xenophobia and homophobia.

Moreover, she is bothered with the intention behind the headscarf ban. For her it suggests that Muslim children have to be protected against their parents. Personally, she wears one but would never force her child to wear one and says that she would always let her decide.

Discussion

In this article SPIEGEL ONLINE has asked a variety of people, including Muslim teachers, children, blogger and parents, giving their opinion to the debate about the headscarf for girls under the age of 14 years old.

Articles, like the one from picture 7, which shows a diversity of Muslim women, including a more modern and colourful type of veiling, are mostly missing from mainstream media coverage. Most of the times women with black veils or headscarves are shown (as seen in picture 5), which can create a more negative and closed off atmosphere surrounding these women. Compared to this the more modern colourful veiling options could be seen as more progressive and welcoming.

In this particular article the aspect of free choice has been emphasized. Due to a lack of finding many similar articles it seems to me that such a depiction often seems to be rather secondary in the media. (I found maybe a handful of similar articles from both magazines). This lack of *diversity* within the portrayal of Muslim women creates the image of a one way Muslim women, giving the idea to readers that there is only one version of what a Muslim women is, which then can easily put all Muslim women into the same category. Henceforth, another important aspect which can be seen is the lack of intersectional analyses within the description of Muslim women in the media. By doing so counteracting the creation of **the Muslim woman** by depicting them as this homogenous group, who do the same things for the same reasons (Nightingale, 2011). Thereby, ignoring the possibility and reality of differences in real life Muslim women. This rethinking of “universalized Muslim women” is needed to create a more balanced portrayal of Muslim women in mainstream media. Hereby, *power relations* are important to note, with the mainstream media having more power than the singular Muslim woman or even all Muslim women in Germany by deciding what to *include* (the one-dimensional, dark veil wearing Muslim woman with no opinion) and what to *exclude* (the more colourfully dressed Muslim woman with an opinion ready to spread it).

This in turn helps to create the *Us vs. Them* mentality as the Muslim women can be seen as one entity. This together with the previously described depiction can lead to either fear and

suspicion or pity between the Muslim part and the rest of the German society. Moreover, creating an entity of Muslim women rather than showing individuality and intersectionality decreases the possibility to find common ground between the two groups, thus creating and/or sustaining the division between them.

5.3. Conclusion

So how have Muslim women been represented in current media texts in newspaper articles and visual segments in mainstream media, such as the Spiegel and Stern?

The most dominant aspect that I found was the fact how many times articles wrote about Muslim women without consulting them. Though Islam scholars were able to give their opinion, the limited access of Muslim women to the creation of mainstream media message was apparent. Hence, the people that talked about issues that concerned Muslim women did mostly not include them to give their opinions and experiences from their daily lives.

Moreover, the ideas behind ban different types of veiling, such as the headscarf, the Burka or Bikini are enclosed behind a want to support the Muslim woman and help them out of their 'oppression' while it might actually steam from a deeper fear of one's own freedom. Here the creation of victimhood is of importance, showing Muslim women, who veil themselves to do so because of pressure from the outside from for example family or friends/community and not by their own choice.

Before I started this research I had this image of what the dominant picture in mainstream media is and I can say that my previous image was indeed affirmed but I also found alternative images to the dominant one, which I have analysed in this chapter. Out of the six articles that I have chosen one can say that the first three are more in line with the dominant media messages whereas the last three entail alternatives to the dominant message. I chose these because they added value to the discussion, highlighting the most dominant aspects in today's mainstream media. Even though I also found quite a few positive articles about Muslim women they are a lot less compared to the more negative ones. Looking at 100 articles about Muslim women, at least 75 would be depicting a negative image about them, especially in conjunction with the veil and only about 25 would be either neutral (like explaining the different types of veiling) or positive, by focusing on the Muslim women's agency for example. Therefore, the majority of articles about Muslim women which can be found are written more negatively, describing what is inherently bad for them, thus creating an overall negative atmosphere.

According to my findings in the previous parts of chapter 5 I was able to select three videos based on important themes in mainstream media messages to show the participants during the interviews as a starting point for the discussion. The following part will analyse the three chosen videos and describe why these three specific ones have been chosen.

5.4. Video analysis

5.4.1. Introduction

In this part I will elaborate on the analysis of three short videos which depict a variety of Muslim women as well as topics, which are deemed important for this research.

These videos were selected to be shown in the interviews as a tool to help start the conversation and hopefully easing in the participants into the discussion. In order to start the interviews to answer the following two sub- research questions:

What do young Muslim women living in Germany think about the mainstream media representations of Islam in general and Muslim women in particular over the past few years?

How do young non-Muslims perceive the media coverage about Muslim women in mainstream media?

and give the respondents a more relaxed way into the discussion, I showed them three short videos, which talk about some aspects which have been identified within the textual analysis.

5.4.2. Descriptions and analyses of the three videos

1. Name: Lehrerin sagt Kopftuch für Mädchen steht im Koran_ stimmt das_¹⁹ (Teacher says headscarf for girls is described in the Quran – is that true?)

The first video is about the fact that women and men or girls and boys should not be taught together from the age of puberty. Therefore, a Muslim female Quran teacher, who has been living in Germany for 10 years, is interviewed. The first picture depicts the said teacher. It is noticeable that the women is dressed rather traditional in darker colours.

¹⁹ Lehrerin sagt Kopftuch für Mädchen steht im Koran? stimmt das? [Video file]. (2016, September 19). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1jGNV5Dpxl8>



While introducing her, the voice-over questions whether she teaches the values of an open and tolerant society to the students, giving us, the audience, immediately the tone of a rather negative outlook of the teacher and suggestion of where this interview will go and how it should be perceived.



In the picture above one can see that a few young girls, probably around the age of 9-12, are sitting in the circle wearing a headscarf.



The interviewer is very brisk towards the teacher and she seems to be overstrained with the situation and the questions that are being asked. It is not likely that she was told the questions in advance, thus giving her time to prepare, which of course as a Quran teacher she should maybe know by heart. She is asked whether or not children of both sexes can be swimming together. Whereupon she answered rather uneasy, that this is not possible, ("that this is no good", she says), starting to get into the headscarf debate that women have to cover up. It is emphasized that her German is not the best as well.



In the last picture of this first video, we can see a Kurdish man in a suit, which can be seen as very professional compared to her clothing. Moreover, his German is by far superior and more eloquent, thus giving the audience the impression that he is more educated and maybe even more qualified in giving his statement. He stated that community centres which teach their students (mostly young children) “problematic” gender roles can lead to problems in society when it comes to integration of said children. For example, it can create problems in schools, with young girls wearing headscarves or not wanting to participate in school gym or swim training. This setup creates a direct opposite of the statement of the teacher. At the same time this segment generates a more positive atmosphere during his speaking time which suggests a more favourable opinion by him which probably equals the point of view of the interviewer and the producers of the video.

I selected this video as it shows how the dominant view of the mainstream media is depicted and supported by illustrating the dominant view in a more positive way, using a more elaborated speaker while at the same time showing the Muslim woman in a more negative way by not being able to answer the questions adequately and thus supporting the mainstream media own agenda.

2. Name: Kopftuchverbot für Lehrerinnen?²⁰ (Headscarf ban for female teachers?)

In the second video a female teacher was interviewed, who lost her job because she decided to keep wearing her headscarf when religious symbols have been banned in public schools in Berlin in July, 2018. For her the headscarf is important due to her religion but at the same time she states that it is also only a clothing item, thus she does not understand why there is such a discussion about it.

²⁰ Kopftuchverbot für Lehrerinnen? [Video file]. (2015, March 15). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RBe3EqmI64Q>



She was able to find another position but as the video explains that is not a possibility for everyone. Other teachers in high schools for example have to wear hats as a compromise, as the picture below shows.



The ban is often argued (as analysed in 5.2.2.) as teachers being able to influence students while wearing religious symbols, often emphasizing the headscarf and its influence on the young girls in class. Again these two teachers have sued and in the end overturning the ban in this state in

month, year, in Germany. The judges argued that although the state is religiously neutral but at the same time the schools need to teach religious tolerance.

I selected this video as it deals with the ban of the headscarf of Muslim teachers, which is a highly discussed topic in the media at the moment. It is of high importance not just due to its proximity but also the implications it would have for Muslim women, who would like to become teachers while at the same time wearing a headscarf.

3. Name: Angst vor dem Kopftuch _ Schleier - Unterdrückung oder Freiheit - Deutschland Islam Muslima Frau²¹ (Fear oft he headscarf_ the veil: symbol of oppression or freedom in Germany)

This video deals with the question of whether the headscarf is a symbol of oppression or one of freedom. It depicts two different Muslim women, who talk about their choice to wear a headscarf. They can be seen after one another, thus each having their own screen time. The video is a pro headscarf argumentation describing it as a symbol of freedom if chosen freely. The first one is 22 year old student and says that the head scarf symbolizes freedom for her and also strengthens her identity. She does not want to be other-directed and wants to make her own decisions about whether or not wearing a headscarf, adding that she does not want to comply with the restraints of mainstream German society. For her freedom is often mirrored with permissiveness. She also criticises how often people feel the need to help her, as she is being “a poor oppressed Muslim woman” in need of rescue.

²¹ Angst vor dem Kopftuch / Schleier - Unterdrückung oder Freiheit - Deutschland Islam Muslima Frau [Video file]. (2013, June 12). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uj30izX45ms>



The second girl is a 13 year old high school girl which is in secondary school and is described by the commentator in the video as confident because she is wearing a headscarf freely since the 7th grade and even though being mobbed because of it she stays by her decisions.



The tone of the video asks where the voices of the Muslim women are who actually wear headscarf and how critics of Islam “take the right” to talk for them. The voiceover within the video tries to depict both women as confident and self-determined. However, both are not

equally as convincing. Whereas the first one spoke fluently but deliberate and confident, the second one sounded to recite her part. This could be due to the fact that she was younger and maybe less secure in talking into a camera and more nervous than the first. However, one could also question if she did not come up on her own with this speech. Worthy to mention is that both speakers, though noticeably to different levels in confidence, spoke good and proper German, which is not always the case. Also the mimic and gestures of the second speaker (as can be seen in the picture above) are rather bored or show a negative presence coming from her, creating a less desirable atmosphere of the video. Sometimes it seems to be that the message that the producers want to bring across are supported by choosing a person, which is not necessarily perfect in answering the questions at hand. This is also the case in the first video.

I selected this video because it is very different than the other two, in the way that it represents a more positive outlook at Muslim women/girls wearing a headscarf. Moreover, it suggests that the video is made by Muslim women for Muslim women rather than someone else making a video about Muslim women.

Discussion and conclusion

In order to analyse the context, which affects the choice of information by the producers of the media under revision *power relations* will be analysed. Who has how much say in creating information and distributing it is of importance, within this concept. Moreover, it gives an insight into who and what is included and excluded and potentially the reasons why this is. Another concept could be patriarchy in a way that Muslim women are depicted as subordinate towards their male counterpart but through this one-sided depiction one could argue that the media is strengthening and reinforcing this idea of *patriarchy* within the Muslim community and thereby inadvertently ‘support’ it.

Chapter 6. Opinions & experiences part 1_ the veil and the media

6.1. Introduction

In the following two chapters (chapter 6&7)²² the sub-question concerning the audience reception will be answered, which is as follows:

What are the differences and similarities in perception and acceptance of mainstream media representations of Muslim women between Muslim and non-Muslim women in Germany?

To answer this adequately first I divided each chapter into Muslim and non-Muslim parts²³, which afterwards have been analysed and concluded, including here the sub-questions of *what do young Muslim women living in Germany think about the mainstream media representations of Islam in general and Muslim women in particular over the past few years* as well as *how do non-Muslims perceive the media coverage about Muslim women in mainstream media?*

Both chapters encounter the opinions and experiences of the participants in relation to mainstream media messages but are divided again into two parts; the first is chapter 6 which deals with the veil and the media; the second is chapter 7 which analysis the “consequences” of how the mainstream media portrays Muslim women and in how far this depiction influences their daily lives.

The first part in this chapter (6) is the one-sided portrayal of the veil in mainstream media, including the differences between stereotypes and reality. Next to this the differences in wording between mainstream media and Muslim women in terms of to *cover* and to *cover up* have been looked at and whether a headscarf can be seen as a symbol of Muslim identity. The second part deals with the lack of differentiation between religion and culture, while looking at how the mainstream media has used terms like conservative and liberal Islam and what both groups thought about it. The third part is about “Zwangssentschleierung” (Forced unveiling) using the debates about the Burka and Burkini ban as an example to illustrate. The fourth and last part deals with the aspect of discrimination the Muslim respondents have experienced and in how far the non-Muslim respondents have noticed this as well as the perception of the overall atmosphere in the country by both groups.

²² *The following chapters will each have their own small introductions.

²³ **All names of the participants have been altered, letting them choose a name for themselves.

6.2. The one-sided portrayal of the veil in mainstream media

In the first part, I started with how the mainstream media has portrayed Muslim women and more specifically the veil. Hereby, I showed the participant(s) the selected videos to ease them into the interview. Watching the interviews gave the participants a visual about certain topics which were talked about during the interview and gave them a starting point. Moreover, it helped them relax and ease them into the topic, especially the non-Muslim women who were a bit more reluctant because they mentioned that they did not know what to talk about in the interview when I initially approached them. Then I will go into more detailed about how the reality, according to the respondents looks like compared to the stereotypes the media has depicted. Afterwards I analyse the differences in wording between mainstream media and Muslim women in terms of to *cover* and to *cover up*. I will end the first part with the question whether a headscarf can be seen as a symbol of Muslim identity. At the end of this part (and each of the other four) the discussion and conclusion has been placed in order to determine the differences and similarities in perception and acceptance of mainstream media representations of Muslim women between Muslim and non-Muslim women in Germany.

In this first sub-section I deal with how the mainstream media has portrayed Muslim women and more specifically the veil. Including not only what the veil entails but also the reasoning of why it is chosen to be worn and subsequently the meaning behind it and whether or not Muslim and non-Muslim women recognize a mainstream depiction or rather alternative ones.

Muslim respondents

Overall all respondents agreed that there is a lack of information in mainstream media of not only what the veil entails but also the reasoning of why it is chosen to be worn and subsequently the meaning behind it. Hereby, the first video, which included a female Muslim Quran teacher, has been a good starting point for the discussion with both the Muslim and non-Muslim respondents. In general the respondents agreed that the teacher was not able to elaborately explain why one should wear a headscarf, simply saying that the Quran says so. However, opinions varied of why that was the case, from being unprepared, up to unable to clearly articulate themselves and including not knowing better.

Looking at the first video Rana (24) and Seda (24) say that the mainstream media often deliberately uses people, who can express themselves more eloquently when they want to bring their own opinion across and someone, who is less articulate and with a bad German (like in this case) when it comes to a different belief, thereby, already guiding their viewers' opinions.

The woman in this video especially came across quite uncharismatic and negative and even a bit aggressive due to the fact that she was not able to express herself properly due to her poor German. Here Bahar (26) adds that the interviewer has not given the interviewee the structure of the interview in order to prepare, which Rana (24) argues that may have been in order to receive a rather authentic answer.

Liya (24), for example, states that she herself was previously unable to explicitly express herself, which led people to believe that she did not know enough about her own religion in the past. Moreover, she notes that there are different interpretations on what the veiling should entail, thus making it more difficult to find a consensus. The different interpretations vary regionally and nationally. Hereby Bahar (26) adds “it doesn’t literally say, that women are supposed to wear a headscarf or a hijab in the Quran. It only states that we should veil ourselves in order to cover up the allurements of the human body, which indeed goes for both males and females. However, the focus is often put on women, which I see as a way of oppression.”²⁴ Melike (26) sees it as a way to cover up ones amenities and as a way to protect the woman. For her it is not important what others think but rather something that is between yourself and Allah; and it should only be seen for your partner, though adding that this goes for both men and women. Meyram (28) and Melike (26) end it by saying that it is described quite am ambiguous in the Quran and not explicit enough.

Why do Muslim women choose to wear a headscarf?

Meyram (28), Melike (26) and Hilal (25) state that they do not see the mainstream media elaborating on why Muslim women choose to wear the headscarf. Liya (24) and Sena (19) mention that they have seen some articles on explaining this but only a few, whereas Seda (24) describes how she found a number of articles which deals with the reasons for Muslim women wearing them and even a few of those entailed more in-depth explanations.

In relation to the video Bahar (26) says that the women do not properly explain at which point in a woman’s life one can consider wearing a veil, which also depends on the region or country. It is especially important to question when someone like the woman in the first video tells you when to start and to which extent one should or better wants to cover themselves up. Unfortunately, especially in the media it is often depicted as if those conversations with scrutinizing questions do not happen in the Muslim community. However, Bahar (26) admits

²⁴ „Es steht nirgendwo wörtlich drin ihr sollt ein Kopftuch tragen. Es steht drin, dass wir uns verhüllen sollen, unsere Reize bedecken sollen (gilt sowohl für weibliche als auch für männliche), wird fokussiert auf Frauen -> unterdrückt“

that there are certainly communities in which an exchange and questions are not happening. Due to the fact that she is herself interested in the possibility of wearing a headscarf, she is quite involved in the topic and according to her studying of the Quran one should cover “from head to toe, however how you do this is up to you, e.g. full body veil or a hood.”²⁵ It can be noted that the face, hands and feet can be seen. Furthermore, she persists that the decision to cover yourself is up to oneself, as there is no coercion in Islam. In fact, many respondents emphasized freedom of choice when veiling as an important part of Islam.

Moreover, Esra (26) disagrees with the statement of the teacher in the first video that veiling is also for young girls. “Small children do not have to cover themselves.”²⁶ Indeed the Quran talks about it with the start of puberty but she herself emphasizes the importance of being ready to cover oneself. She believes that a main problem with the interview was the woman’s language barrier, adding that it would be helpful for her credibility to add verses of the Quran which describe the veil and why it is important. Esra (26) believes that such a video only fuels the misconception of the veil for non-Muslim creating the illusion that the people who wear it do not know the reason behind it and just do it due to cultural reasons. She feels saddened that the majority of videos are orchestrated like this.

Liya (24) worries that only conservative Islam is being taught in those classes. She also sees the main problem with video 1 is the language barrier, which she recognizes from herself. She too used to have a lot of problems with not being able to phrase her opinion in the exact way, when she was in school. This even led her to believe that she did not know her own religion as well as she did because she could not get her point across that well. At the same time she feels like the women has been chosen purposefully as she fits into the expected picture of the mainstream media, thinking that it will create better headlines for the media. “It creates a picture of the Islam, which dictates what is allowed and what is not. Phrases like girls and boys are not allowed to do activities together creates a deterrent image of the religion used to scare people.”²⁷ She also critiques the way Islam is taught in Germany, mainly that it is too conservative and the way it is being taught. Religious content is being taught in Turkish, the meaning of certain terms are not being translated into German for easier understanding when she grew up here in

²⁵ „also von Kopf bis Fuß quasi, aber wie du das tust ist dir selbst überlassen, z.B. auch Vollverschleierung oder auch eine Kapuze“

²⁶ „Kleine Kinder müssen sich nicht verhüllen.“

²⁷ „Hat ein Bild vom Islam das einem vorschreibt was man darf und was nicht, Mädchen und Jungen dürfen nicht zusammen -> Islam wirkt abschreckend“

Germany. Later on she taught herself specific words, which then made it easier for her to explain the religion to others.

Esra (26) mentioned that she enjoyed the second video and found it very informative. She is aware that at public schools after the law religious signs are not allowed as the state and religion is separated. However, she had a teacher who wore the cross in class and there were no complaints. She was also not the only Muslim in her class. She believes that one should be able to live out their faith. Her sister is a kindergarten teacher and she is wearing a headscarf. Kids often ask her why she wears it and she explains it to them whereupon they say fine and go back to their activities. She says “children do not mind, they ask because they are curious.” Answering their questions does not mean that she wants to impose her own ideology onto the children, according to Esra (26). This can indeed be done without symbols. She also mentions that there seems to be a prejudice fear against the headscarf, especially in schools. To counteract or reduce this fear she thinks it’s important to have Muslims in your circle of friends. Open communication with parents (coming back to her profession as a teacher) and to incorporate them into school trips or excursions would benefit to create a better atmosphere to understand each other better. Moreover, Esra (26) notes that it would be good to report less about it and emphasize other societal aspects in the mainstream media. Esra (26) “for other people it might just be a clothing item but for her it has more meaning than just that.” She also compares it to nuns, which also wear it due to their belief.

Non-Muslim respondents

Lisa (26) and Josie (28), for example, find that the teacher from the first video was unable to explain why it is of importance to wear a veil. When asking of the reason for that Lisa (26) mentions that she thought that she was not prepared and was indeed surprised by the question. To counter this argumentation, Vera (29) said that being a Quran teacher she should not need time to prepared but be informed well enough to know the answer.

Xena (27) is unaware of general information about the veil and thinks that the first video does not add to increase her knowledge as many other articles in mainstream media about what is entailed in veiling within the Islam and how the Quran describes it. For her the women in the first video was not able to explain it properly was also due to the fact that the topic was self-evident and that it might have a high interpretation value. She notes that the interviewer was very pushy as if she wanted to summon so the interviewee.

For Marie (21) the video depicts her as someone who “dumbly preaches this without thinking about it”²⁸. In addition Kamilla (26) adds that “the teacher seems to be simply accepting the idea of the veil without questioning it”²⁹. This argumentation is supported by Sophie (26), adding that she just takes it as a given “because the Quran says so”³⁰. Rebecca (24) calls it even a “dead shooting argument”³¹. Moreover, she has the impression that the interviewee feels attacked when the interviewer enquired more detail about why the headscarf should be worn. However, at the same time she sees the interviewer as being neutral and objective in her questioning the interviewee in both tone and facial expression. All four of them agree that there are limited amounts of articles in mainstream media that describe the reasoning for the veil, especially with in-depth information.

Cecilia (23) is not convinced by how the Quran teacher portrays her opinion, adding this might be due to language barriers and that in her mother language she assumes her answer would be clearer and elaborate. Cecilia (23), for example, has a few Muslim friends, which are very religious but do not wear a headscarf because for their interpretation of the Quran it is not necessary on the one hand and on the other hand their families do not require them to do so. Additionally, the critical response at the end of the video was spoken by someone who better articulated himself, thus giving the impression of being better integrated (Cecilia, 23).

6.2.1. Reality versus stereotype of the headscarf

In this section I will examine the potential differences in the mainstream media representation of the headscarf and in reality, looking at potential stereotypes which may have been produced in the mainstream media.

Muslim respondents

The headscarf is often used in connotation to show someone as being uneducated and “easily” oppressed in the mainstream media, as has been discussed by many respondents while watching the first video.

There seems to be an agreement between the respondents that there is a lack of representation of the variety between female Muslims. Therefore, the third video has been extremely positively

²⁸ „stumm predigen ohne darüber nachzudenken“

²⁹ „einfach hinnehmen ohne zu hinterfragen“

³⁰ „steht halt im Koran“

³¹ „Totschießargument“

accepted by the Muslim group as it depicts more diversity (for example by Meyram, 28). The Muslim women is often depicted as a one dimensional character in the mainstream media. They are put into boxes and seen as there is only one version of a Muslim women, however in reality it is much more versatile. Moreover, the media rarely features positive stories (Melike, 26). Muslim women have a very limited representation (Yaren, 20). Liya (24) adds that she is saddened to see that the representation of academic female Muslims is almost non-existent. Moreover, Esra (26) is concerned that not many younger Muslim women are depicted in the mainstream media. I only found this partly to be accurate in my textual analysis of mainstream media. If she means the age range of say 12-18 to be younger Muslim women than yes this age range is not often depicted in the mainstream media. In fact I only found a few examples in which this age groups was represented as active speakers in the articles and videos, for example the video I chose for the alternative media messages contrary to mainstream Medias, in which two teenage girls, age 14 and 16 spoke. However, if by young she includes the age range of 18 to 30, there have been more women included by mainstream media. Though one can differentiate the women into more modern or traditionally ones. Hereby, one can see that the more traditionally ones are more often depicted than the more modern ones, but I could not find such a large distinction as I initially thought in the representation quota of modern versus traditional Muslim women.

Often people mix up burka and e.g. the hijab and use those terms interchangeable. A clear differentiation between the different options of the veil is mostly lacking (Bahar, 26). Here, Rana (24) and Seda (24) admit that they themselves are unsure which is exactly which, as there are many different interpretations on what to wear and the names for it. Differences between the veiling options often have traditional and cultural backgrounds, which are regional (Bahar, 26). Though she often does not understand the groupings as well, as it is not specified in the Quran.

Non-Muslim respondents

The headscarf is often used in connotation to show someone as being uneducated and “easily” oppressed in the mainstream media, as has been discussed by many respondents while watching the first video.

There seems to be an agreement between the respondents that there is a lack of representation of the variety between female Muslims. Therefore, the third video has been extremely positively

accepted by the Muslim group as it depicts more diversity (for example by Kamilla, 26). In addition, Marie (21) appends that “most people do not care about what every day female Muslims think, as it would not make lurid headlines.”³² Cecilia (23) questions whether people can differentiate between the various types of veiling or if the mix up burka and e.g. the hijab and use those terms interchangeable. A clear differentiation between the different options of the veil is mostly lacking, according to her. Therefore, Cecilia (23) notes that some people might be less understanding and even less tolerant towards Muslim women wearing headscarves or other veiling options, simple because they do not understand the reasons behind it. For her personally it does not matter if a woman wears a headscarf or not as she does not judge people on the basis of their clothes and in turn their beliefs, however adding that she knows some women who do wear one and is thus more familiar with it. “This could of course influence my behaviour and perception towards the topic in a more positive way rather than having the connotation of Muslim women being uneducated and oppressed when wearing a headscarf as some mainstream media would like to suggest³³”, Cecilia (23) states. Kamilla (26) adds that because she has Muslim women as friends and knows that they are not uneducated because they wear headscarves that she does not need the explanation as much as people who do not have contact with that group, thus her perception and in turn behaviour is less effected by the mainstream media messages.

Additionally, in the 3rd video there is a lack of explanation on why she decided to wear a headscarf, thus Xena (27) questions whether it was an active decision on her part or due to family pressure, either active or a passive influence by the family members in the way she has been raised. Xena (27) was not only the participant that noted that the way in which especially the first girl spoke in the third video made it seem like she was unsure about herself in the way she articulated herself in front of the camera because of that Kamilla (26) and Marie (21) add that they got a less positive impression about the girl actively choosing to wear a headscarf because of the way she articulated herself. Both participants admit that this has an influence on their perception of the girl and to a certain Muslim women wearing headscarves if they do not see them being able to explain why they wear headscarves. However, Kamilla (26) and Marie (21) also mention that they are wondering if this representation and in turn their rather negative perception would also lead to them behaving differently or even negatively towards Muslim women wearing headscarves, simple because they do not interact a lot with said group. “I do

³² „es interessiert fast niemand was alltägliche Muslimin denken, nicht reißerisch genug“

³³ „Das könnte natürlich meine Meinung gegenüber Musliminnen mit Kopftüchern beeinflussen, da ich welche persönlich kenne und daher weiß, dass nicht alle ungebildet sind.“

not know if I don't interact with Muslim women because of them wearing headscarves thinking that we might not have anything in common because I don't understand their reasoning for wearing it or that I simple don't associate with them because I don't meet them", Marie (21) states.

6.2.2. „Verschleiern vs. Bedecken“ – differences in wording and its connotation to the audience

This next part deals with the differences in wording and its connotation used by different groups (mainstream media, interviewees/experts talking about Muslim women & Muslim women) when describing Muslim women who wear a type of veil. Hereby a differentiation has been made between *cover up* („verschleiern“) and to *cover* (“bedecken”), in which the former is seen as more negative whereas the latter is seen as more positive or neutral.

Muslim respondents

There is a consensus between the participants that *to cover up* („verschleiern“) is used in a negative way when talked about the headscarf and veiling in general in the mainstream media. Hereby the type of veil is of importance, meaning when the mainstream media talks about the Burka or Burkini they always use the wording *to cover up*. However, when they talk about the headscarf they might also use *to cover*. This can also be seen in the debate of the Burka/Burkini ban and the headscarf ban in high schools, as many respondents have noted. *To cover up* („verschleiern“) is often used with a negative conjunction within the mainstream media. Often Muslims themselves use the word *to cover* (“bedecken”) as it has a more tame meaning than *to cover up* (“verschleiern”), the respondents answered.

During this part in the interview the atmosphere was noticeably more negative or sadder while the Muslim respondents talked about it. There was a palpable frustrate atmosphere coming from the respondents, seeming to be a more difficult topic for them. After enquiry to elaborate more on this issue, Bahar (26) for example explains that anytime the mainstream media wants to depict their dominant view about the veil, especially the Burka or Burkini they use the word *cover up* but if a Muslim woman who is more maybe more liberal than conservative they use the word *to cover*. This was supported by Rana (24) and Seda (24). In addition, Esra (26) claims that the mainstream media often uses the word *to cover* when they use Muslim women to support their argument if she is wearing a headscarf while using *to cover up* if a Muslim woman

disagrees with their dominant viewpoint. For her this is very biased and she does not wonder when Muslim women get frustrated while seeing such a depiction.

Non-Muslims respondents

There has been a consensus in the non-Muslim group between most participants that *cover up* („verschleiern“) is used in a negative way when talked about the headscarf and veiling in general in the mainstream media. To *cover up* is often used in a negative conjunction within the media, which wants to be, while Cecilia (23) adds that *cover* is a more innocent word, which is required within certain contexts. Xena (27) understands why Muslims would rather use the word *to cover* than *to cover up*. “It seems like an easier word, something that is done voluntarily rather than having been forced upon someone.”

Cecilia (23) subjoins that *to cover up* especially the face are also banned at e.g. demonstrations, thus a Burka can also be seen from that perspective as it obstructs the view of the face of the person wearing it. Another example would be masks on Halloween or carnival (Kamilla, 26), where one can also not see who is behind the mask though those are exceptions for specific dates, nonetheless they are accepted and mostly not seen as threatening.

6.2.3. The headscarf as a symbol of Muslim identity?

This section looks into the premises of whether the headscarf can be seen as a symbol of Muslim identity or not and in how far this influences perception and behaviour of the respondents.

Muslim respondents

Liya (24) automatically associates as a Muslim while wearing the hijab and feels a sort of belonging. Esra (26) adds that “when she sees another Muslim wearing a headscarf she immediately smiles, as it gives her a feeling of belonging”³⁴. The identification of the respondents with a Muslim woman wearing a headscarf was mentioned by a few (e.g. Yaren, Melike, Esra). Rana can imagine that some women are wearing it out of protest from the negativity, adding that it takes courage to do so in our society and she admires everyone who does it despite of that.

³⁴ „Ich lächele andere Kopftuchträgerinnen meist unbewusst an. Ein Zusammengehörigkeit wird meist sofort gefühlt, eine gleiche Identität.“

Bahar (26) has been starting to wear a headscarf recently more often and she has to dare herself often to do so as she is seen differently from people every time she does it. According to her this can lead to a conflict within herself. Non-Muslim Germans often seem to think that wearing a headscarf equals being a completely different person. Esra (26) wears a headscarf since she is sixteen years old. Her parents were in fact against it, she should finish up her high school and deciding on a job first, telling her that she cannot become a teacher if she wears a headscarf and making sure this is what she really wanted. In addition Liya (24) notes that she has been treated differently by peers or bystanders whether she has worn a headscarf or not, receiving more negative responses, looks or treatment while wearing it. She has been wearing a headscarf since 2003 for various reasons such as it being a part of her religion and thus she feels like wearing it is "good for her", but also because she simply found it beautiful. However, she admits that there were days in which she did not find it as beautiful to wear. Noticing that she would be different than the rest of her peers and in retrospect those days may coincide with days in which she got more looks from bystanders. Due to being only in fifth class, when she decided to wear it with two of her friends, her parents also asked her whether she was sure and if she not rather wait two more years. Liya (24) also added that they were proud of her for wearing it. "Of course people asked me in school why I am wearing a headscarf. I told them that I interpreted the verse in this way but it can also be understood differently. Today it is out of habit that I do not want to take it off anymore.³⁵" (Liya, 24).

Another aspect for Yaren (20) is that her sense of belonging is difficult because here she is classified as Turkish and in Turkey as German. Thus the veil as a symbol of identification might be a way to enhance her own sense of belonging to a certain group. Personally Yaren (20) would not wear it on an everyday basis but rather for special occasions. For Liya (24) a Muslim women wearing headscarf is easier approachable and definitely is a symbol for being a Muslim and belonging to that group.

Sena (19) also finds it beautiful and plays around with the thought of wearing one every day for quite a bit already. At the moment though she only wears it for special occasions, e.g. festivities. However, during her time in school she could not do it, mentioning she would have been too scared to do so because she would have been the only one as there were no other Muslim girls wearing a headscarf in her school. She admitted that she would have felt excluded, was afraid of the looks from others because she knows that many people are against it, if she

³⁵ „Gehört für sie dazu, fragen kamen in der schule warum. Heute für sich könnte es nicht ablegen, Gewohnheit Den Vers hat sie für sich so ausgelegt das man es machen wollte, kann man aber auch anders auslegen.“

had no support from others wearing it as well. In fact she admires Muslim women who keep on wearing it, staying strong and do not lose their courage.

Hilal (25) started out wearing a cap at the beginning, especially during school and her traineeship until she transferred to the headscarf full time. She received quite a bit of discrimination in fact from her colleagues in wearing it (more in the discrimination part). Hilal (25) is wearing the headscarf for a bit over a year now and does not really understand all the controversy about it as it is basically like a cap, with which she started out with. Her decision was a bit quicker than most of the others, as she thought about it and then started wearing it the next day. Her father also asked her if she did not want to wait a bit to be sure but she felt like she wanted to do it immediately. She has been talking and discussing about the religion and certain topics and verses about Islam in a group of friends. “I find it beautiful and at the same time very practical and easy to not have to care how your hair looks at any given day because you just don’t see it.³⁶” Also she removed all her pictures without a headscarf from her social media. At the beginning her colleagues found it weird that she was one day without and then the next day coming to work with a headscarf but she did not care about what they thought.

The symbol of a headscarf can show identification as a Muslim women, which is mostly seen as a positive aspect by my respondents, still it can also be used in a more negative way. Liya (24) mentions that a lot of Muslim women judge each other, thinking that one is better at being a Muslim woman than the other. For example, she has seen Muslim women who wear headscarves, while at the same time wearing makeup, judging others who do not wear a headscarf, thinking they were a superior Muslim. “Just because I don’t wear a headscarf doesn’t mean I am less religious and know less about the Islam³⁷”, Melike (26) adds. For her wearing a headscarf is deeply personal and a “matter of the heart³⁸”. As of this moment she does not want to wear a headscarf during the day. She does however, wears one during her evening prayer. Melike (26) does not feel like she is ready for it yet but can imagine doing it when she is older. It is important for her that people do not do it half-hearted, giving up after six months or two years. Looking at the third video, she is unsure about the thirteen year old girl wearing a headscarf. Not knowing whether one has the maturity to decide at such a young age. “In the fifth class I wouldn’t do that to my daughter.³⁹” Melike (26) is unsure whether the girl decided

³⁶ „Finde es voll schön aber auch einfach praktisch.“

³⁷ „Nur weil wir kein Kopftuch tragen, heißt das nicht dass wir weniger über den Islam wissen, oder weniger gläubig sind.“

³⁸ „Herzenssache“

³⁹ „Ab der 5 Klasse würde ich das meiner Tochter auch nicht antun wollen.“

on her own, as she did not look confident and content. Adding to this Liya (24) mentions that the young girl in the video looked nervous and as if she had memorized her text. Still she believes that this video is done well overall, showing a different perspective on the topic and having a more general positive feeling after watching the video. She agrees with the statement from the video that liberality (“Freizügigkeit”) is too often mistaken for freedom. Liya (24) counteracts though that she is not too young to make this decision. She herself started to wear the headscarf voluntarily at a young age and also has a niece who is wearing a headscarf since she is twelve, and she does so voluntarily. She even asked her why she wears it and was surprised by how thoughtful and well-articulated her cousin’s answer was, considering her being so young.

Non-Muslim respondents

This aspect cannot be explained by non-Muslims in-depth as it includes very intrinsic motives and is thus not really applicable to them but many did see a correlation between women wearing a headscarf and identifying them as Muslim women.

Cecilia (24) points out that non-Muslims have been wearing headscarves and are still today. “It always comes down to our own perspective.” There are many different times in history that women have been wearing a veil or headscarf (even if the type of veiling has changed) and there have been many different reasons for them, either cultural or religious or just out of necessity for example while working in field/agriculture, according to Cecilia (24). However, people often forget historical background while thinking about the veil and now a days the mainstream media has manifested that the veil belongs (only belongs almost) to Muslim women, which of course is not the case. In fact many other religions also have a veil in one way or another, especially in religious ceremonies but for some reason the Muslim woman has been singles out, Cecilia (24) adds. Rebecca (24) and Kamilla (26) both name similar argumentations. In addition, Xena (27) says that she can see that Muslim women might see it as an identifier and part of their identity but states that she does not understand the intrinsic motivations for it from the media representation.

Marie (21), Sophie (27), Vera (29) and Erna (26) all state that they do not know or understand enough the reasoning behind why Muslim women choose to wear a headscarf, as it is not as present in the mainstream media as other topics are. ‘Even if there are articles out there, which I am sure there, I have not read them, but this might be due to the fact of the overabundance of

other images that I see in the media concerning Muslim women, for example the ban of the Burka or Burkini”, Sophie⁴⁰ mentions.

Overall due to on the one hand the very personal reasons for choosing to wear a headscarf and on the other hand the lack of acknowledgment or access of information, while simultaneously most non-Muslims lack interaction with Muslim women, more data for this topic could not be found. This however, shows that a lack of interaction can lead to a lack of understanding between the two groups.

6.2.4. Discussion & Conclusion

This part deals with what many respondents, especially the Muslim ones, have called the misconception of the media portrayal of Muslim women in respective to the veil. The mainstream media has shown mainly a one-sided version of the topic, thus creating a certain image that all Muslim women and a few non-Muslim women see as incorrect. The portrayal shows certain Muslim women, the respondents agree but simultaneously it is just one version and does not depict the whole of Muslim women, thus ignoring their diverse meaning.

Within Islam a religious modesty applies to both men and women, which means that believers of both genders are required to dress and behave modestly according to the Quran. However, there is a lack of consensus of what that entails, e.g. whether women must wear the hijab. This lack of clear guidelines leads to open interpretation possibilities for both advocates and opponents of the hijab. Although Islam dictates modesty from both men and women, an emphasis is predominantly put on female modesty. This is a short summary of what Muslim women explained in the first part of this chapter. Even though they all knew about it, they criticized the fact that mainstream media does not clearly depict this and thus they do not wonder when non-Muslims are getting confused as to what a veil entails and why Muslim women would wear it. Indeed when I asked the non-Muslim women whether they could explain it to me, only a few, mainly the ones that had closer contact to Muslims could.

This narrative is then intensified, as Piela (2010) puts it, by radical traditionalist Islamic sects, such as the Salafi. The idea behind modesty in Islam is also not explained in much detail in most mainstream media, giving not all background information to their readers which leads to

⁴⁰ „Selbst, wenn es diese Thematisierungen gibt, habe ich sie nicht gesehen. Dies mag sein, weil es einfach so viele Berichte über andere Dinge gibt, z.B. das Burka Verbot.“

false assumption about the religion. This is why I have stressed the question of why Muslim women choose the headscarf in the interviews with different replies in both groups.

Moreover, a growing feeling on the part of Muslim women that they no longer wish to identify with the West, and that reaffirmation of their identities as Muslims requires the kind of visible sign that the adoption of traditional clothing implies has been claimed by some scholars such as Ibrahim (1999). In these situations the hijab is not seen as a symbol of tradition but rather they choose to embrace the hijab as a marker of their Muslim identities (Ibrahim, 1999). This is not the case in this research as the Muslim participants specifically denied the fact that they wear or would wear the headscarf in order to disassociate with German culture. However, they do see that some might get a “might as well now⁴¹” idea concerning wearing the headscarf due to all the negativity surrounding it. For some it is definitely a symbol of their Turkish tradition, which can be found more closely explained in the next part; the lack of differentiation between religion and culture.

In accordance to the hijab as an identity symbol in the global context, one of Ruby´s participants said (2006) that if she sees a woman in the hijab she immediately knows she is a Muslim, which creates a sense of belonging and community in this particular situation, which has been described as a positive, ‘nice’ feeling. Mahmuda and Swami (2010) add that the hijab or head-cover is used as a visual identifier among Muslim women, even though it’s a highly sensitive topic. This has been confirmed by the Muslim respondents in this research. Here the symbol of the headscarf can also be a kind of protection for the marginal group wearing it from the dominant one. In turn it can create a being stronger together mentality towards mainstream society. Hence, the headscarf *signifies* a kind of belonging to a specific group.

Interesting to see was that all the Muslim respondents, who are or were interested in wearing a headscarf took some time to started wearing it. It seems to be a process for many rather than an immediate decision. This could be related to the negativity many people have towards the headscarf. They also emphasized the importance of *agency*, meaning that freedom of choice is highly important in Islam which is often neglected to mention due to extremist point of views which are often seen as the norm in mainstream media to describe the Muslim community.

In fact the lack of *agency* by Muslim women represented in the media can be linked to the fact that they are often portrayed as victims. Some respondents felt like Muslim women are not

⁴¹ “jetzt erst recht”

representing themselves as it would show their *agency* and in turn contradict the idea of *victimhood* the media often portrays Muslim women to be.

Another important theory that can be used here is that of *intersectionality* by Nightingale (2011), which explains that one cannot combine all Muslim women into one homogeneous group and call it the Muslim woman, as often done in mainstream media. By doing so they are neglecting differences in ethnicity or class. As of now the Muslim community is still largely comprised of Turkish descendants but this is gradually changing. When talking about Muslim women, the focus often lays on Turkish Muslim but that it often not made clear. They rather assume and mix together Turkish culture and Islamic religion when writing stories about headscarves or honour killing, etc. Next to that they also do not differentiate between classes when it comes to this group. For example they rarely depict academic Muslim women and if they do they almost never wear a headscarf.

Here it is important to recognize the differences in *power relations* between Muslim women and mainstream media which is tilted towards the latter, as they are the ones who decide what kind of representation and with which underlying *ideology* will be included and what will be excluded.

This is particular important if we accept that the media is a source of cultural pedagogy, in which it contributes to “educate” us on “how to behave and what to think, feel, believe, fear, and desire – what not to” (2011, p.7), as Kellner states. The medium that is supposed to educate us and bring us closer in understanding to the illustrated group does indeed work the other way around often times, creating a bigger separation, such like in the case of the veil (Piela, 2010). Again a lack of commentary by the portrayed group, the Muslim women ensures an increase in *Orientalism and Otherness*, rather than closing the gap.

6.3. “Zwangssenschleierung” (Forced unveiling)

In this part the aspect of forced unveiling has been analysed. This part also dealt with the fact that the headscarf has been banned for teachers in some cities in Germany since 2013 (as was examined in the second video, which has been shown to the participants during the interviews). The two sub-sections deal with the fact that Muslim women were to be forced to unveil in case a Burka or Burkini ban would be made into law.

Muslim respondents

Over the last two years there has been an ongoing discussion on whether the headscarf should be banned from high schools. Thus in turn, the question came up on how to enforce this and if that would mean that women who wear a headscarf could be forced to take it off on school grounds or be forced to leave.

A few respondents mentioned that they see a paradox from the interviewee in the 2nd video, as she states that for her the headscarf is of importance due to her religion but at the same time she declares it just another clothing item and thus does not understand the continuous debate about it. Bahar (26) sees the ban as discrimination against Muslim women, as the headscarf does not dictate how someone is able to perform in their job.

In addition a few respondents argue that just because one wears a headscarf does not mean that they are less of a good role model or more likely to influence the students (Melike (26), Meyram (28), Yaren (20)). The importance hereby is to ensure that the students understand that it has to be done voluntarily (Bahar (26), Melike (26)). Yaren (20) thinks that it took courage for the women to choose her beliefs and in turn her headscarf over the particular job, as wearing it does not reflect on how good one does their job. Here Meyram (28) adds that other religions and their symbols are not seen as important by decision makers and the mainstream media and are thus not discussed in the same matter even though according to her they also do not belong in German schools, as there is a division between nation and religion in Germany and most schools which are public should uphold the same division.

The respondents understand the division of religion and school in the German school system, though a few add that other religious symbols are not seen as a problem though. Moreover, she does not see a difference between a politics teacher, who might influence his students by talking about his personal political views and a woman wearing a headscarf, thus creating a fine line between what should be acceptable. Sena (19), for example, had a politics teacher who had a strong opinion and every opinion which deviated from it, such as hers received a lower grade, no matter how clearly it was argued.

In the video, the interviewee also compared the headscarf to the traditional costume of nuns as to being similar but no one has second thoughts about the latter. Melike (26) agrees with the interviewees' statement and adds that other religious garments, e.g. the clothes of Jewish orthodox men, are not debated in the media. They are not seen immediately as a danger and brought in relation to terrorism, hence forced to unveil.

All three big religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) have comparable traditional clothes but unlike with the Islam the other two are accepted and tolerated. As for the video she does not appreciate how the Muslim women is depicted as she seems to be intelligent and emancipated thus it is likely that she wears it voluntarily. Taking away the women's choice to perform a certain job due to the fact of how she looks or what she wears is unacceptable and even goes as far as to describe it as an attack on a human's dignity. She compares it to piercings and tattoos which are nowadays widely accepted in society and should also not have an influence on a person's capacity to execute ones job though she admits that they do influence the decision making in some cases (Melike, 26). Another example Yaren (20) gives is that a long beard is only seen as negative when it comes to Muslim men whereas for everyone else it's just a fashion statement.

When asked whether a Muslim women is more likely to be seen as an influencer of students compared to teachers with other religious backgrounds. Esra (26) adds that also without a headscarf you can influence a student with your own religious or political views, however there seems to be a pre denunciation of Muslim teachers. Even if there is no evidence people are more likely to suspect them to try and influence children. Open communication between the teacher, wearing a headscarf, and the parents is highly important in order to successfully deal with the topic of religion within a school for younger children, according to Esra (26). However, she also adds that a leap of faith is imperative within this situation.

When Liya (24) started her studies to become a teacher, the ban of headscarves at schools were in effect and as she is wearing one she was unsure about her future prospects. For her it was not an option to wear a different kind of head covering, such as a hat. She and a few of her fellow students thus had a talk with her professor talking about their anxieties about the ban. He was indeed confident that it would be lifted soon and indeed this was the case just a year later in her region. During her studies she faced quite a bit of obstacles because of her covering herself. She received many rejections due to her wearing a headscarf when she was looking for internships which she had to absolve for her university program, as one was not allowed to teach with a veil. In the end she found a school which would take her 1 1/2 hours away while inquiring about the ban. They then told her that the ban does not count for interns but only trained teachers.

Non-Muslim respondents

Over the last two years there has been an ongoing discussion on whether the headscarf should be banned from high school. Thus in turn, the question came up on how to enforce this and if that would mean that women who wear a headscarf could be forced to take it off on school grounds or be forced to leave.

A few respondents mentioned that they see a paradox from the interviewee in the 2nd video, as she states that for her the headscarf is of importance due to her religion but at the same time she declares it just another clothing item and thus does not understand the continuous debate about it. Cecilia (23) explains that it may seem paradoxical at first but on a closer look the headscarf can be indeed seen objectively as a piece of clothing, adding that there are various clothes that one would attach an increased value, e.g. an emotional component or a favourite clothing, next to religious attributes. Xena (27) believes that a headscarf ban would not only be a setback, as it restricts Muslim women in performing their jobs, but rather hypocritical as one of the reasons people want to ban it is because it symbolizes oppression and restrictions.

Here Rebecca (24) adds that other religions and their symbols are not seen as important by decision makers and the mainstream media and are thus not discussed in the same matter even though according to her they also do not belong in German schools, as there is a division between nation and religion in Germany and most schools which are public should uphold the same division. So either all symbols should be allowed or none at all (Xena, 27).

Generally speaking Cecilia (23) thinks it is important to divide religion and school, however, she adds that in Germany there is religious education, as well as crucifixes hanging on the walls of her school, which were never problematically discussed, which relativizes this division. Moreover, she does not see a difference between a politics teacher, who might influence his students by talking about his personal political views and a woman wearing a headscarf, thus creating a fine line between what should be acceptable. Therefore, she feels like it is impossible to ban a headscarf from Germany's school system.

In the video, the interviewee also compares the headscarf to the traditional costume of nuns as to being similar but no one has second thoughts about the latter. This got quite some reaction from the respondents as for example Cecilia (23) says that especially in the historical context you could compare these two, however in modern days a one-to-one comparison is just not applicable as for one not everyone can wear the clothing's for nuns whereas technically every Muslim women can just decide to wear a headscarf or hijab.

All three big religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) have comparable traditional clothes but unlike with the Islam the other two are accepted and tolerated. As for the video she does not appreciate how the Muslim women is depicted as she seems to be intelligent and emancipated thus it is likely that she wears it voluntarily. Taking away the women's choice to perform a certain job due to the fact of how she looks or what she wears is unacceptable and even goes as far as to describe it as an attack on a human's dignity. In addition, the headscarf has been used within Germany as well traditionally, thus cannot only be related to the Muslim community (Cecilia, 23).

When asked whether a Muslim woman is more likely to be seen as an influencer of students compared to teachers with other religious backgrounds, Cecilia (23) mentions the importance of open and honest communication between the teacher, who is wearing a headscarf, and the parents in order to successfully deal with the topic of religion within a school for younger children. However, trust towards the teacher is imperative within such a delicate situation and should be given beforehand to a certain extent, which in fact is the case for most teachers with a different religious background, she adds.

6.3.1. Burka ban

This next section examines how a potential Burka ban in the public is depicted in the mainstream media and in turn perceived by the participants as well as how they see Muslim women who decide to wear a Burka.

Muslim respondents

In addition to the debate of banning the headscarf in German schools, there is also a large debate in the media over whether Germany should ban Burkas in public. The opinions of a potential Burka ban was mixed in both groups. Esra (26) found the idea of the topic being so intensely discussed "absurd" due to the amount of people it actually affects and believed that a ban would lead to the opposite of the desired outcome, "with a *fortiori* mentality"⁴².

Rana mentions that „one never knows who is under the Burka and even though a prohibition restricts people to a degree in their freedom of clothing choice, it is even for her as a Muslim woman uncomfortable to be standing beside someone who is wearing one, as it has been abused before. Moreover, it kind of reminds her of the KKK and understands when people get

⁴² „Verbot wird zu einer jetzt erst recht Mentalität führen“

frightened, who are not familiar with it.”⁴³ Bahar’s (26) opinion is divided on the topic for one “it (the Burka) is not necessary, as it is not written in the Quran.”⁴⁴ (Bahar, 26) Moreover, she agrees with Rana (24) that “we live in a time in which the Burka has been exploited”⁴⁵ but at the same time she feels obligated on a personally level to support these Muslim women in their decision to wear a Burka. In the end however, due to the current security situation it is understandable that it is prohibited in certain situations. If Rana (24) has a friend who decides to wear a Burka she would not have a problem and support her, while for herself the Burka is out of the question. “I myself look at it with suspicion and I often stare because it is unusual”⁴⁶ Seda (24) mentions.

Another aspect which has been mentioned by Rana is that rather than just banning the Burka it would be wise to analyse the reasoning and background on why people women want to wear it. Some people are bothered with covering in general, not caring whether it is a Burka or a headscarf. Esra (26) believes that in general it is their decision what to wear, however one does not always know who is underneath, which can be a security risk. As for the argument of lack of communication possibilities, she believes that people are often not interested in talking to her while wearing a headscarf thus wondering if people would talk more to the women when they are not wearing a Burka. Additionally, for Esra (26) the debate about the Burka ban is out of proportion to the number of people wearing a Burka within Germany, saying that it is probably only 100 or 200 people. Sena (19) even questions whether most people even know what a Burka is. People who are against it probably have no connection to the people who are wearing it. It is unfamiliar and in turn scares them because they cannot identify with the person underneath. Liya (24) also feels uncomfortable when the face is completely covered, still she would not want to prohibit it. She feels with a woman who is told to take it off because it has happened to her as well and it was not a nice feeling. Due to her own experiences she feels very conflicted, on the hand trying to show empathy while on the other hand not really knowing what to think about it. Indeed she feels the need to not only support the other woman but also to come to her defence. “The women feel like they can’t get out of the house without the Burka but if they don’t get out of the house than they don’t even try to integrate themselves.”⁴⁷ The

⁴³ „Bei der Burka weiß man nicht wer drunter ist, auch wenn ein Verbot eine Einschränkung der Freiheit ist, da jeder tragen können sollte was sie möchte, aber selbst für sie als Muslimin unangenehm jmd. neben einen zuhaben, es wurde schon oft missbraucht, erinnert sie an KKK, viele die es nicht kennen kriegen angst“

⁴⁴ „Es muss ja nicht sein, im Koran steht es nicht.“

⁴⁵ „aber leben in einer Zeit wo es ausgenutzt wird“

⁴⁶ „Auch sie selber beobachtet sie mit argwöhne und starrt auch, obwohl nicht möchte aber ungewohnt“

⁴⁷ „Die Leute fühlen das sie nicht aus dem Haus gehen können und dann wieder sagen sie integrieren sich nicht“

argument about the missing possibilities to communicate with these women she rejects, questioning how many would even talk to her if she did not wear a Burka. She herself is wearing a headscarf and often feels ignored, which is why she wonders what the real reason behind it is. However, she also understand the other side because she believes that some people exploit it, for example the Burka has been utilized for some terror attacks (Liya, 24).

So instead of a Burka ban, Liya (24) believes that other measurements to analyse the reasoning behind it might be a better solution. A ban would create attention and could lead to the opposite outcome. Though, she admits that picking up your child from kindergarten or elementary school in a Burka should not be allowed because one cannot be identified. Nonetheless, she is sure that there are possibilities to work around this rather than a full ban.

Yaren (20) was very sceptical against Burkas and gets scared quickly when sees one woman wearing it. “I feel uncomfortable when someone is wearing a Burka.⁴⁸” It feels weird and immediately discourages her from interacting or becoming friends with the woman. Meyram (28) immediately distanced herself from women who wear Burkas. “I, myself also would be frightened in the first moment seeing a woman in a Burka and wear at headscarf myself⁴⁹.” Hilal (25) admits. All three perceive the mainstream media message as a rather negative one towards the Burka with the intention of creating at least to a certain extent a fear towards this type of veil about one’s own safety and that of the society. They admit that it does work in a way.

Non-Muslim respondents

In addition to the debate of banning the headscarf in German schools, there is also a large debate in the media over whether Germany should ban Burkas in public. The opinions of a potential Burka ban was mixed in both groups. For Marie (21) “the Burka is not compatible with our society”⁵⁰ as it serves the compartmentalisation of the carrier, thus does not enable basic communication. Xena (27) mentions that it is strange and she finds herself questioning who is underneath it. She was rather sceptical about it but like Rana she believes that rather than just ban one should want to understand the reasoning behind it. For her, scepticism comes from the uncertainty of the other and lack of information about.

⁴⁸ „Ich finde es unangenehm, wenn ich jemanden in einer Burka begegne.“

⁴⁹ „Ich als Kopftuch Frau würde auch einer Burka hinterherschauen.“

⁵⁰ „die Burka ist gesellschaftlich nicht vereinbar hier“

For Cecilia (24) the debate about the Burka ban is out of proportion to the number of people wearing a Burka within Germany. This was indeed very interesting because she states it in the exact same way as Bahar (26) has from the Muslim group. There could be different reasons for this. On the one hand she could have read a similar article which wrote that statement in this way. On the other hand she could have come to the same conclusion on her own by analysing the media messages and the wording could just be a coincident. Moreover, she also questions whether most people even know what a Burka is. People who are against it probably have no connection to the people who are wearing it. It is unfamiliar and in turn scares them because they cannot identify with the person underneath. “The coercion to wear it is just as bad as to enforce to take it off.”⁵¹ (Cecilia, 24)

6.3.2. Burkini ban

Next to the debate about a possible Burka ban is the discussion about the Burkini and if it should be allowed, which will be scrutinized in the following section. The Burkini is a full body swim suit, similar to a neoprene suit. The main difference between the Burka and the Burkini for the respondents was the possibility of the face being unrecognizable disguised by the Burka, which led to the predominant dislike of it in both the Muslim and the non-Muslim groups.

Muslim respondents

Many Muslim respondents argue that the Burkini helps to include Muslim women rather than leave them out, as they might not be able to go swimming without it, no matter if it is their decision or not. Bahar (26) mentions that the Burkini creates possibilities for some Muslim women to participate in society. Esra (26) mentions that the Burkini was indeed a compromise for her cousin in the fifth grade, who would not have wanted to attend swim class in school without it.

“We have a lake close by to where I live and there it first was prohibited to wear it, which was later repealed.”⁵², Seda (24) explains. For her that was a good decision, because although it did not affect her personally she knew that close by there were quite a few refugees situated, from which the women may have been excluded if they would not have been allowed to wear a Burkini. Liya (24) told a story about her friend who wore a Burkini to an open air swimming

⁵¹ „Oft denken Leute sie müssen es anziehen und werden gezwungen, aber durch die Debatte und ein mögliches Verbot würden Leute ja gezwungen es auszuziehen, was genauso schlimm ist.“

⁵² „Wir haben einen See in der Nähe, wo es zunächst verboten wurde, aber später wieder aufgehoben wurde.“

pool and was sent away to change otherwise she would not have been allowed to use the pool. She felt terrible for her, imagining it was already difficult to wear it, as she was standing out with it, but to then be sent away and forced to take it off that must have been an awful experience. ‘How bad it must feel to want to integrate yourself by joining such an activity, just to be sent away. That must have been very humiliating for her. And if she wouldn’t have gone people also would have said something, like she doesn’t want to join us and integrate herself⁵³’, Liya (24) describes during the interview. ‘If this would have happened to my two sisters (32 & 34 years old) who are also wearing a Burkini, I would have asked them how it is their business and why they feel disturbed by it.⁵⁴’, Sena (19) adds.

Non-Muslim respondents

Next to the debate about a possible Burka ban is the discussion about the Burkini and if it should be allowed. The main difference between the Burka and the Burkini for the respondents was the possibility of the face being unrecognizable disguised by the Burka, which led to the predominant dislike of it in the Muslim and the non-Muslim groups.

Cecilia (23) and Rebecca (24) have argued that it helps to include Muslim women rather than leave them out, as they might not be able to go swimming without it, no matter if it is their decision or not. They see it as a possibility for Muslim women to create space in the public to participate in society. A few non-Muslim respondents add that there are so many differences in what you can wear a swim wear these days, from the bikini to bathing suits to shorts, which show different amount of skins and are not debated over.

Cecilia (23), who is not Muslim says that “if anybody would ask me to get undressed, more undressed in the context of not wearing a Burkini – that would be ridiculous”. She adds that she believes that this debate is especially done to have a reason to regulate a women’s body. “The core argument against the Burka and Bikini for some is that they are forced to wear these and now in return they want to force these women to take them off is beyond comprehension.”

Kamilla (26) agrees with Cecilia’s (23) statement and in addition adds that it seems to be related to the culture of exposure, we in the Western world, have established. After centuries of having to cover up in the West in order to signify ones purity and values, people and especially women

⁵³ „Wie schlimm ist es wenn man sich integrieren will und schwimmen geht und dann weggeschickt wird, Demütigung, Identitätskrise, wenn sie nicht gegangen wäre auch nicht richtig gewesen.“

⁵⁴ „Meine Schwestern (32 und 34) tragen auch Burkini, würde andere fragen warum es sie stört und was es sie angeht.“

have thought for the freedom to wear less in the last half century, while not be perceived as being inherently bad or immoral for it. In a way the Burka and Burkini represent for many what used to be and how women had to dress to not be ridiculed. So in our culture now it might bring out the fear of taking back those rights which were fought for so hard, which in turn then is a negative depiction of the Burka or Burkini.

A few of the other non-Muslim respondents mention that there are so many differences in what you can wear as swim suits these days, from the bikini to bathing suits to shorts, which show different amount of skins and are not debated over.

6.3.3. Discussion & Conclusion

In this part there was a mix between people who think the veil should be banned in one or the other instance and the ones who disagree.

Looking at the headscarf ban in German schools for teachers, there is a reason to ban it as the school is a public space and thus needs to stay neutral when it comes to religion in Germany. The headscarf is often depicted as a symbol of oppression in mainstream media. It signifies their *victimhood* according to them. Though one can also claim that by having the freedom to choose to wear it or not to wear it one can exercise one's own agency.

One could also question if limiting their ability to decide where to wear the headscarf also limits their freedom of choice, the one thing that is often used as a means to advertise against the veil. On the other side there are without a doubt girls and women who are not given the choice whether they want to wear it or not. One could argue that with the free headscarf zone in schools, these girls could get the necessary freedom and space to develop. Do we limit one person's *agency* in order to ensure that another ones is not infringed on?

However the underlying question of why they wear it to properly explain it to the audience in mainstream media. This rather vague description leads to inadequate knowledge and hence does not bring the unknown closer but rather creates a space between the two groups. The Muslim women who wears a Burka or Burkini also is often just talked about but not given the chance to explain themselves, Hence she is not seen as an individual but rather an entity which is different from us. She is this aloof concept of a certain Muslim woman, which does not get a chance for a closer approach. This creates her as a symbol of *Otherness* and this depiction in mainstream media ensured the creation of an *Us vs Them* thinking. This was especially the case when it came to the Burka and Burkini.

It is depicted as something that is not us in the mainstream media and with us they mean mainstream German society. It was often questioned why a women wearing a Burka was instantaneously seen as a threat although there has been no evidence for the German case that either had been used in a violent, threatening manner.

The mainstream media portrays the Burka/Burkini as an instrument of Islam to enforce their *social construction of gender*. One which is laced of the oppression of women, by claiming the importance of modesty especially for women. Thereby it is not differentiated where these Muslims come from often times but rather depict as an overall phenomenon. Might that be the problem? Or is it a clash towards our own *social construction of gender* which interrupts our daily lives? The *social construction of gender* is of importance in this aspect, but at the same time the question that arises, is whose? Ours or theirs?

Is the Burka and Burkini a problem because it clashes with how we have created our social constructions of gender or how we assume theirs is? The Burka and Burkini might clash with what we consider our social norm that women can wear as little clothes as they like without being chastised with modesty claims for it. Might this be the underlying problem that we fear that it is a step back from what we have achieved in society so far?

This can only be answered if one decides whether it is a free will to wear either of these two veiling options. Hereby Lind's concept of paradoxes in which "women's survival and struggle occur within the culturally constructed boundaries of the 'public' and 'private', sometimes challenging or transgressing these boundaries, other time reinforcing them" (Lind, 2004, p. 421), can be applied. Wearing the Burka or Burkini, can be seen as a way Muslim women can exercise *agency* and create their own space in a way that they can live and participate in activities next to mainstream German society. So in fact it would be a way to integrate themselves and partake in everyday lives of the German population. But one can also see it as a symbol of oppression, in which Muslim women are not able to exercise their own free will. With this the participants from both groups made a clear distinction between the Burka and the Burkini. Most thought that the Burkini is an acceptable alternative for women who feel uncomfortable to walk around exposing so much skin in normal swim suits, on both the Muslim and the non-Muslim side. Concerning the Burka that was not the case. Only a small percentage did not find anything negative about the Burka as long as it was worn freely. The majority however, of both groups believe that the Burka should not be part of German society. Their main reason was that it creates a friction in "normal" life, e.g. in terms of communication possibilities.

It can be argued that the depiction of the Burka/Burkini harming the German society might be merely a *power play* against Islam as a whole while oppressing Muslim women by limiting their freedom of choice. This of course is only a given if we believe that every individual Muslim woman has the freedom to choose if and how to use a veil.

Chapter 7. Opinions & experiences part 2_ the consequences

7.1. Introduction

In the second part of opinions and experiences, chapter 7, the consequences on how the mainstream media portrays Muslim women and in how far this depiction influences their daily lives will be analysed. This will help to understand how audience reception might affect interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim women. Starting off this chapter by looking into the lack of differentiation between religion and culture in mainstream media. Afterwards, the conservative versus liberal Islam will be examined, followed by a part about discrimination Muslim women might experience in their daily lives. At last I will investigate the level of contact between the Muslim and non-Muslim participants or the lack thereof. Just like in the previous chapter 6, there will be a discussion and conclusion at the end of each part.

7.2. Lack of differentiation between religion and culture

In this part the lack of differentiation between religion and culture in mainstream media is illustrated. Hereby, the use of terminology of conservative vs. liberal Islam by mainstream media is analysed.

Muslim respondents

One point which has been made was the fact that there is a lack of differentiation between religion and culture, mainly that they are used interchangeably in the media. In the German context and in this study particular the Turkish culture is used, due to the high percentage of Turkish descendants we have in Germany and the majority of the Muslim respondents, who have a Turkish background. Bahar (26) and Rana (24) mention that the media often uses either the religion to support an argument regarding the Turkish culture or the other way around using the Turkish culture to “explain” the Islam.

However, a few respondents discuss that this is not just the media but some people in the community as well which mix up the two. Melike (26) states that especially the older generations have a societal mind meaning that the honour of the community is of high importance to them. “What will people think if you do this and that?”, Melike (26) states has been one of most questions she has been asked by her community while growing up. Having to preserve the appearance with neighbours and in the community, which led to the fact that limitations have not been properly explained by just stating that “this is not respectable”⁵⁵. Many aspects which the media claims to be part of Islam, especially concerning sex, such as virginity is a cultural aspect rather than a religious one but is often portrayed as the latter. She believes that if her parents would not have separated she would have been raised a lot closer to the Turkish community and would have probably experienced more restraints while growing up, e.g. when it comes to having a boyfriend. This would have been justified with religious reasons although they would have been cultural traditions (Melike, 26).

When it comes to differences in treatment between men and women, Esra (26) states that it is indeed very culturally dependent. In Turkey men are allowed more freedoms than women. In some parts nothing has really changed in the last 30 years, which she definitely disagrees with because in Islam equal rights prevail and prohibitions apply to both genders, e.g. going out dancing. “The media often mixes Turkish culture with religion, though sometimes it is in fact difficult to differentiate because it is culturally dependent how the Islam is interpreted.”⁵⁶

The kind of veil used by women is also conditional upon culture, e.g. in Turkey the face is not covered (Esra, 26). For her the veil can be understood as a protection barrier in certain cultures and historical times; showing the other gender a boundary. There is an emphasis on looking at the Muslim women, whether she does it the right way by the community but also the media, which is not fair, she adds. Moreover, the mainstream media concentrates on topics like forced marriage and education possibilities of Muslim women, which are then mixed up between the culture and religion. This can be problematic because it interchanges different problems and causes with each other, which can in turn lead to more misunderstandings rather than a way to deal with a certain problem, new ones might arise because of misinterpretation of the first one.

⁵⁵ „Was sollen die Leute denken (den Schein bewahren, Nachbarn) und wenn sie reden. Das gehört sich nicht, Verbote wurden nicht erklärt“

⁵⁶ „Kultur und Religion oft vermischt in den Medien, manchmal kann man es kaum unterscheiden, kulturell ausgelegt wie man den Islam interpretiert.“

Esra (26) adds that many Muslims themselves mix culture and religion. Meyram (28) agrees that culture and religion is often intermingled but also feels like her community themselves does not properly differentiate and then there is a lot of gossip about what Muslim women should and should not do mixing cultural traditions with religion. Alana agrees that many people in her community talk about one another and especially in terms of what girls and women are doing. For Meyram (28) it is very difficult to live between the German and her Turkish culture because of both the mainstream media and the Turkish community.

In addition Sena (19) herself also mixes culture and religion at least partially when she admits, “When you grow up in this culture you automatically have a connection towards it (the headscarf). It pulls you towards it... I can't really explain.” She did not wear a headscarf at the moment as she did not feel ready for it but at a later stage in her life she definitely wants to do so.

Non-Muslim respondents

Many respondents agree that there is a tendency to not differentiate between culture and religion. They often notice that there is not a clear differentiation in the mainstream media, which makes it even more difficult for them to understand. Especially for the ones who do not have a lot of contact with Muslims and thus cannot verify and see for themselves what might be cultural and what part of the religion. Also they have no way of knowing the differences if they were to look for it themselves without some guidance but after asking if they talk about it with Muslim women with a connection to the Turkish community

Kamilla (26) mentions that many problems which the Turkish community faces in Germany for example honour killings are rather a cultural problem but the mainstream media often depicts it as a religious one. In that way they reduce a complex problem to a simple one by saying Islam is at fault, whereas other reasons could play into it and consequently solutions cannot be found.

7.2.1. Conservative versus liberal Islam *Muslim respondents*

In this part it will be discussed how the mainstream media portrays conservative versus liberal Islam. Looking back at the 1st video Rana (24) says that the Islam is often portrayed as “a one and done kind of thing” and that everyone is acting accordingly to how the women in this video

has been described. She questions why the media does not differentiate and also shows a more liberal Islam. Melike (26) also says that the 2nd and 3rd generation are way more open minded and liberal than depicted in the video. Girls and boys are not separated for activities and more importantly girls do not have to wear a headscarf at the age of six as the interviewee claim. Liya (24) argues that conservative Islam is predominantly been taught and thus outbalancing liberal Islam. Simultaneously, she argues that liberal Muslims are viewed more positively by the mainstream media and in return more widely accepted in society. What does that mean for her?

Interesting was that Bahar (26), Rana (24) and Seda (24) say that they have been raised quite liberal but would be stricter with their children. They say that of course their parents have given them the values that they deem worthy, however at the same time they have given them the freedom to choose in how far they integrate these into their lives. In addition a few respondents, like Esra (26) or Seda (24) mention how the veil can be interpreted rather modern these days, with different colours, etc. The media however, often neglects to shows the more modern options of the headscarf and rather sticks with the old black ones, which are looking more negative and old fashioned. “Only one version is being portrayed over and over again.⁵⁷” (Melike, 26) For Melike (26) it really depends on how one was raised, whether it was more conservative or not.

Bahar (26), who is starting to wear a headscarf more regularly says: “just because I am wearing a headscarf does not mean I am more religious than those who do not. At the same time the women who do not wear one are seen as more liberal and progressive”⁵⁸ and are often depicted in a more positive way in the mainstream media. This is supported by Esra (26), the term conservative is being depicted in a negative way and the mainstream media disregards to be objective and also illustrate the topic of the veil alternatively as the verses about the veil have various possibilities for interpretations.

Bahar (26) also mentions that she started wearing the headscarf in steps for multiple reasons. For one she did not want to put it on completely for a while just to stop again but rather have a more gradual way of easing herself into it which is related to her second reason. She notices how difficult it is to wear the headscarf in public, especially in certain situation and although she also feels like she derives strength from wearing it she also feels like she needs strength to

⁵⁷ „In den Medien immer nur eine Version dargestellt.“

⁵⁸ „Nur weil ich ein Kopftuch trage heißt das nicht das man religiöser ist, trägt man keins wird man als liberaler angesehen.“

do so. This has to do with the hostility Muslim women often get when they are wearing headscarves.

Non-Muslims respondents

Most of the non-Muslim respondents did not differentiate between conservative and liberal Islam themselves during the interview. It was not something they were really aware at first, if they had not taken the time earlier to contemplate about it. However, during the interview they became more sensible towards the difference. Many mention that the women in video 1 is the predominant presentation in the mainstream media and for them she depicts the conservative fraction of Islam. Indeed, several mentioned that they often see this kind of representation with a more negative connotation.

Cecilia (24) states though that the veil can be interpreted rather modern these days, with different colours, etc but that this is not often depicted in the media, especially the mainstream one.

7.2.2. Discussion & Conclusion

The aspect of intersectionality of the depiction of Muslim women is missing in the context of German mainstream media. Even though still the majority of Muslims in Germany are from Turkey, more and more are coming also from other countries, e.g. due to the refugee crisis. Hence the Muslim woman does not exist anymore due to differences in origins, age and educational background now a days. That does not mean that there was a universalized Muslim woman before in Germany but rather than mainstream media tended to base such a woman on the Turkish community. Looking at the theory of *intersectionality* by Nightingale (2011) ethnicity but also age is a characteristic which needs more focus on in mainstream media representation of Muslim women.

Another aspect in media literacy is the *codes of gender* by Erving Goffman (1978), and in particular the introduction of the codes of femininity and masculinity. Within the concept of codes and gender the hegemonic masculinity is represented as the “culturally dominant form of masculinity in relation to femininity and in relation to subordinated masculinities (e.g. homosexual men, family men)”. Men are usually presented as a strong, powerful and assertive, being aggressive and ‘*perpetrators*’, whereas women are often viewed as passive, dependent and even weak, thus seen as the ‘*victims*’. This depiction of male and female attributes has been

divided as the ritualization of domination (male attributes) and the ritualization of subordination (female attributes), which creates a dispute within (Kilbourne, 2013). This can be found in mainstream media many respondents mentioned. A consensus between Muslim and non-Muslim women has been identified that Muslim women are often portrayed as being *victims*, which are *oppressed* by their male counterparts. And although that might be the case for some Muslim women, it is not correct to show this predominantly in mainstream media. For one it takes out the importance of women who are indeed affected by this and secondly, a repetition of this portrayal just enhances this image instead of changing it and in turn supporting women to get out of an oppressive relationship by showing her that there are other ways.

7.3. Discrimination

This part examines whether Muslim women experience or have experienced discrimination and in turn if their non-Muslim counterparts have noticed Muslim women being discriminated. Although some respondents initially denied that they have received discrimination, after careful consideration they found a few examples of everyday discrimination they have experienced in the past. The rest immediately had some stories in their mind which they have shared. Hereby, a division between physical and mental attacks has been made. After the responses of the Muslim women, the non-Muslim women have been asked whether they have witnessed such discrimination.

Muslim respondents

At first many respondents did not feel as if they have experienced discrimination when asked, however during the interview a few stories of situations came up when they experienced more (subtle) discrimination. Nonetheless, all Muslim feel an increased negative atmosphere concerning the Islam in the mainstream media coverage as well as in the society. A major aspect which could lead to discrimination according to the respondents is the fact that the media and correspondents often or better mostly do not differentiate between religion and (in this case predominantly) Turkish culture (which has been described in an earlier paragraph).

9/11 was definitely a point in the nearer past that has changed the atmosphere according to all Muslim respondents. Rana also describes 9/11 as an “original sin”⁵⁹ for Muslims, as they often have to justify their religion and distance themselves from ISIS as an extra step. To overcome

⁵⁹ „Erbschuld“

and not create a deeper gap between the Muslim community and the rest of German society humanization is important. She said that she often receives questions which are supposed to be bashful. However, some also add that the refugee crisis and the rise of the AFD in Germany has led to a more negative climate within the country. The discourse definitely turned more negative in the last ten years. She thought it was getting better but then the backlash came and it feels worse than before (Liya, 24). Meyram (28) adds that Islam is often connected with terror in the mainstream media nowadays. Seda (24) even feels like what is happening in the mainstream media today border on malicious agitation rather than news coverage and this did not just start now but is going on for years now in her opinion.

Rana (26) mentions her Imam, who did not have any problems when he started years ago preaching, but after 9/11 this has changed and he is looked upon differently these days. In fact she acknowledges, that she herself is starting to become a bit prejudice in certain situations due to the increased media coverage about terrorism. For example, she gets a “queasy feeling”⁶⁰, even if only for a moment when she sees someone who very obvious looks like a Muslim, like men with long beards and long garments or women in Burkas.

Melike (26) notes that she has not experienced any recent discrimination but rather in her high school years in which she often felt like receiving worse grades due to her foreign sounding name and religion. Moreover, teachers were more likely to treat her as being dumb and expected less from her or other students did not want to work with her because she had a Turkish heritage. Seda (25) mentions that for her discrimination was not as existing in her working life but rather a subtle way of differentiating herself from her colleagues. For example in the case of a terrorist attack she is often singled out and asked by her colleagues what her opinion about this is, thus feeling more pressure to denounce the hatred and violence practised in the name of Islam. To this Bahar (26) adds that she often receives provocative and even aggressive questions from her co-workers any time the media has been writing a story either concerning Islam, terrorism or Turkey and Erdogan (Turkish president). This creates a negative atmosphere at work and the direction this is going scares her.

Non-Muslim people often do not want to actively look for information about the Quran, Seda (25) explains. Additionally they expect her to ask very reflective questions about her religion while not doing the same with their own religion. Seda (25) is not wearing a headscarf at the moment but would like to in the future. For her it is important that it comes from the heart.

⁶⁰ „mulmige gefühlt“

Rana (24) has been wearing a hijab for a while when she was in the 8th grade and enjoyed it, however soon teachers came to her and asked her whether she was doing that on her own account or if her parents are making her wear it. At the same time she received worse grades and even had a teacher tell her she must be stupid because she was wearing it. After that her parents argued that she should take it indeed off as not to damage her future. For her this was a moment in which she noticed that she is not as free as she thought she was, living in Germany, which was devastating for her. Moreover, she had a friend later on which has not received an internship for a German class in school because she was wearing a headscarf.

Although the majority of people are rather positive towards her wearing a headscarf, Esra (26) has encountered a few negative situations. Most of the times people just stare at her in a weird way, sometimes giving (hurtful) comments while she is walking past them on the streets in Stuttgart. From her friends experiences she knows that people often give derogative and hateful comments to Muslim women who wear headscarves and says that she believes that every Muslim women has experienced some kind of harassment at least verbally if not even physically, when covering up. In terms of actual discrimination she had a story from her time in high school. During English class she and another Muslim woman, who was also wearing a headscarf have been sent out due to talking. Even though the whole class was loud and they were not even sitting together and talking with each other. Her cousin has also been in the same class and when the teacher threatened to send him out as well, he said why I am not wearing a headscarf. Afterwards the teacher noticed that she apparently acted prejudicially even if Esra (26) said she did not do it consciously and even apologized, she was still disappointed in her behaviour. Moreover, she adds that non-Muslim often do not notice subtle discrimination like this and she has never talked to one about it as she is unsure of what should come of this.

Liya (24) had an internship at a school which had a lot of Muslim students and Muslim girls wearing a headscarf but no teacher with one. Liya (24) is one of the participants wearing a headscarf. For her it was not a problem to do so because she was only doing an internship but the trainee teacher had to take of the headscarf, although they were basically doing the same work. She confronted the principal about it and she supported her in wearing the headscarf during the internship but at the same time prohibited it for the trainee teacher as it would be a bad example, sending young girl the message that they should wear one as well. "She should have seen her as role model, showing young girls that you can be an academic while wearing a headscarf. Whereupon the principal said that no that's not a role model, the headscarf blocks opportunities for these girls. At that moment I was like seriously whose fault is that? Isn't it

rather the people who have a problem with the headscarf and discriminate against them when it comes to hiring people? ⁶¹” Liya (24) questions why schools try to ban the headscarf if every third women out in the street wears them. The fact that academic Muslim women are not represented in mainstream media but only untaught ones with headscarves, enhances this negative portrayal of Muslim women, creating a picture of women that wear a headscarf are uneducated.

Liya (24) also had a lot of problems in school, feeling unfairly treated by teachers, being mobbed by students and having students pulling her headscarf are just a few examples. Unfortunately, these things have not been discussed properly then. On the streets she has experienced quite a bit of hostility, looks and whisper when she was walking by. “Once I was riding in a bus and talking on the phone in Turkish and an older lady turned around looking at me continuously, so I asked her if I disturb her and she starts putting me down, telling me to speak German. Than another man also got involved and sided with her but luckily I was supported by another German woman, which defended me against both. I was close to tears. It happened when I was fifteen years old. ⁶²”, Liya (24) told.

Sena (19) found it more difficult to go outside wearing a headscarf, especially in smaller cities as many people are giving you evil eyes, particularly older people. “You can almost see their thoughts: is she doing this because of her husband? ⁶³”. Once she overheard an elderly couple talking about a girl wearing a headscarf, saying how unfortunate it was that she was wearing one and wondering if she was being forced to wear it. “They saw the headscarf and immediately thought she needed help, not looking how she was acting or whether she looked sad. ⁶⁴” This was also the reason why she did not wear one in school, she did not want to feel excluded. “When I was in secondary school, German boys often called me Aishe, asking me where my headscarf was. I was in grade eleven or twelve. ⁶⁵” (Yaren, 20). Sena (19) also experienced quite a bit of discrimination in school, especially with a certain teacher in politics, who always put her on the spotlight when something happened in the world which only had remotely to do with

⁶¹ „Sie sollte doch als Vorbild gelten weil sie eben Akademikerin ist. Schulleiterin jedoch, nein, Kopftuch versperrt Möglichkeiten und fragte sie sich wessen schuld das ist? Kopftuch oder diejenigen die sich daran stören und Leute deswegen nicht nehmen“

⁶² „Ich habe im Bus auf Türkisch telefoniert, alte Oma hat sich immer umgedreht und sie fragte nach ob es sie stört, dann ein anderer Mann auch auf mich los und hat die Oma unterstützt, ich bekam dann aber auch Hilfe und wurde unterstützt. Verteidigt von einer deutscher frau, war schon fast an den Tränen nahe, vor 15 Jahren ist das passiert.“

⁶³ „Kannst ihre Gedanken lesen tut sie das aus zwang, wegen ihrem Ehemann?“

⁶⁴ „Sie sehen nur das Kopftuch und denken man bräuchte Hilfe.“

⁶⁵ „Am Gymnasium wurde Aishe gerufen deutsch Jungs, diskriminiert, rufen wo ist dein Kopftuch -> 11/ 12 Jahrgang „

the Islam and the media reported on it, asking her what she thought about it as a Muslim woman. “I mean you are standing there in front of at least 20 other students and sometimes I didn’t know what to say that quickly. This also tampered with my confidence but when I voiced my opinion and it was different from the teacher I always got worse grades than other students who also had a different opinion. He often said I should make up my own mind and not just bring the ready-made opinions from home.”⁶⁶ She also knows from similar experience from Muslim friends, such as one girlfriend has had a man pull down her headscarf and when she tried to stop him he pushed her to the ground. This happened in Düsseldorf. Most of this is a result of the news coverage of the mainstream media she says combined with the fact that people just accept what they are seeing and not think about it. “In a way I understand certain aspects, because they are so overly present in the media, that people just believe it, thinking that a man at an airport who just prays will blow himself up any minute.”⁶⁷ (Sena, 19) Most (7 out of 10) of the other respondents agree with her assessment.

Moreover, Hilal (25) mentions that on the street it usually stops with people just looking derogatory and saying dumb stuff but during her traineeship, in which she worked alone with boys, there also were racist slurs. Meyram (28) had a more extreme experience. When she was pregnant two skinheads drove past her calling her a Turkish slut. “I was afraid they would get out of the car, I mean I was really pregnant. That was pretty scary.”⁶⁸ she describes.

Non-Muslim respondents

A major aspect which could lead to discrimination according to the respondents is the fact that the media and correspondents often or better mostly do not differentiate between religion and (in this case predominantly) Turkish culture.

Cecilia (23) knows a few cases in which discrimination has occurred, for example when it comes to Muslim names there is a tendency for prejudice in the job market. Also she has a friend with a different skin tone (not Caucasian), the girl is from Afghanistan and there have

⁶⁶ „Dann stehst du da vor 20 Leuten, bloßgestellt und weißt nicht was du so schnell sagen sollst. Das hat schon manchmal an meinem Selbstbewusstsein genagt und dann habe ich schlechterer Noten bekommen weil ich eine andere Meinung hatte. Soll keine vorgeprägten Meinung von zu Hause mitbringen –Lehrer gesagt“

⁶⁷ „Kann gewisse Sachen auch nachvollziehen, weil sie so oft in den Medien präsent sind das Menschen das glauben, z.B. am Flughafen sehen jmd. beten haben Angst das er sich gleich in die Luft springt und die letzten Worte sagt.“

⁶⁸ „Ich war schwanger und zwei Skinheads rufen mir aus einem Auto heraus hinterher, türken schlampe und so weiter. Ich hatte Angst davor, dass sie aussteigen würden.“

been situations in which she is seen more hurriedly as not trustworthy or in shops the suspicion that she could be stealing is drawn quicker in opposite to the “innocent white person”.

Marie (21) says that the media depiction of Islam has been changed negatively due to its association with IS⁶⁹. Additionally, since the founding of the Alternative for Germany⁷⁰ “the topic has been picked out as a central theme in the media, whereupon it has been depicted rather inept”⁷¹. She notices an increase in media coverage about these topics in recent years. Josie (28) does not believe that the discourse of Islam has changed over the years, yet Lisa (26) disagrees with this statement and attributes the more recent terrorist attacks have led to an increase in negative press of Islam. However, Josie (28) notes that the media increasingly depicts the alleged ‘displace of western culture’, which according to her can be ascribed to the rise of the AfD and its xenophobic discourse. Moreover, Kamilla (26) argues that a Muslim man with a full beard is just as easily judged and depicted as a danger by the media than a Muslim women with a headscarf.

7.3.1. Discussion & Conclusion

In this chapter the question has been dealt with whether Muslim women experience or have experienced discrimination. Most of the respondents did not initially mention that they did not experience discriminations personally, however during the interview many remember different stories in which discrimination can be seen as the examples have shown. This may have been due to the fact of how the Muslim respondents defined discriminations and they saw them as “smaller” daily discriminations rather than a big one which was more predominant in their minds. In the end they came up with these examples however, noticing that they have indeed experienced some type of discriminations due to them being Muslims or perceived as foreign (as everyone has been born in Germany). The rest immediately had some stories in their mind which they have shared. Hereby a division between physical and mental attacks has been made. The mental attacks were mostly dominant for the respondents. After the responses of the Muslim women, the non-Muslim women have been asked whether they have witnessed such discrimination, which has been supported by some respondents.

Moreover, it is worth noting that almost everyone, Muslim or non-Muslim, felt an increased negative atmosphere concerning the Islam in the mainstream media coverage as well as in the

⁶⁹ Islamic state

⁷⁰ short: AfD

⁷¹ „seit der AfD sehr thematisiert, sehr plump in den Medien dargestellt“

society. One can question whether non-Muslim notice enough of these discriminations to understand and see the link to the predominant media coverage, which might explain their lack of commenting on it during the interviews.

But what creates this negative image and leads to discrimination? Can it be only explained by media representation? No that would be to easy and I am certain other factors also play a role, after all I highly doubt that someone attacks another person simply because of depictions they have seen in the mainstream media but it certainly does not help that the representation is very one-sided without much space for Muslim women to bring in their own points of views. There is (as mentioned before in other chapters) a space between Muslim women and the audience of mainstream media which hinders an understanding of the former and creates an *Otherness* of the depicted group.

Concluding, one can say that the mainstream media does not depict a well-rounded image of Muslim women, according to the Muslim respondents. This leads to lack of knowledge which in turn can lead to incomprehension and angst towards the *other* that is (in this case) the Muslim woman. Of course the media should not stop also bringing out negative stories but there is a difference between stories of Muslim women that create an overall negative atmosphere, while not including them in creating this representation and writing critiques about certain aspects of the Muslim community. Only due to better information some of this distance can be closed, which in turn could eradicate prejudices against Muslim women because people would get to know the Muslim community and especially their women better.

However, one can argue that someone who rips off a headscarf of a young women's head will not try to understand and educate themselves. The question hereby is what can either group do to reduce these thoughts and create a better atmosphere?

7.4. Contact part or lack thereof

In how far does interaction influence audience reception and can it in turn also influence or even change mainstream media representation? To answer this it is important to see how the two groups interact and whether they talk about the mainstream media representation of Muslim women. This last part of the chapter studies whether or not Muslim and non-Muslim women have contact with each other and if so what kind of contact in terms of closeness, for example, is it a collegial relationship or a friendship and in how far does that determine each other's willingness to communicate with each other and what might be the consequences.

Muslim respondents

“There is a continuous need for us Muslims and maybe even specifically us women to defend on the one hand the Islam and condone on the other hand the extremism”, Seda (23) states. However, many people cannot differentiate between those two. “I feel like this has to do with the way the media represents us Muslim women.”, Bahar (26) mentions. When asking if they have talked with non-Muslim friends or acquaintances about their experiences, the answers were usually the same. They generally decline, though not really knowing why they do not. Often it was mentioned that they feel like there is no demand or interest from the non-Muslim people in their social network, thus giving them no incentive to talk about it. Some however, state that they do talk about it with their friends. “I have a lot of friends that come to me and ask if it really like that⁷²”, Seda (23) said during the interview. She often feels like she is the only contact person when it comes to topics like the Islam or Erdogan⁷³, etc. because she is the only Muslim woman her colleagues or friends know. “If they read something negative and then see me they notice the difference and that not everything is just like the mainstream media portrays it to be.⁷⁴” The first time she prayed in front of her girlfriend, she received very positive feedback from her, being able to experience something that is usually just depicted from the afar in the media. Though she admits that it also can be overwhelming having this burden of speaking and presenting Muslim women for her colleagues. Bahar (26) adds that sometimes it can be strenuous to constantly to justify herself as a Muslim woman, even though she does enjoy talking about her religion. For her the way questions are asked is important. Esra (26) also mentions that she did not have a lot of contact with non-Muslims, mainly just fellow students, thus she does not often interacts with them. Next to this Melike (26) understands that people are more sceptical if they do not know a Muslims while reading many of the portrayals of Muslim women. “I get when people want to stay at a distance after how the media portrays the Islam.⁷⁵” Her boyfriend is not a Muslim and his parents have never had contact with one before her, so they were asking a lot of questions, wanting to understand her and her religion, which she appreciates.

⁷² „Hat viele Freunde die kommen und fragen ist das wirklich so?“

⁷³ Turkish president

⁷⁴ „Sie lesen etwas Negatives und sehen es aber von mir, wie ich es praktiziere, z.b. beten.“

⁷⁵ „wenn sie sie nicht kennen würde hätte sie vielleicht auch angst nach den ganzen Medien Darstellungen, Abstand halten.“

Non-Muslim respondents

For the non-Muslim respondents about half of them had contact with Muslim colleagues or friends. Only three (Kamilla 26, Cecilia, 23 & Rebecca, 24) said that they were in close contact with Muslim women at the time of the interviews. Each of them mentioned that they did indeed talk to their friends about their religion and sometimes what has been depicted in mainstream media but it is not something they do daily but rather situational, e.g. when something happens that could have an influence on their friends' everyday lives. Some of the others like Xena (27) or Lisa (26) cite that they often felt not comfortable in addressing issues and asking questions to their Muslim colleagues, unsure to how to best approach certain topics.

Xena (27) for example has only “known” Muslims as acquaintances but never as closer friends, thus not feeling like it was the place to talk about more sensitive topics. Lisa (26) has colleagues at work now but it is not a close relationship which goes further than work and she does not feel like she could talk to her about certain aspects or feels the need to, thus did not do so. Josie (28) has a daughter who is very close friends with a Muslim girl and thus she knows the girl's mother but other than small talk or talk concerning their daughters they do not really communicate with each other. For her this “relationship” is not close enough to talk to the mother about things that she has seen in the media.

7.4.1. Discussion & Conclusion

The differences in responses can be traced back to whether non-Muslim women had contact with Muslims or not. It seems that the more contact non-Muslim women had with Muslim women the more likely they focused on the content and in turn the less contact they had the more likely they did not think about it and just accepted the message the media distributed and did not create their own opinion. This would concur with the contact hypothesis by Allport (1954). Allport (1954) presented the first outline of the contact hypothesis claiming that true acquaintance between groups lessens prejudice. He believed that knowledge alone will not make people negating their prejudices and stereotypes, since they are very likely to accept only the information that fit into their preconceived schema of the world.

However, when looking at the different stages by Pettigrew (1998), I found that the majority of Muslim and non-Muslim women rarely went through the first stage and did not learn about the outgroup, thus in turn did not go further into the other three stages ((ii) changing behavior, (iii) generating affective ties, and (iv) in-group reappraisal). Rather than prejudice there seemed to

be an ignorance about the issue, as most non-Muslim participants simply did not actively think about it.

Only three of the ten non-Muslim participants went through all the stages. These women were also the most eager to join the interviews and talked a lot during them on their own accord whereas other participants had to be coaxed a bit more. However, due to the small number of respondents being in close contact with Muslim women (only three out of ten respondents) there is not a clear indication in how far contact influences audience reception. Other factors may have played a bigger role here, for example the fact that all three respondents are university students, with a social science background. All three of them are also students in a field that puts an emphasis on building your own opinion and analysing what has been said rather than just accepting the message that is being given. That might also be a reason that they are more reluctant to just accept the message given by the mainstream media.

As for the other respondents who mentioned they have Muslim colleagues but do not feel close enough to ask them about certain topics and thus do not interact with them in that way. Therefore, the relationship of colleagues seems to be too superficial to have in-depth conversation, which is needed to create a sort of understanding and in turn reduce prejudice and stereotypes.

Chapter 8. Discussion & Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

The previous chapter explained the audience reception and showed the differences in perception and acceptance of mainstream media ideology of Muslim women between Muslim and non-Muslim women in Germany using the headscarf as an example. In this chapter I will answer the main research question by answering the sub- research questions:

What influences the audience reception of representations of Muslim women in German mainstream media by Muslim and non-Muslim women in Germany and what are possible consequences resulting from it?

First I will recap the important aspects of the previous chapter of how Muslim and non-Muslim women perceived the representation of Muslim women in mainstream media and how this leads to the creation of Muslim women being created as the 'Other'. Afterwards I will look into the respondents' participation, analysing whether their participation showed an eagerness or

reluctance. Next to this I also determined whether the participants perform rather dominant, oppositional or negotiated reading when dealing with the mainstream media representations of Muslim women. In the subsequent part, I will examine that the audience reception is not just a one-way route but can be rather seen as a back and forth between ideologies and how they are shaped. Furthermore, I will analyse how the interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim women influence audience reception. I will end this chapter with a short conclusion and recommendations part.

8.2. Creation of Muslim women as a symbol of Otherness

In the previous two chapters, *Opinion & experiences part 1 & 2*, five major points have been derived and analysed from the answers of both participants groups. Firstly, the one-sided portrayal of the veil in mainstream media, which dealt with the fact that mainstream media has a very narrow presentation of Muslim women, especially in relation to the headscarf. To illustrate this point sub-points, such as how often the stereotype of what a Muslim woman is versus what Muslim women feel like her reality looks like, have been analysed. Next to this the differences in wording and its connotation has been looked at using the two terms of to *cover up* and to *cover*. This is an important aspect when it comes to the veil, as the mainstream media most of the times uses to cover up whereas Muslim women prefer to cover. The first has according to both participant groups a rather negative connotation compared to the second. Lastly, the question whether the headscarf can be seen as a symbol of Muslim identity has been analysed. Muslim women express that the hijab is a form of empowerment in various ways: making their identities distinct; taking control of their bodies; and giving them a sense of belonging to a wider Muslim world. This shows a degree of *agency* they have according to the participant which is often times neglected in mainstream media. By making the conscious choice to wear the hijab, they enact *agency* by making a decision not only whether to wear it or not but what they do with their own body and subsequently their lives. Although I found alternative representations to this I feel like the media does often times neglect agency in their messages or at the very least does not make it clear enough in their representation, that Muslim women do have a choice in wearing it.

Secondly, the aspect of a lack of differentiation between religion and culture has been found due to the analysis of the data. This was specifically connected to Islam and the Turkish community. Within this aspect a sub-point which came up was that there was a difference in how the media portrayed conservative versus liberal Islam, with the latter being more positively

portrayed and thus preferred by mainstream media. In turn the former has often been described more negatively and has been more scrutinized in the mainstream media. This means that the media is more nuanced in their treatment of Islam than previously expected but at the same time they reinforce their own ideology by depicting the more liberal Islam in a more positive and desirable way.

Thirdly, the aspect of forced unveiling has been identified, as the headscarf has been banned for teachers in some cities in Germany. This part also dealt with the fact that Muslim women were to be forced to unveil in case a Burka or Burkini ban would have been made into law.

Fourthly, the point of discrimination was made as there was a consensus between both groups that the atmosphere in Germany (and Europe) has been a negative one about Muslim people. Hereby, one can note that most of the Muslim women have experienced some kind of either physical or psychological discrimination, varying in degree, for most during their high school time. Also interesting to mention is that most of them initially said that they did not experience discrimination but after some rethinking during the interview they indeed found several instances in which they were victims of discrimination. This could be an impact of media representation as the portrayal of Muslim women leads to subtle discrimination in everyday situations rather than big experiences that would scar the participants more deeply so that they would immediately think of it and not just after more consideration.

Fifthly, the theory that the more contact one person has to a specific group the more likely they are positive towards said group and less likely to just accept the mainstream media message, has been examined. In turn these participants have been more critically of the mainstream media messages due to having their own experiences with the portrayed group.

My initial hypothesis was that this negative atmosphere has seen a recent increase in 2013 with the establishment of the Alternative for Germany (06.02.2013. – right wing political organization, which gained a lot of power in recent years) as well as in 2015 with the opening of the German borders during the summer months. However, the respondents, especially the Muslim women group did not feel like this was a catalyst for the increasingly negative atmosphere surrounding the Islam but rather a continuation of an ongoing negativity which has started before even 9/11 but got its high since this date. This was a surprising fact as most of them were pretty young, considering the participants age range in this research was from 18 until 28. Hence, my initial idea was that they would be less affected by that event or better that they would perceive that event as less important because they were rather young when it

occurred to notice the repercussions of it. Though, most of them experienced discrimination during their teenage years, which was around the same time a 9/11, which may have led to the fact of them remembering it more clearly.

All of these points have shown that they are used in the mainstream media to form a picture of the Muslim women, especially if she is wearing a headscarf, as something other than the “normal” German population. Creating a rift of *Us vs Them* in society and the Muslim women as a symbol of *Otherness*. The portrayal of Muslim women by mainstream media coverage has led to a creation of the Muslim women as a creation of *Otherness*. In this discussion I will try to answer whether the mainstream media does succeed in this creation or not.

8.3. Eagerness vs reluctant participation

One of the main differences noticeable between the two groups was that the Muslim respondents were rather eager to answer the questions and get their voice out, having their opinions heard whereas the non-Muslim respondents were more reluctant to agree to the interview in the beginning.

All the Muslim women I asked to participate in this research were very enthusiastic to conduct the interviews. Moreover, they were willing to help me find more Muslim women to participate in this research. They were grateful to have been given an opportunity to tell their side of the story and have their voices heard. Many mentioned that they feel that the representation in mainstream media in Germany is one-sided and does not show all the differences of Muslim women.

In contrast many of the non-Muslim respondents mentioned that they were unsure how they could help and answer the questions, unconfident in their abilities to contribute to the topic. It was interesting to see that after a few minutes they became more open and confident in answering. Thinking about the topic showed them that they were indeed able to answer and that in turn made them more confident in voicing an opinion about the topic. It seems that for many in our society it is difficult to talk about this topic, being afraid of saying the wrong things and at the same time feeling that they have not enough information about not only Muslim women but also the headscarf. This could have two reasons, one they are uncomfortable with the dominant representation and are not sure what to think about it or second they might feel overwhelmed with the sheer amount of information out there and do not know how to dissect it or even where to start.

In turn one can conclude that the more a respondent was having contact with Muslim women, for example having Muslim friends, the higher their willing to participate in this research. Moreover, they were also more confident in their responses. It seemed that they had an eagerness to “set the record straight” by dispersing the mainstream media ideology while at the same time supporting Muslim women and their own representation.

8.4. Dominant, oppositional or negotiated reading

So how can one apply the reception theory from Stuart Hall (1980) to these specific participants? In how many cases can the dominant or the oppositional or the negotiated reading be applied? What influences a person to be one or the other?

Firstly, the *dominant or preferred reading* includes how the producer of the message wants the audience to view the media text. Secondly, in *oppositional reading*, the audience rejects the preferred reading and creates their own meaning for the text. Lastly, the *negotiated reading* is a compromise between the dominant and oppositional reading, where the audience accepts parts of the producer’s views but has their own views on parts as well.

Which one is most applicable to this research really depends for one, on the person but also on the situation/the context in which it is asked. Looking at it specifically on the time span of the interviews, which is where the participants were involved. One can say that there have been a few participants, which I would have included in the first category, the dominant reading. This had to do with the fact that these participants mentioned, that they did not pay as much attention to the specific news, but rather attained them passively, thus they did not actively think about it. These participants were also more reluctant to agree to the interview at the beginning, as they felt inadequate towards answering the questions and not feeling like they knew enough about the topic. However, during the interviews I noticed that they were getting more confident in talking about it and after giving it some thoughts also changed or adjusted their viewpoints. So during the interview they became more of a negotiated reader as they reflected about the aspects of the topic more intensely.

The different types of readers can also be found in the previous chapter in terms of how much space each individually with both groups got. Three non-Muslim respondents (Cecilia, Kamilla and Rebecca) had a lot of opinions, experiences and examples, which were added in the previous chapters. These three participants are also the same ones that have the most contact with Muslim women. A few that gave more explicit answers after worming up and thinking

about it during the interviews. The rest was a bit shy, needed a bit more explanations, were not that comfortable to talk about it thinking they could not give as much insight into the topic or they agreed with previously mentioned views from other participants but did not give a lot of examples to illustrate their points, therefore they have been bundled under the arguments rather than given a spotlight in them.

The more a participant has been quoted or their argument has been noted, the more confident they were in their argumentation, so that I, as the researcher felt like that contributed towards answering the research question. That does not mean that the other participants and their answer were not valuable but rather that they depicted a more wider argument of the group, at times adding to a consensus, than an individual based point of view or an explicit example for their argumentation. I do admit that this can be seen as subjective because I chose which answer are of higher importance but looking at how elaborate an argument had been made I believe I was able to counteract such subjectivity. Concluding, the more passively a participant had reacted towards mainstream media news, the less examples they were able to give and hence less quotes and space they got during this research.

Nonetheless, the biggest group has been the dominant and oppositional reading, which is a mixture of rejecting and accepting mainstream media beliefs. This group has been comprised of both the Muslim as well as the non-Muslim group. This group seem to have been very active while attaining media news. They constantly challenged what they were seeing or reading. All non-Muslim participants from this group, which were 3 out of 10, had closer contact with Muslims, being friends or close associates. They were more eager to participate in this research as well and seeming more confident in answering the questions. However, one could also look at it in certain instances, for example one respondent might be a more negotiated reader at one point and a more oppositional reader at another point.

To conclude it is indeed one of the major findings in this research that active participation with media coverage is of importance, while many of the respondents often participate passively. This means that one has to actively think while reading or listening to the mainstream media messages, by scrutinizing and analysing the message that has been portrayed and not just passively accept and let it come into ones thinking. Hereby, passively means that people do not dissect, at least to a certain degree, the media message but rather just accept it.

8.5. Audience reception not just a one-way route

An important aspect to mention is that the audience reception model is not just a one-way but rather can be a back and forth between ideologies and how they are shaped. On the one hand the dominant narrative shapes the interpretation of the people receiving the message but on the other hand interactions can also shape the narrative. Hence one can see it more as a continuous cycle of how the narrative is shaped and evolves throughout time.

Where does the representation of Muslim women start and how can Muslim women create space for themselves within the mainstream media? These are questions that need to have a more in-depth look into it. This research showed that the veil has been seen as a signifier for the identity of many Muslim women by the Muslim respondents. That does not mean that every single one the respondents are wearing one at the moment but they recognize it as an important aspect within their religion. Many in fact have stated that they want and probably will wear a type of veil in the future or are transitioning slowly towards wearing one permanently at the moment. The portrayed agency is embedded in intersecting social forces of domination and subordination, which means that Muslim women constantly have to renegotiate their space and agency within the social sphere. So where does one start and the other end?

I think it is more of a cycle. Not only does the media shape how Muslim and non-Muslim perceive the representation and how this may influence their interactions but also their interactions with each other can shape how they experience these representation and in how far they are willing to accept or neglect them.

Another aspect which has been discussed is in how far the discourse about Islam has been changed negatively in Germany over the last few years. In how far does this influence the interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim women? This will be examined in the following section.

8.6. How does interaction between Muslim and non-Muslim women influence audience reception?

In how far does interaction influence audience reception and can it in turn also influence or even change mainstream media representation? To answer this it is important to see how the two groups interact and whether they talk about the mainstream media representation of Muslim women.

When asking if they have talked with non-Muslim friends or acquaintances about their experiences, the answers were usually the same. They generally declined, though not really knowing why they do not. Often it was mentioned that they feel like there is no interest from the non-Muslim people, thus giving them no incentive to talk about it. Some however, stated that they do talk about it with their friends. “I have a lot of friends that come to me and ask if it is really like that⁷⁶”, Seda (23) said during the interview. She often feels like she is the only contact person when it comes to topics like the Islam or Erdogan⁷⁷, etc. because she is the only Muslim woman her colleagues or friends know. “If they read something negative and then see me they notice the difference and that not everything is just like the mainstream media portrays it to be.⁷⁸” The first time she prayed in front of her girlfriend, she received very positive feedback from her, being able to experience something that is usually just depicted from the afar in the media. Though she admitted that it also can be overwhelming having this burden of speaking and presenting Muslim women for her colleagues. Bahar (26) added that sometimes it can be strenuous to constantly to justify herself as a Muslim woman, even though she does enjoy talking about her religion. For her the way questions are asked is important. Esra (26) also mentioned that she did not have a lot of contact with non-Muslims, mainly just fellow students, thus she does not often interacts with them. Next to this Melike (26) understood that people are more sceptical if they do not know a Muslims while reading many of the portrayals of Muslim women. “I get when people want to stay at a distance after how the media portrays the Islam.⁷⁹” Her boyfriend is not a Muslim and his parents have never had contact with one before her, so they were asking a lot of questions, wanting to understand her and her religion, which she appreciated.

For the non-Muslim respondents about half of them had contact with Muslim colleagues or friends. Only three said that they were in close contact with Muslim women at the time of the interviews (Kamilla, 26, Cecilia, 23 & Rebecca, 24). Each of them mentioned that they did indeed talk to their friends about their religion and sometimes what has been depicted in mainstream media but it is not something they do daily but rather situational, e.g. when something happens that could have an influence on their friends’ everyday lives. Some of the

⁷⁶ „Hat viele Freunde die kommen und fragen ist das wirklich so?“

⁷⁷ Turkish president

⁷⁸ „Sie lesen etwas Negatives und sehen es aber von mir, wie ich es praktiziere, z.b. beten.“

⁷⁹ „wenn sie sie nicht kennen würde hätte sie vielleicht auch angst nach den ganzen Medien Darstellungen, Abstand halten.“

others like Xena (27) or Lisa (26) cite that they often felt not comfortable in addressing issues and asking questions to their Muslim colleagues, unsure to how to best approach certain topics.

Therefore, the differences in responses cannot be traced back to whether non-Muslim women had contact with Muslims or not entirely. It seems at first that the more contact non-Muslim women had with Muslim women the more likely they focused on the content and in turn the less contact they had the more likely they did not think about it and just accepted the message the media distributed and did not create their own opinion. However, due to the small number of respondents being in close contact with Muslim women (only three out of ten respondents) there is not a clear indication in how far contact influences audience reception. Other factors may have played a bigger role here, for example the fact that all three respondents are university students, with a social science background, who are more likely to scrutinize information which is given to them.

Hewstone et al. (1986) theorized that contact effects generalize to the outgroup only when group membership is salient. When group saliency is low, the situation is interpersonal and no intergroup effects should result. Only when the members perceive the other as a group representative, the contact generalize to the outgroup. This point is crucial for this thesis and will be later discussed more in-depth.

8.7. Conclusion

Concluding as of right now the mainstream media has a too narrow one dimensional view of Muslim women and represents them as such. A representation of Muslim women by Muslim women is important, including all varieties of Muslim women. This will only be more important in the future, when the number of Muslim women coming from different backgrounds than the Turkish community increases.

Moreover, it is important to note that audience reception is not just a one-way model but can also be vice versa. Not only does the media shape how Muslim and non-Muslim perceive the representation and how this may influence their interactions but also their interactions with each other can shape how they experience these representation and in how far they are willing to accept or neglect them. So what are the consequences of different influences on the audience reception?

One initial hypothesis was that the more contact non-Muslim women have with Muslim women, the higher their likelihood to challenge mainstream media coverage by making up their

own minds and not just accepting the dominant message. Thus, the closer an individual is towards the group that is being presented in the media, the easier they can build their own opinion. However it is not conclusive enough cause only three participants fit into this and thus more data is needed. Other factors could also play a role as to why these three participants are more critical towards mainstream media messages. Another factor could be the educational background. All three are students in a social sciences field thus are more likely to question what they were reading from the start due to their educational background.

Nonetheless, active participation is also essential. One cannot make up their own mind without actively thinking about it. Most people only read captions or short summaries, look at picture but do not read the whole articles, especially if they are posted on social media sides. So what they received is only a small portion of what could be found, the more contact or the more involved a person is the more likely they will look into more, read more, which in turn will give them a clearer picture.

So what are the consequences of a society due to the creation of 'Otherness' for one part of said society, in this case the Muslim women. It can lead to a divide by the different communities within the society. By having the dominant society seeing the Muslim women as the 'other' and not part of their society a division can occur and misunderstanding and problems can lead to a parallel living where both parts are living next to each other rather than together.

8.7.1. Recommendations

I have three recommendation in mind for future research. First, one could include a Focus group with both Muslim and non-Muslim women to see how their interaction during this focus group might influence their answers. Second, a generational aspect might be interesting to look at how older generations' answers differ from the younger ones. Third, a repeat of the research using the male participants would be interesting to see the differences in how Muslim men are portrayed by the media and how Muslim and non-Muslim differ in their audience reception and interaction with each other in turn.

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Appendix

1. Overview Interview participants list

Interview	Group/ Individual	Muslim/non- Muslim	Name ⁸⁰	Age	Profession	Time
1.	Group 1	Muslim	Bahar	26	Kindergarten teacher	3 & ½ hours
2.	Group 1	Muslim	Rana	24	Student for a teaching degree	3 & ½ hours
3.	Group 1	Muslim	Seda	24	Medical assistant	3 & ½ hours
4.	Group 2	Muslim	Melike	26	Kindergarten teacher	3 hours
5.	Group 2	Muslim	Meyram	28	Domestic economy	3 hours
6.	Group 2	Muslim	Yaren	20	Apprenticeship	3 hours
7.	Group 3	Muslim	Sena	19	Legal assistant	3 hours
8.	Group 3	Muslim	Hilal	25	Mechanic	3 hours
9.	Individual	Muslim	Esra	26	Student for a teaching degree	1 ½ hours
10.	Individual	Muslim	Liya	24	Student for a teaching degree	2 hours
11.	Group 4	Non-Muslim	Lisa	26	Student: Marketing	1 ½ hours
12.	Group 4	Non-Muslim	Josie	28	Salesperson	1 ½ hours
13.	Individual	Non-Muslim	Cecilia	23	Student: International development	2 ½ hours

⁸⁰ All names have been changed.

14.	Individual	Non-Muslim	Kamilla	26	Student: International development	2 ½ hours
15.	Individual	Non-Muslim	Rebecca	24	Student: environmental science	2 hours
16.	Individual	Non-Muslim	Xena	27	Banker	1 ½ hours
17.	Individual	Non-Muslim	Marie	21	Student	2 hours
18.	Individual	Non-Muslim	Sophie	27	Student	1 hour
19.	Group 5	Non-Muslim	Vera	29	Student	1 hour
20.	Group 5	Non-Muslim	Erna	26	Student	1 hour

2. Questions from the interviews

a. Muslim women

„It would be nice if you could tell me of a few situations and experiences as examples, which have stuck in your head.”

- According to you how are Muslim women depicted in the German mainstream media?
- What have you seen or read in German mainstream media?
- Which depictions are predominantly shown?
- How are Muslim women portrayed compared to Muslim men?
- How do you feel about these depictions?
- Did these depictions change over the last few years?
- How far has the discourse of the Islam changed over the last few years?
- In how far does those depictions influence your personal daily life?
- Have you or someone you know had a negative experience which could be traced back to the mainstream media representation?
- Have the people changed in your surrounding or when they come into contact with you? Especially strangers?

- Do you talk with non-Muslim friends or acquaintances about your experiences? If so can they comprehend them?

b. non-Muslim women

„It would be nice if you could tell me of a few situations and experiences as examples, which have stuck in your head.”

- According to you how are Muslim women depicted in the German mainstream media?
- What have you seen or read in German mainstream media?
- Which depictions are predominantly shown?
- How are Muslim women portrayed compared to Muslim men?
- How do you feel about these depictions?
- Did these depictions change over the last few years?
- How far has the discourse of the Islam changed over the last few years?
- In how far does those depictions influence your personal daily life?
- Do you have Muslim friends or acquaintances? If so do you talk to them about those depictions?
- Do you know someone who had a negative experience which could be traced back to the mainstream media representation?