Abstract

Over the past decades Norway has become a multicultural country with people of various race, cultural and religious backgrounds residing alongside ethnic Norwegians. As this development is still relatively new, tensions between people of minority backgrounds and ethnic Norwegians seem to become apparent in everyday encounters. "Othering" and stigmatizations of those who do not fit within the ethnic majority framework occurs through small and mundane acts and linguistic remarks such as 'us' and 'them'.

Within this context, anti Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiments in Norway are found both in social media and in the establishments of anti-Muslim groups and organizations such as Pegida (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident) and SIAN (Stop the Islamization of Norway). People who practice Islam are being targets of negative generalisations and stereotypes, and framed as potential threats to Western society and culture.

This study aims to explore young, Muslim girls' encounter and challenges in relation to their minority status in the Norwegian society. It aims to discuss the effects of anti-Muslim attitudes and behaviour on ethnic minority girls who practice Islam and how these girls negotiate those effects in everyday life. Furthermore, the study has sought to find out more about how Muslim girls' who have now come of age experienced stigma and othering during their childhood years.

This research was set in Trondheim, the third biggest city of Norway, a country that could be distinguished by its secular and rather homogeneous society. The participants of this study consisted of eight young Muslim women who grew up, entirely or partly, as minority children in Trondheim.

The study has been conducted with a qualitative, participatory research design. The methods used were primarily individual interviews and focus group discussions. The study has drawn on theories and research paradigms from multidisciplinary fields, with an emphasis on perspectives in childhood studies like childhood as a social structure and children as social actors. In addition perspectives from other fields such as cultural studies, psychology and sociology have been used, primarily on othering, orientalism and stigma.

The findings of this study reveal that Muslim girls in Trondheim experience several challenges with their religious and minority identities, and that the teenage years are especially difficult. Despite few signs of overt racism, stigma and othering have some impact on the girls' childhood. Muslim girls negotiate stigma and othering by playing down their religious and cultural identities in encounters with non-Muslims, and by socializing with other minority groups. Furthermore, most girls were unaware of anti-Muslim sentiments in their early childhood. However, those who had been aware gained this knowledge from social media sites. The findings also show that the Muslim girls felt frustrated by non-Muslims generalizations and Muslim stereotypes.

The findings of the research has several implications to fighting everyday racism, facilitating integration of immigrants to mainstream society as well as empowering young Muslim girls as citizens of modern Norway. It is suggested that social policy makers acknowledge and respect children's religious agencies, and thus allow children the option to practice their religion freely. In addition, problems with othering and stigmatization of minority groups in Norway needs to be addressed in order to avoid social segregation and thus promote better terms for integration. Lastly, it is suggested that more research is necessary in order to fully understand the complex issues of Muslim, minority children in Norway.

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Ingrid Berg

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research motivation

During my year of studies at Cardiff University in 2011, I got to know 'Sofia'[1], an Afghani student who I spent a lot of time with discussing both academic and non-academic issues. Our conversations were always interesting, but it was our first which is the most memorable; Sofia asked that if I had any 'silly'[2] questions regarding Islam and Muslims. Though this seemed like an odd conversation starter between two strangers, I could understand her desire to answer non-Muslim questions, given that countries with a low Muslim population often portrays discourses around Islam and Muslims negatively (Akkerman & Hagelund, 2007). Sofia's desire to discuss the topic of Islam, and the need to correct any prejudices or misconceptions, was also fuelled by her own experiences as a child and the bullying she received for wearing her hijab. Particularly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York, sofia felt that having an opportunity to express her own perceptions of what a Muslim is, and what a Muslim does, was an important and empowering discussion. It appears that Maria was correct in assuming that I, a non-Muslim, had heard many negative things about her religion and lifestyle. Yet, it also appears that Sofia's feelings and experiences demonstrate clearly how children's lives can be impacted by international events.

There has recently been a lot of media attention concerning Muslims and immigrants in Norway. This is due both to the current refugee crisis, as well as the recent terror-attacks in Europe by Muslim extremist groups. Since meeting Sofia and hearing of her childhood experiences with prejudice, I have been curious to explore how public debates and media events might impact the lives of Muslim children in Norway. Muslims are a stigmatized minority group in the Norwegian society, yet our knowledge and understanding to how this stigma affects Muslim children is rather limited.

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[1] Her real name has been exchanged with a pseudonym due to reasons of anonymity. More on anonymity will be explained in the methods chapter.

[2] Sofia was well known to questions based on prejudice and generalizations

The charity 'Red Cross Norway' just designed a new campaign against online hate towards refugees entering the country. The campaign involves a YouTube video[3], which shows refugee children reading out various comments written online. Such comments were often filled with anti-Muslim/anti-immigrant opinions, based on prejudice, stereotypes and generalisations. The extent of prejudice shown towards Muslims (which is evident in the Red Cross video) is significant as it represent attitudes and opinions of Norwegian people. Since the 9/11 terror attack there has been an increase in negative stereotypes and generalisations against 'all' who practice the religion of Islam, framing them as potential terrorists and a threat to the Western society (Nielsen 2004, Sheridan 2006, Poynting & Mason 2007).

Previous research has linked anti-Muslim attitudes to the processes of 'othering' (Schwalbe et al. 2000; Afshar, 2008) orientalism (Dwyer, 1999; Said, 1978/2004; Haldrup, Koefoed & Simonsen, 2006) and stigma (Göle, 2003; Endelstein & Ryan, 2013; Ryan, 2011). Norway is currently in the process of accepting some of the refugees that has fled from war and conflicts in countries such as Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan (UNCHR, 2015). These refugees are primarily Muslim. Public and political debates have for a long time been concerned with integration issues related to Muslim immigrants in Western non-Muslim societies (Akkerman & Hagelund, 2007; Betz & Meret, 2009; Spruyt & Elchardus, 2010). I suggest that experiences of being othered and stigmatized could make it harder for Muslim immigrants to integrate in Norway.

The experiences of Muslims and prejudice documented in several studies (Strabac & Listhaug, 2007; Kunst, Tajamal, Sam & Ulleberg 2011) show that prejudice impacts Muslims in Northern Europe. As children more easily than adults learn new languages (Hakuta, Bialystok & Wiley, 2003), they may (as demonstrated by the Redd Cross video) be the first ones to become exposed to anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant attitudes and hatred in their new country.

This thesis offers new and fresh insight into young Muslim girls' encounters with stigma and othering in Trondheim, a Norwegian city where the majority citizens are ethnic Norwegian

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[3] Link to Red Cross video: http://prat.rodekors.no/

and non-Muslims. The objectives are concerned with the ways in which these girls experience and negotiate their religious and minority identities in their daily life. In addition, how anti-Muslim attitudes might have impacted upon Muslim girls' childhood in Trondheim.

1.2 Research aims, objectives and questions

The aim of this study is to examine Muslim girls' experiences with stigma, othering and minority status in everyday life contexts in Trondheim.

The study has the following specific objectives:

1. To explore young, Muslim girls encounter and challenges in relation to their minority status in Norwegian society

2. To discuss the effects of anti-Muslim attitudes and behaviour on Muslim minority girls and how these girls negotiate those effects in everyday life

3. To find out more about how Muslim girls' experienced stigma and othering during their childhood years in Trondheim.

Research question for this study:

1. How do young Muslim girls encounter challenges in relation to their minority status in a predominantly white and non-Muslim society?
2. What are the effects of anti-Muslim attitudes and behaviours on Muslim girls and how do these girls negotiate those effects in everyday life?
3. How are the experiences of Muslim girls' childhood in Trondheim shaped by stigma and othering?

1.3 Who would benefit from this research?

I believe that an increased knowledge of children's own thoughts and experiences of stigma and othering is beneficial to anyone working with minority children. For instance, a key narrative from the participants in this study seems to suggest that there is limited knowledge among adults working with Muslim children in Trondheim. In particular this relates to the understanding of Muslim children's lives and religious agency.

Despite an attempt to respect that their cultural and religious practices differs from the Norwegian standard, it seems to me like minority children and their families are still approached with a certain sceptics. To some degree, this is to be expected, considering that until quite recently Norway has been a homogenous country with a rather low percentage of people from other cultures. Yet, the focus on multiculturalism has increasingly developed along with the growing number of people from different backgrounds. Various educational programs have been developed for schoolteachers and preschool teachers to reflect and respect multiculturalism. It is a hope that the discussion of this thesis, with a focus on young Muslim's experiences in Norway, might be of interest to such programs. Simply learning about other cultures and religions is not adequate if the aim is to increase the understanding and knowledge of Muslim minority children in Norway. By acknowledging that children are experts in their own lives (Clark, 2005), it is equally as important to learn from them. With the use of qualitative participatory research methods, this thesis aim to do just that.

1.4 Outline of the thesis

Chapter 2 of this thesis presents some relevant background information in regards to the context in which the participants of this study (partly) grew up, and currently lives. This entails such as demographic facts about Norway and Trondheim, Muslim practices, anti-Muslim movements in Norway and so on. This is followed by chapter 3, which involves the theoretical framework that has contributed to shape and direct the analysis of the thesis. Chapter 4 provide insight to the methodology and methods used in the research, as well as some ethical considerations and reflections. The two analysis chapters, chapter 5 and chapter 6, present and discuss the findings from the data. Chapter 5 present findings relative to the participant's challenges with their religious and minority status in regards to social

relationships, religious and cultural practices, and veiling. Chapter 6 present findings relative to the participant's encounter with anti-Muslim sentiments, negative media representation, prejudice, stereotypes and generalizations. Chapter 7 provide a conclusion in relation to the research questions, as well as some further research – and policy recommendations.

Chapter 2: Background

In order to have a better comprehension of childhood experiences of Muslims in a Norwegian city, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the circumstances in which it is lived. This chapter will therefore explore information relating to the topic and context of this study, presenting a brief introduction to the history, culture, religion, politics, immigration policies and socio-economic circumstances in Norway. Information will also be provided for Trondheim as a city, the religion of Islam, Muslims and Muslim childhoods, and on the current anti-Muslim movements in Norway.

2.1 A brief introduction of Norway

Norway is known for its long coastline, mountains, woods and fjords, and as the main occupations used to be farming and fishing, the nature now makes up a large part of the country's national romanticism and identity. Much due to the country's natural resources in oil, gas, fisheries and a growing aquaculture industry, Norway is wealthy and has one of the highest gross national product (GDP) in Europe according to Statistics Norway[4] (Statistisk Sentralbyrå 2015a). As of 1st of January 2016, the Norwegian population counted 5 213 985, which is relatively small in the overall European context (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2016a).

Norway gained independence in 1814 when the union with Denmark dissolved, establishing its own government and constitution. The welfare state can also be said to have its roots during this period of reform, dating to the 1880's when the country went through a paradigm shift into social welfare policies (Hjelmtveit, 2009). It is a relatively egalitarian society in which inclusiveness and social consensus is valued.

According to findings from the 2016 'Better Life Index' of the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2016), wage inequality is low and the tax and benefit system is high (ibid). The country also performs well in measures of well-being, ranking above average on most dimensions such as subjective well-being,

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[4] Statistic Norway will here be referred to as "SSB" (Statistisk Sentralbyrå)

housing, work-life balance and environmental quality (ibid). The country has one of the highest rates of employment compared to other OECD countries, with more than 75% of people between 15-64 being in a paid job. Levels of education are also at a high rate, with 83% of adults between 25-64 having finished their upper secondary education. The life expectancy between men and women is of a similar calibre, with 80 years for men and 84 for women. Perhaps is it a combination of these facts that contribute to the higher satisfaction levels for the people in Norway. Indeed, Norway's residents appear to be more satisfied with life than the average of OECD countries, and there also seems to be both a strong sense of community and civic participation (ibid).

2.2 Trondheim

Trondheim is Norway's third biggest county with a population of 175 068 (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2015b). As it is also known as a popular student city, it is estimated that about 15 000 students live there in addition to the registered residents (Trondheim Kommune, 2011). Trondheim has a small percentage of persons with lower education, and those in such percentage live in the suburbs. The suburbs are related to the larger immigrant population in these areas (ibid).

As with most cities in Norway, Trondheim is surrounded by woods and nature areas, which tend to be eagerly used by the residents for hiking and other outdoor activities. Geographically Trondheim lies in the middle of the country, by the Trondheim fjord, with the river Nidelven running along the city centre. Saint Olav can be said to be one of the most prominent symbolic characters in Trondheim, as he is claimed to be responsible for the christening of Norway in the very beginning of the 1000-century (Norseng, 2015). As he was was killed in the battle of Stiklestad, close by Trondheim, the city still pays homage to him through the annual festival called 'Olavfestdagene'. It is a historical city, with many architectural landmarks such as Nidarosdomen (Cathedral from the 1300 century), the fortresses of Kristiansten, and Munkholmen, but also links to contemporary life by naming the university hospital after Saint Olav[5].

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[5] St. Olavs hospital

2.3 Immigration

As Gullestad (2002) explains, Norway has never been a country with too much immigration; the country is rather homogenized when it comes to ethnicities, with the late 1960's bringing a flow of immigration from Asia, Africa and Latin America. Also followed by labour migration dominantly from Pakistan and Turkey (ibid), whose majority citizens being of the Islamic faith, one could claim that this was the start of Muslim immigration to Norway. However, in 1975 authorities decided to regulate further immigration by restricting forms of movement. Today, such forms mainly consist of experts, family reunifications, students, refugees and asylum seekers (ibid, p.26).

First generation immigrants in Norway make up 13.4 percent of the population with the dominant group consisting of Polacks, followed by Lithuanians and Somalis (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2016b). Approximately half of the immigrants are young people between 20-40 years old, and many have only stayed in the country for quite a short period of time. This especially accounts for the Polacks and Lithuanians, but also refugees from countries with a high Muslim population such as Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan have not been living here for very long (ibid).

2.4 State religion(s) and laws of religion

Since May 2012 the Norwegian Parliament disconnected the church and state, and there is no longer an official religion of Norway. However, paragraph 2 of the Norwegian Constitution declares that the state's core values will still be based around the country's Christian and humanistic inheritance (Grunnloven, 1814). The significance of this inheritance is still shown in the Church's high numbers, as in 2014 there were 3 835 973 registered members of the Norwegian church (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2015c). However, findings from SSB (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2015d) indicate that around 25,2 percent of people in Norway belonging to a religious community outside of the Norwegian church are Muslims. In 2015 there were approximately 141 027 people belonging to various Muslim religious communities (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2015d).

Paragraph 16 of the Norwegian Constitution proclaims that all religions and faiths are to be considered equally supported by the state (Grunnloven, 1814). Norway has signed the United Nations Declaration of Human rights, which in article 18 emphasize that everyone has a right to religious freedom and to express their religion in public (United Nations, 1948). The state has also signed the United Nations Convention of the Right of the Child, which in article 14 declares that all State Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (UN General Assembly, 1989).

The Norwegian law on religious societies declares in Paragraph 5 that all children born to married parents belong to the same religious society as them. If the parents belong to different religious societies, they can decide which religion the child should follow. If the parents are not married, the child belongs to the same religious society as the mother (Lov om trudomssamfunn og ymist anna, 1970).

Paragraph 6 of the Norwegian law on religious societies state that as long as a child is under fifteen years of age, the parents can sign their child in or out of a religious society, but, from the age of twelve the child should be given some autonomy to decide (ibid).

According to Paragraph 27 on the Norwegian law on religious societies people belonging to a religious society outside the Norwegian church have a right to claim two days leave from work or school in relation to religious holidays (ibid).

There are no exact records of how many people belong to which religion or faith in Norway. The numbers used by SSB only take into account official memberships in church communities that have applied for state aid. Furthermore, people may very well consider themselves part of a religion without being a member of such a church community. This is why these numbers given from the SSB should only be considered as estimates (Daugstad & Østby, 2009). However, it is estimated that Muslims make up a considerable part of non-Western immigrants in Norway.

2.5 Non-Western immigrants

Most of the research regarding Muslims in Norway has been conducted in the capital city Oslo, due to the bigger Muslim population and communities (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2016c). The proportion of immigrants from non-western countries[6] that are either first generation immigrants or children of first generation immigrants in Norway is 475 340. This makes up around 9,1 percent of the entire Norwegian population today (Ibid). The amount of immigrants in Trondheim is small compared to other big counties in Norway, with just about 12 000 altogether (Trondheim Kommune, 2011). There are some distinct areas in Trondheim with a bigger population of non-western immigrants than others. However, it is not nearly as segregated as in Oslo, where there is a rather clear-cut division between east and west when it comes to the population of non-western immigrant background (Trondheim Kommune, 2011; Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2013). Non-western immigrants in Trondheim does not live as clustered together as they do in the capital, and as a natural result there should be a broader distribution of children (and adults) with various backgrounds in schools, after school programs, sports activities and other communities, neighbourhoods and so on (Trondheim Kommune, 2011). Therefore, as the demographics and population disperse rates vary between the locations of Trondheim and Oslo, it may be assumed that the effects of anti-Muslim behaviours, and the experiences on Muslim childhoods, also differ.

2.6 Muslims and the religion of Islam

People who consider themselves Muslims either believe in the religion of Islam, or identify themselves with believers through ethnicity or origin (Vikør, 2006). The five pillars of Islam, *arkan al-islam*, make up the core of Islam and are obligatory (*fard*) according to sharia law (Raudvere, 2015). Sharia is the law of the Muslim god Allah, and is based on customary practice. Raudvere (2015) describe Sharia as the umbrella term that comprises the implementation and discussion of religious, civil, economic and penal regulations (ibid). The five pillars consist of the following:

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[6] In accordance with SSB this group consist of: Asia, Africa, Latin-America, Oceania (except Australia and New Zealand) and Europe (except EU28/EEA)

1. The confession of faith (*shahada*), which is: 'There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his messenger'.

2. The five daily prayers (*salat*).

3. Giving alms or charity (*zakat*).

4. Fasting during Ramadan (*sawm*) and

5. Conducting a Pilgrimage to Mecca once during your lifetime, if one can afford it (*hajj*).

The majority of Muslims believe in these pillars, though there is no set way on how to practice them (ibid).

The Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, gives some rules and prohibitions for Muslims relative to these five pillars. However, the manner in which Muslims choose to interpret the religion varies in the different local traditions (Ibid).

As an example, Vikør (2006) draws on the issue of how the Qur'an has a rule that says women and men should dress modestly, though it does not offer any clarification on what this implies. Indeed, there are many different ways of dressing for both men and women which vary from culture to culture, based on geography. Some women wear *burkas* (a veil that covers the whole body, including the face) while others may wear *Chadors* (a black veil covering most of the body except the face), though most people in Europe are used to seeing women wearing *hijabs* (a veil that covers the hair and is tied around the face). There are also some women wearing *niqabs,* which include a separate veil covering the face but not the eyes. Vikør (2006) explain that the choice of dress code is often linked to how strongly individuals would like to express their Muslim identity.

Food is another interesting feature in the expression of religion for Muslims. Most Muslims do not eat pork, and any meat must be *halal,* (a process of butchery according to a specific ritual). The majority do not enjoy alcohol or any type of narcotics (ibid).

As mentioned, there are several ways of practicing Islam or being Muslim. Two main groups of Muslims do stand out: The Sunnis and the Shi'is. These two groups are divided mainly

through their different views on religious leadership, but also on ritual practices and impressions on what is to be considered a good society (Vikør, 2006). It is estimated that Sunni Muslims make up about 85-90 percent of all Muslims in the world (Bangstad & Rasmussen, 2013). The four largest countries with predominantly Sunni Muslim populations are Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh, and the four largest countries that have predominantly Shia Muslim population are Iran, Irak, Asarbajdsjan and Bahrain (ibid). Sunni-Muslims make up the largest part of the Muslim population in Norway, although there are also smaller groups of Shia Muslims. People sometimes mistake Muslims for *Islamists*, but these are people believing in an ideology that claims that a society should be built on the religion Islam. Islamists are also called 'fundamentalists', 'Muslim extremists' or 'radical Muslims' (Vikør, 2006).

2.7 Muslim childhood

Islam considers childhood a special period in a person's life, and the Arabic language has terms for many of the stages a child goes through, such as *sadigh* (seven days old), *tamyiz* (when the child has learnt to differentiate between good and evil) and *bulug* (age of physical maturity) (Fernea, 1995). Islam teaches that everyone is Muslim from birth, and that Islam is the religion of humans (Scourfield, Gilliat-Ray, Kahn & Otri, 2013). However, how a person's Muslim identity develops is dependant on the family upbringing, education and social environment. These factors are thus highly important in a Muslim childhood.

In Islam, parents and children have mutual obligations towards one another. Parents are very much responsible for their children's religious education and nurture (ibid), and the findings of Scourfield et al. (2013) suggest that when compared to other religious traditions, the Islamic education of children is quite severe. Scourfield et al. (2013) explain how, over the centuries, several Muslim educational institutions have been developed with the aim of undertaking 'life-long learning'. These institutions are various types of 'mosque schools', *maktab* (Muslim elementary school) and *madrasah* (educational institution) (ibid p.17). However, the first site for religious learning is at home, and children are especially encouraged by parents to learn Arabic in order to read the Qur'an, and to spend time with the congregation in order to get more familiar with the religion (ibid). A child does not have to

pray the five daily prayers before he or she reaches puberty, but this varies significantly among Muslim communities and cultures (Fernea, 1995).

2.8 Media coverage, public debates and politics concerning Muslims

In an eight-year period from 2005-2013, the so-called 'red-green'-government consisting of left wing and centre parties Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet), Social Left Party (Sosialistisk Venstre) and Centre Party (Senterpartiet) governed Norway. Since 2003 the Major of Trondheim has been Rita Ottervik, also representing Trondheim Labour Party. Thus, the political power has for many years been predominantly left-centre. Both the Social Left Party and the Labour Party has had quite a positive outlook on immigration, and in the 2013-2017 programme of the Labour Party it is declared that they believe diversity in Norwegian society is fundamentally positive (Arbeiderpartiet, 2013). Further, their opinion on religious clothing is that: "The general rule in Norwegian working life should be that individuals could dress and express their religious identity as they wish" (ibid, p.90). Since 2013, however, the right winged, 'blue-blue' government, with the Conservative Party (Høyre), the Progress party (Fremskrittspartiet) and the Liberal Party (Venstre) has governed the country. Especially as the Progress Party are well known for having a devoted anti-immigration politics (Akkerman & Hagelund, 2007) there are reasons to presume that the political climate in Norway has changed in the last couple of years, especially in regards to immigration.

As in other Western countries, Muslims have received much more media attention in Norway since the events of 9/11 (Steien, 2008). This attention grew especially since 2006, when the Norwegian magazine "Magasinet" reprinted the Danish caricatures of the prophet Mohammed. The reprinting was followed by a wave of protests and discussions between Muslims and non-Muslims (ibid), and public debates and politics have since questioned how compatible Norwegian societal values are with Islam and Muslim practices (ECRI, 2009).

The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (2014)[7] shows an increasing skepticism towards Muslims among the Norwegian population. Kunst, Tajamal, Sam and Ulleberg (2011) argue that Anders Behring Breivik, the Norwegian terrorist behind the attacks on Utøya and Oslo 22nd of July in 2011, might be an indication that right-wing extremism might be growing in Norway. Breivik specifically stated that he hated all Muslims (Kultorp et al. 2012).

The journalist and author Hege Storhaug published her seventh book on immigration and Islam in 2015: "Islam, the 11th plague". Storhaug argues that Norway and Europe are moving towards an undemocratic, savage era as a result of Islamization (Storhaug, 2015). Akkerman and Hagelund (2007) claim that Storhaug has been crucial in putting many issues and concerns around Muslim practices on the public agenda through her books, documentaries and newspaper articles. She has mostly focused upon women and children's rights among people with immigrant backgrounds and suggests restrictions on Norway's immigration policies in order to combat what she consider a threat to western culture (Akkerman & Hagelund, 2007).

Afshar (2008) discusses how the current rise in Islamophobia in particular has othered Muslim women and girls and demonstrate aspects of Edward W. Said's (1978/2004) Orientalism, which she claims still lies at the core of race and gender issues in the West. I will return to this issue of orientalism and construction of otherness in the theory chapter.

The hijab-debate

In Norway, a public debate on hijabs and children has been prominent for quite some time. In 2010, the Progress Party suggested there should be a legal prohibition against hijabs in primary schools (Nilsen & Randen, 2010). However, the government announced that banning hijabs for schoolchildren could be considered as going against the Norwegian constitutions paragraph 2 on religious freedom, as well as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) article 9, UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) article 18, and the

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[7] The Directorate of Integration and Diversity will be referred to as 'IMDi' - Integrerings-og mangfoldsdirektoratet

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) article 14. A ban was therefore rejected (Regjeringen Stoltenberg II, 2010).

In 2015 the debate regained attention from the media when Hadia Tajik - who sits in the Parliamentary Committee on Justice, and is the deputy chairman of Arbeiderpartiet - claimed that she was in favour of a legal prohibition against hijabs in primary schools. Tajik argues that hijabs are 'sexualising' children, thus interpreting the hijab as clothes Muslim women and girls wear in order to hide their physical beauty from males (Ruud & Sigurjonsdottir, 2015). There has been several other arguments for and against such a ban, and I will give a few examples.

Some principals of Oslo schools are critical of denying school children the use of hijabs and veils as they argue it should be up to the parents of the children to decide what they can wear and not wear (Pierstorff, Norum, & Tahir, 2015). The Right Party politician Mahmoud Farahmand wants to forbid veils on children and claim it is used by parents to control their children and shape their identities (Aarnes, 2016). Jonas Gahr Støre - current leader of the Norwegian Labour Party - says children should not have to wear clothes that would make it difficult for them to be a child in Norway, but believe a prohibition would prove very difficult to succeed with (Lilleås, 2016). The Prime Minister Erna Solberg explains that she does not think children in school should wear hijabs, but states that this do not mean it should be forbidden by law (Stavrum, 2015).

The hijab-discussion is noteworthy because it represent attitudes of Norwegian politicians who are influential, therefore impacting the agenda of both media and the general opinions of people. In other words, it says something about Norwegian peoples views on Muslim traditions and school-children. IMDi (2014) found that 86 percent of the Norwegian public are rather negative towards the use of hijab by both children and adult women, and especially to the niqab. Veiling - and what it may signify to some non-Muslims - will be discussed further and accounted for in both the theory chapter and analysis chapter of this thesis.

Despite such debates and issues concerning Muslim immigrants, a recent study by SSB in 2015 indicated that Norwegians have become more positive to immigration in general since the early 2000's. 28 percent of the participants agreed, or partly agreed, with the statement

"most immigrants are the source of insecurity in society", whilst 60 percent disagreed. The same study found that women seems to be more liberal and positive towards immigrants and immigration than men, and that older people are more sceptical than those who are younger.

People living in more urban areas are less sceptical than those who do not, which correlates with the finding that those who are more in contact with immigrants, or have a immigrant background themselves, are less sceptical.

There also seem to be a link with education, as people with higher education tend to be less sceptical than those with a lower education (SSB, 2015e).

IMDi (2014) also found that out of all immigrants, people seem to be the most negative or sceptical towards Muslims. This apparent move from people being sceptical of immigrants to Muslim immigrants in particular will be discussed in the theory chapter.

2.9 Current anti-Muslim movements

Lately, ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), Al Qaida and other terrorist groups linked with Islam have become an everyday topic in Western media (REF). Just in 2015 alone, Paris, Istanbul and Tunisia experienced several terrorist attacks. Recently, in March 2016 Brussel experienced two severe attacks within the same day. With the English Defence League publicly criticising the Muslim culture and way of life, as well as the recent establishment of the anti-immigrant organisation Pegida around various countries of Europe, it seems as though the western world is experiencing a similar 'wave' that occurred in the aftermath of the US tragedy of 9/11 (Nielsen 2004; Sheridan 2006; Poynting & Mason 2007). This wave consists of increased islamophobia as well as the stereotyping of those who practice – and look as though they practice - the religion of Islam (ibid).

Signs of this new wave can also be detected in the various forms of resistance to it. These forms of solidarity acts includes twitter-campaign "I'll ride with you" in Australia. The act involved protecting Muslims travelling on public transport from potential anti-Muslim assaults, after a hostage situation took place by an Islamist in a Sydney café (Alexander,

2014). Another sign of resistance is the implementation of the 'Islamophobia Awareness Month'. Though established in November 2012, worldwide, IAM has only gained popularity in the UK (Pitt, 2013).

According to Sheridan (2006), in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, Muslims are reporting more abuse. As an example, 128 attacks on Muslim targets were registered in France after the ISIS terrorist attack on the magazine of Charlie Hebdo in Paris (Mon, 2015). In Norway, immediately after the bomb went off in Oslo the 22nd of July Muslims and other immigrants experienced increased verbal abuse before the offender was revealed as a non-Muslim, ethnic Norwegian (Nordlie, 2012).

Through the course of writing this thesis, a large-scale refugee crisis affecting Europe has received massive attention from the media (UNCHR, 2015). By the end of November, the UNHCR reported that almost 850 000 people had entered Europe through the Mediterranean in 2015, with numbers increasing each day (ibid). The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration[8] estimated that about 30 000 refugees entered Norway in 2015 (UDI, 2015). These refugees are mainly from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Eritrea, countries that experience on-going war and conflicts (FN–Sambandet, 2016; Østby, 2015). The fact that many of these refugees might have a Muslim background seemed to be an underlying factor in scepticism from some Norwegians. Looking online through Facebook or newspaper-comment fields, utterances of suspicion, prejudice, fear and hatred are present by Norwegians who want to close the borders and deny asylum to Muslim refugees. More than twenty-five asylum centres and aspiring centres were lit on fire in Sweden during the autumn of 2015, with the police presenting a case for how this could potentially be linked to anti-Muslim right-wing extremists (Hagen, Berg, & Røset, 2015).

Pegida and SIAN

Pegida is a political protest movement which originated from Germany in the autumn of 2014. The acronym Pegida is therefore German and stands for Patriotic Europeans against the

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[8] The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration is here referred to as 'UDI' – utlendingsdirektoratet

Islamization of the Occident (Patriotiche Europaer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes) (Thran & Boehnke, 2015). The official Facebook site for 'Pegida Norway' states that "Pegida is a protest movement that on humanistic grounds demonstrate against Muslim immigration and the influence of Islam" (Pegida Norge, n.d).

A similar group, which seems to be more popular at this current point, is SIAN (Stop the Islamization of Norway/Stopp Islamiseringen av Norge). SIAN argue that Islam pose a threat to peace and freedom in Norway (SIAN, n.d.). On their official webpage the group explains how their aim is to "..work against, stop and reverse the islamization of Norway". It also states that reversing islamization will be achieved by spreading information about what Islam stands for and what consequences this islamization will have for the country. In 2015 the group's facebook page had about 8 209 members, yet their Trønderlag page had only 65. However, Facebook is by no means a correct measure of membership numbers for these groups as people might give their support in other ways than through public membership.

The Pegida Norway Facebook page had received over 5000 'likes' in March 2016, and on the same day, Pegida Trondheim had received 168. In such a small country like Norway, these groups do not go unnoticed, and especially not online. On an everyday basis anti-Muslim and anti-immigration propaganda in the shape of newspaper articles, You-tube videoes, posters and images are being spread and shared through Facebook and other forms of social media. One example is this abstract, taken from an article published on the Norwegian SIAN webpage:

> "Muslims have never brought piece to an area they have populated, regardless whether it happened through hjira or jihad. The Islam-beast that was last chased off from Europe 400-500 years ago is now back. In the meantime our elites have deliberately diminished our fellow memory of Islams immanent evil, and of good Muslims barbaric nature based on Muhammad's example as it is written in the wholly book of the Muslims." (Thoresen, 2016, my translation)

Anti-Muslim movements and attitudes are highly relevant in regards to the potential impact on a Muslim childhood in Norway. Opinions and statements - such as the one above - are by no means hidden from children with access to social media. This will be apparent in the analysis chapter.

2.10 Summary

In this chapter I have presented some of the relevant factual information about Norway and Trondheim, such as culture, immigration policies and history. I have done so in order to give a more comprehensive understanding to the circumstances of the Muslim participants in this study, and how they spent some of their childhood. The chapter also entailed a short introduction to Islam and Muslim life, as well as Muslim childhood and upbringing. Lastly, the chapter has pointed towards some of the current public and political debates concerning Muslims in Norway, as well as the anti-Muslim climate that appears to be growing.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

In this chapter I would like to present the theoretical frameworks and concepts used in order to get a broader understanding of the data collected in my study. I will start with a brief introduction of childhood studies and its perspectives of children as social agents and childhood as a social construct. This will be followed by the discussion of other theoretical concepts that I have found useful in explaining the negative discourses of Muslims and Islam, mainly; stigma, orientalism, othering and racism. I then explain how social constructions of difference might be reinforced through the media, public and political debates, as well as in everyday interactions and conversations. The last half of this chapter brings focus to the previous research on stigma, stereotypes and prejudice views of Muslims in non-Muslim societies.

3.1 Childhood studies

This study has been developed with a childhood studies point of view. The main concern of childhood studies is to gain knowledge and further understanding of children and childhood (James & James, 2012). As James and James (2012) writes; "…Childhood is a complex phenomenon, which therefore requires complex understandings that cannot be arrived at by looking through a single disciplinary lens" (ibid, p.xi). As such, James and James (2012) argue that despite of having most of its roots within sociology and social anthropology, childhood studies must be conceived as an interdisciplinary field in order to better the knowledge of the different parameters of childhood and children's lives. In the view of James and James (2012), geography, history, psychology, economics, medicine, law, social policy, art, literature and pedagogy have all contributed in the study of children and childhood (ibid). In this chapter I will therefore present a range of theories from different disciplines, all of which will contribute to gaining a broader understanding of the lives of Muslim girls' childhoods in Trondheim.

I will begin with a brief look into the paradigm shift that led to some of our current conceptions of children and childhood, as it very much has influenced the main processes of this thesis.

The 'new' paradigm of childhood studies

Childhood studies emerged out of a critique of the dominant paradigms of family studies and child development around the 1980's and 1990's (Tisdall & Punch, 2012). Until then, Piaget's ideas of child development and Parson's socialisation theory had very much influenced the views of children and childhood as being universal, irrational and natural (Prout & James, 1990). The emphasis seemed to be on children as 'adult becomings' rather than human beings (Qvortrup, 2009).

Qvortrup (2009) also focused on what he considered to be sociologists *fail* to think of childhood in terms of structure, as a social group, or a collective. Despite their efforts in looking into the significance of social structure, Qvortrup found that children appear to only have in common the biological fact that they all eventually will become adults (ibid).

As childhood had previously been considered in terms of child development with a beginning and end, it should - in structural terms - instead be understood periodically. This way, childhood must be seen as a permanent form that remains a stable social structure through various generations (ibid). Qvortrup (2009) thus questioned common conceptions and emphasis on the need for children to become integrated successfully *into* society with time, as if they were not already a part of it. By using such terminologies, one seems to view society as only belonging to adults, without acknowledging children's place in it. Instead, childhood studies wants to draw further attention to childhood as more than just a temporal stage in which children find themselves before entering the adult life phase.

The 'new' paradigm of childhood studies was thus put up as a counter-paradigm to these old ideas and perspective (Tisdall & Punch, 2012). Some of the key paradigmatic features are as follows:

1) Childhood is to be understood as a social construction, and is neither natural nor universal.

2) Childhood is tightly connected with variables such as class, gender and ethnicity.

3) Children are worthy of study in their own right.

4) Children have agency, and should be seen as active in the construction of their own life and the society around them.

5) Ethnographic methods can be useful in the study of children and childhood, as it give children a voice and the chance to actively participate themselves (Prout & James, 1990, p.8).

Two of the main ideas arriving from this 'new' paradigm are especially useful in relation to this thesis. Namely, the emphasis on childhood as a structural form (Qvortrup, 2009), and children being social actors in their own life (Prout & James, 1990).

Theoretical concepts

3.2 Childhood as a structural form

Qvortrup (2009) explains childhood as a social space, which is the result of structural forces such as the economy, politics, culture, discourses, ideology and so on. Children lead their lives within this social space, a space which changes constantly. However, despite these changes, childhood as a structural form remains on a permanent basis (Qvortrup, 2009). Comparing childhood to social class, people could leave their current position to enter another (for example if a working class member became part of the middle class), but working class as a social structure would still consist.

Considering that childhood is an integral part of society, and therefore exposed to the same societal forces as adulthood, this thesis will look into whether Western discourses attached to Islam and Muslims have any effect on Muslim girls' childhood in Trondheim. However, the impact and effect of various societal forces are not necessarily the same for each generational unit (Qvortrup, 2009).

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What is a discourse?

As Montgomery (2003) explain, discourses are sets of ideas which are embedded within a social, political and historical context, impacting on how people make sense of the world. Thus, people 'make sense' of things differently in accordance to their own social and political context. Indeed, discourses both reflect the reality of people, as well as how they create it. To quote Montgomery; "the way people speak and think about things has effects on their lives and those of other people" (2003, p.47).

As an example, Kjørholt (2002) looks at childhood as a discursive phenomenon. She points out that particular, Norwegian discourses on children have moved from the notion of 'the vulnerable and dependant child' to 'the competent child' (Kjørholt, 2002, p.64). This change, she argues, is linked both to international and universal children's rights discourses, in addition to a specific Norwegian cultural context (ibid). Thus, the discursive construction of children and childhood emphasize to some degree both *universality*, as well as *particularity*, (Kjørholt, 2004, p.226). Kjørholt (2004) argue that there is a relationship between the discourses on children as competent citizens and the Norwegian discourses on nationality and democracy; both the significance of children as central actors, as well as the way in which social constructions of children and childhood is connected to cultural, economical and political transformations in society (ibid, p.227).

Thus, when childhood is seen as a structural form, in order to find out more about their childhood one looks at how wider forces of economics, politics and social structures impact children's lives (Qvortrup, 2009). Furthermore, as my focus is just on girls, gender might also have a considerable influence on the impact such discourses might have on childhood. Bearing this in mind, Western discourses on Islam might impact Muslim *childhood* in quite different ways than it would impact Muslim *adulthood*. In regards to this study, I will look into three forces that could potentially have an impact on Muslim girls childhood in Trondheim:

> 1. The exposure of social media's coverage and debates on Muslim-related issues.
> 2. Political discussions in Norway regarding hijabs and immigration from countries with a high Muslim population.

3. Anti-Muslim groups and organisations, and the 'war on terrorism'.

Yet, in exploring structural forces shaping Muslim childhoods in Trondheim it is also important to keep in mind that children are not just passive subjects. Rather, they are social actors and agents with the ability to resist and navigate through various constraints in their lives.

3.3 Children as social actors

One of the most prominent theoretical developments in childhood studies involves the shift into seeing children as competent, social actors (James, 2009; James and Prout, 1990; Mayall, 2002). From around the 1970's, scholars began to acknowledge children's individual ability to interfere and make an impact, both in regards to their own lives, and to others' (James, 2009). Such a renewed focus on children led to a change in the conceptions of what 'childhood' is, as well as how children can be understood as more than just passive participants in society (ibid).

James and Prout (1990) argue that seeing children as social actors also requires a view that they are active in the construction of both their own lives and in their societies. Yet, according to Mayall (2002) one should distinguish between 'actor' and 'agent', in that an actor are able to do something, but not necessarily in the same conscious and deliberate process as an agent. An agent, in the other hand, is negotiating in order to change a constraint or social assumption (Mayall, 2002, p.21).

Corsaro (1997) pointed to what he named 'the process of interpretive reproduction', which concerns the "innovative and creative aspects of children's participation in society" (Corsaro, 1997 p.19). He explains this type of reproduction as two processes in which children are both actively part of cultural production and change, but at the same time are being constrained by their society and culture (ibid). In order to gain a better understanding of children's agency, it is therefore necessary to look into the connection between agency and the social structures involved in their lives.

3.4 Stigma

As this thesis very much evolves around stigma and the experiences by (sometimes) visible members of a religious minority, I begin with presenting some of the main theories around this concept. In particular, the ethnographic and interactionist work of Erving Goffman (1963) has established the groundwork on the subject. This section will therefore start with a short presentation of his theory of stigma, followed by other, more contemporary theories around the topic and it's comparison with prejudice. Further on I will present what I believe to be related concepts in the context of this thesis: othering, racism and orientalism. All of these are concepts which theorise how constructions of difference occur and function, and how people create distinctions between what they consider to be 'mine' and 'theirs' as well as 'us' and 'them'. A broader understanding of these social constructions is necessary in order to gain a wider understanding of the data, and the experiences of the participants of this study.

Goffman and stigma

Goffman (1963) described stigma as a process that is initially based on the construction of social identity. Stigma is connected to an attribute that is greatly discrediting, which makes the stigmatized person different from a given majority (Goffman, 1963). However, as Goffman described, an attribute cannot be discrediting unless it is attached to what is referred to as *"a language of relationships"* (ibid p.13). The process of stigma, and the process of being stigmatized, is based on the reactions that appear in the interaction those connected to a stigma and those who are not. Primarily, a stigma differs from what is considered 'normal' in a given context. To use this thesis as an example, being Muslim cannot be seen as stigmatizing by itself. In places where Islam is the dominant religion, being Muslim has positive connotations, and would not be considered stigmatizing. In a Norwegian city like Trondheim, on the other hand, being Muslim is not considered the norm, and might bring forward negative connotations. Such connotations could be linked to stereotypes or prejudice as will be explain this further in this chapter. Significantly, the *social context* in which a Muslim finds herself could determine whether she is being stigmatized or not.

Goffman pointed to the difference between the case of the *discredited,* in which any stigmatized person knows that the majority is (or could be) aware of her standing out, and the *discreditable*, in which she do not believe anyone knows or would be able to notice (Goffman, 1963, p.14). The awareness and visibility of the stigma attached to a person is highly important, as this reveals something about the person's social identity. Goffman (1963) writes about signs that entailed social information. In the case of Muslim girls in this study, this could be the dress style, the veil or various acts like praying and fasting during the Ramadan. Theses are features which could make them differ from the majority in a Norwegian city, and give away their religious and cultural belonging.

Methods of controlling or managing impressions of stigma may take place (Goffman 1959). For instance, praying and fasting can be hidden to an extent, using different spaces, places and 'stages'. However, managing one's performance and 'props' are not always so easy, with veiling and dress style still very highly visible (see Goffman, 1959, p.32-37). Yet, the different signs and symbols which influence interaction could also mean different things to different groups of people. Girls covering up by veiling may represent male dominance, women's oppression and patriarchy to some, while others see it as a religious duty, being modest or something that empowers women (Dwyer 2008). Whether veiling is attached to stigma is therefore dependent on the conceptions of others.

> "The information of most relevance in the study of stigma has certain properties. It is information about an individual. It is about his more or less abiding characteristics, as opposed to the moods, feelings, or intents that he might have at a particular moment. The information, as well as the sign through which it is conveyed, is reflexive and embodied; that is, it is conveyed by the very person it is about, and conveyed through bodily expression in the immediate presence of those who receive the expression. Information possessing all of these properties I will here call 'social'." Goffman, 1963, p.58)

Newer theories

Since the original works by Goffman there has been plenty of research on stigma, and the concept has received criticism for having too much individualistic focus and being vaguely defined (Link & Phelan, 2001, p.363). More recent research on stigma does not only involve detecting different types of stigma and its negative effect on stigmatized people, but focuses

on stigma as socially constructed and dynamic, and as a social process related to power (Link & Phelan 2001; Parker & Aggleton, 2003). Link and Phelan (2001) define stigma as the "co-occurrence of its components- labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination" (Link & Phelan, 2001, p.363). They argue that as stigmatizing processes could have an effect on several areas in people's lives it might also impact the distribution of life chances in domains such as economy, education, criminal involvement, health and the like (Ibid). Additionally, as stigma is created as a social product of the interest of the dominant groups, Parker and Aggleton (2003, p.19) view stigma and stigmatization as tightly intertwined with the production and reproduction of structural inequalities and social difference.

Yang et al. (2007) present their notion of stigma as "an essentially moral issue in which stigmatized conditions threaten what is at stake for sufferers" (Yang et al. 2007, p.1524). In their account, one could better understand the behaviour of both the stigmatized and the stigmatizers through concepts of 'moral experience', - in which they explain as "what is most at stake for actors in a local social world" (ibid, p.1524). Thus, they suggests that the act of stigmatizing someone is not just a result of an unconscious social process, but also as a rather tactical response to what is considered a threat or the 'dangerous other'. For Yang et al. (2007), the notion of a threat is what makes stigma so harmful and troubling. At the same time as the stigmatized suffers under his or her stigma, the stigmatizer uses stigma as an effective response both as an act of self-preservation, but also in the moral experience of being threatened (Ibid, p.1528). They conclude that such a definition of stigma can give a broader understanding of how it can marginalize entire social groups, as well as individuals (ibid).

Stigma and prejudice – what is the difference?

With a lot of work focused upon both stigma and prejudice, Phelan, Link and Dovidio (2008) question why these two concepts, - which were originally defined quite similarly, - have been separated in the literature. They emphasized that current literature on the concepts have begun to merge, and that stigma, prejudice and discrimination now increasingly are being used in the same texts.

Thus, they decided to review 18 key models of stigma and prejudice in order to find the degree of similarities between the two, and to what extent they could be considered the same (ibid). Despite that their analysis implied that there were some difference in focus and emphasis, Phelan et al. (2008) concluded that these models could be described as belonging to one single concept. Due to such little distinctions between the functions of prejudice and stigma, they found it beneficial to outline three subtypes, separating them in terms of: exploitation and domination (keeping people down), norm enforcement (keeping people in) and disease avoidance (keeping people away) (Phelan et al. 2008, p.365).

Research on prejudice has mostly been concerned with social processes of exploitation and domination such as racism, and in the case of stigma, with norm enforcement and disease avoidance (ibid, p.365). Yet, these distinctions are diminishing, and so Phelan et al. (2008) argues that prejudice and stigma still cannot be considered as different concepts due to the large degree of overlap these models entailed.

3.5 Othering

"From a social science point of view, identities are in some sense always social. This means that ethnic minority identities are always situated within specific social contexts and conditioned by them" (Jensen, 2011, p. 63). The theoretical concept of 'othering' is presented to explain processes like these.

Othering occurs when a dominant group defines what is to be considered an inferior group (Fine, 1994), which involves the construction and marking of ideas and persons to fabricated categories (Schwalbe et al. 2000). Going back to the suggestion of Yang et al. (2007), we can interpret how stigmatizing someone could be seen as a tactical response to the 'other'. There are three ways in which othering can take form according to the literature, all of which create meanings that shape behaviour and consciousness so that inequality is produced both directly and indirectly (Schwalbe et al. 2000). These are:

1) Oppressive othering;
2) Implicit othering
3) Defensive othering (ibid, p.422)

Each of these could be seen as related to the three subtypes of stigma and prejudice, from the study of Phelan et al. (2008).

Fine (1994) problematized the ways in which social science researchers may contribute to the continued process of othering by aiming the attention on specific groups viewed as 'interesting' due especially to their perceived 'difference' through their research. When researchers define who is to be considered objects of curiosity and study, it is quite rarely groups of people belonging to the same social group as themselves, but rather those regarded as 'the others' (Fine, 1994). Though this study is no exception, my ethical and methodological considerations, and awareness of researcher reflexivity, aims to reduce some of the potential issues (see methods chapter).

3.6 Racism

Gullestad (2004, p.178) defines racism as the forms of ideology where human races are divided through permanent physical differences, in which there is a direct relationship between mental qualities like morality and intelligence, and physical attributes. These 'races' form a hierarchy with the 'white race' on top and those not white underneath. After the Second World War such ideologies has been turned down and are no longer dominant according to Gullestad (2004). Yet, North American scholars in particular have taken interest in the concept of 'white privilege', or 'racial privilege', - the notion that people constructed as white tend to have certain advantages in society, often without even recognising it (Leonardo, 2004; Hunter, 2002; Kobayashi & Peake, 2000). Features other than having white skin can also be valued in such racial distinctions, like nose shapes, hair texture and more 'hidden' factors like culture and language (Hunter, 2002). Philosophers, sociologists and political scientists in the 1980's and 1990's have looked into whether the encounter with Third World immigrants to Europe since the Second World War may have transformed and renewed racist ideologies (Gullestad, 2002). Such ideologies imply that 'culture' has been exchanged with 'race' in political, right wing rhetoric. This involves the notion of viewing some cultures as inferior to others, and the increased focus on cultural differences. As these cultures are seen as incompatible with each other, it is implied that different cultural groups should be separated

and each stay where they 'belong'. Once such notions and ideas becomes part of institutional powers, it can potentially lead to discrimination and exclusion (Ibid).

Although this thesis does not concern racism per se, I use the arguments of Connely (1998) in his account of the concept, and compare it to that of stigma and othering. Connely claims that racism provides the conceptual framework that impacts how people think of themselves and others, and leads to their behaviour and actions. Racism therefore has a *'formative'* power due its ability to 'form' individual and collective identities, according to Connely (1998). He connects this to Michel Foucault's notion of discourse, which he suggests could be understood as "representing the social construction of language and knowledge, organising the ways in which we think about the world and what we come to regard as appropriate, valid and true" (Connely 1998, p.11). Thus, Connely (1998) argues that the way in which academics used to separate and classify the human species into biologically different groupings such as the "black race" and the "white race", has inevitably led to people maintaining constructions of 'us' and 'them'. As noted by Kobayashi and Peake (2000), whiteness can be seen as a standpoint "from which to look at ourselves and the surrounding society, a position of normalcy, and perhaps moral superiority, from which to construct a landscape of what is same and what is different". This also includes whiteness as the "set of cultural practices and politics based upon ideological norms that are lived but unacknowledged" (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000, p. 394).

Discourse and 'race'

The manner in which 'race' intersects with discourse not only involves language and ideas, but also social practices and processes (Connely, 1998). Race and ethnicity could also influence people's sense of identity and self through the process of other's interactions, for instance, how they are treated and how they react in relation to self-fulfilling prophecies (ibid). However, Connely (1998) emphasizes how discourses on race are not static, but reliant on how they relate to, and are being expressed with other discourses (ibid). Thus, one cannot understand racism on its own without taking into account the ways in which it interacts with gender, age, sexuality and class (Connely, 1998; Robinson, 1999).

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As discussed, Connely (1998) draws attention to how racism has changed over time in line with other scholars (see also Hunter, 2002; Gullestad, 2002). Yet, despite that discourses relative to 'race' have evolved, the topic continues to reinforce people's divisions between 'us' and 'them', and place individuals into different groupings of higher or lower status (Gullestad, 2002). Through the course of this thesis I argue that such discourses also influence what is perceived as 'different' and 'other' in a given context and, therefore, also what is to be considered discrediting and thus stigmatising. As Betz and Meret (2009) explain, the emphasis is no longer on a racial hierarchy, but instead on 'difference'.

3.7 Orientalism

In order to understand the stigma attached to immigrant Muslims in the context of Norway, specifically Trondheim, it might also be useful to look closer into the concept of 'Orientalism', the Western conception of the Orient. Said (1978/2004) explains orientalism as powerful discourses based on an ontological and epistemological division between the Orient and (most often) the Occident (Said, 1978/2004, p.12). He emphasizes how both the concept of the Orient and the concept of the West (also termed 'the Occident') is socially constructed, and argues that European culture got strengthened and obtained a powerful identity through viewing itself as a counterpart to the Orient (ibid, p.13). Said argues how perceiving others as 'different' is a way of defining and consolidating one's own identity, of developing the notions of 'them' as opposed to 'us', which is key in the process of othering. In citing Haldrup et al. (2006) it is the "created body of texts and theories that works as a discursive system of dominance and authority in the uneven relation between the Orient and the Occident" (ibid p.175). Orientalism is therefore a practice that determines how people view familiar spaces as 'mine' and unfamiliar spaces beyond this 'mine' as 'theirs'.

Practical and Banal Orientalism

Haldrup et al. (2006) uses the term *'practical orientalism'* to describe the transformation of rhetoric and everyday practices towards non-European immigrant groups. Thus, Haldrup et al. (2006) focus on the various social mechanisms that shape people's impressions and opinions

of what is to be considered 'ours' or 'theirs'. In discussing the main forces behind these dominant discourses they emphasize the daily reproductions of orientalism in the public sphere. This implies that orientalism is not just established, performed and reproduced by the higher regimes of knowledge, but through the everyday actions of individuals. The ways in which people continuously talk about, practice, think and view orientalism is part of what makes these discourses established as natural, 'taken-for-granted' ideas (Ibid p.175). As a result, it is suggested that orientalism should also be seen to cover what they call *'banal orientalism'*, which can be detected through linguistic markers such as words like 'us' and 'them'. Banal orientalism has now become central in public debates concerning possible dangers for Western societies and identity. By using words such as 'us'/'them' in our everyday conversations, people continuously create an image of non-Europeans as 'the other'. Orientalism could explain why people from Western, European countries - like Norway - tend to evaluate non-European immigrants as separated from themselves.

However, Haldrup et al. (2006) emphasize that banal orientalism should not be viewed as an innocent mechanism as it leads to people's ideological consciousness. Furthermore, Haldrup et al. (2006) problematize how modern orientalism has become such a big part of people's way of thinking, and how social meaning is established and negotiated through politicians, the media as well as everyday narratives. In the view of Haldrup et al. (2006), banal orientalism has impacted the way in which people originally coming from Islamic countries are now seen as either exotic inspiring others, or as problematic strangers. Muslims are being stereotyped as disruptive and threatening to Western people's 'own' culture and nation (ibid). Haldrup et al. (2006) suggest that such negative images and way of thinking are being reproduced and used in the everyday narratives of people (ibid).

Stereotypical views of non-Western, Islamic individuals as threatening to what is regarded as 'ours' could potentially lead to a stigma attached to anything connected to this frightening 'other'. The 'other' may be symbolic clothing and practices including veiling and praying, and whatever might be 'unfamiliar' and different from the norm in Western societies.

Haldrup et al. (2006) argue that there is a connection between what they consider to be a change in the political semiotics in Nordic countries, and the appearance of practical and

banal orientalism in people's everyday lives (see also Akkerman & Hagelund, 2007; Wren, 2001);

> "Through numerous small acts, comments, telling of anecdotes, corporeal attitudes and so on, borders between 'them' and 'us' are redrawn, reproduced and enacted. Thus, the construction of Otherness is basically an embodied practice – a practice that begins and ends in the practices of everyday life". (Haldrup et al. 2006, P.183)

In line with Haldrup et al. (2006), Gullestad (2002, p.193) suggests that when Norwegians talk about 'immigrants', they simultaneously define what 'we', - the ethnic nation - are in contrast to 'them'. In current debates about immigrants, therefore, the socially constructed 'we' in relation to 'the others' become apparent. The ethnic majority keep reinforcing their majority belonging through the emphasising of what they share in common, such as culture, origin and ancestry. Through such '*imagined sameness'*, as Gullestad (2002) people who are considered 'too different' are avoided and ignored in social interactions.

'We' are seen as the normative standard in regards to people who differs from 'us' in various ways. As a result, the dividing line between majority and minorities is drawn, and with such a clear division the issues concerning and affecting both categories are considered differently (Gullestad, 2002). It creates a double standard, both in the daily conversations and the mass media.

For example, if a majority group member commits a crime it is not interpreted the same way as if a member of an ethnical minority were to commit it. The majority group member's act could be seen as an expression of some mental disturbance or linked to economical issues, while the act of the ethnic minority group member may be interpreted to be linked to his or her ethnic culture or religion. Such a process of assumption and misconception contributes to the stigmatisation of innocent people who happen to belong to the same minority group (Ibid).

3.8 Veiling, stigma and constructions of difference

In this section I will present some of the existing research relating to veiling and the dress style of Muslim women and girls within Western countries, and the stigma and conceptions attached to it. Hijabs and the dress style came to be one of the main topics of discussion during interviews and focus group discussion and, as I will demonstrate here, this correlates well with findings from similar research.

Veiling is a particular feature which makes Muslim girls differ and stand out from the non-Muslim majority in countries such as Norway, and the various signifiers the veil entails can play a crucial factor in the possible stigmatization of these girls. As these studies show, there are many ways the veil could entail constructions of difference.

In a British study conducted via individual interviews and in-depth group discussions with young, British Muslim women, Dwyer (1999) explores the ways in which Muslim dress style works as a strong marker of difference. Her findings suggests that it is veiling in particular that contributes to the established discourses around 'Muslim women'. She argues that dress style plays a role in the creation of social boundaries between - and within - different groups, emphasising the importance of understanding how young, British, Muslim women are structured through discourses that are both racialised and gendered. Such discourses are based on Orientalist discourses, in which Islam is constructed as ethically opposite to 'Western culture' and presents young, Muslim women as oppressed by their religion. The fallout implications of such discourses are that Muslim women are reduced into passive victims.

For Dwyer's participants, veiling created a strong marker of difference between what was categorized as 'Asian' (or 'Muslim') and 'English'. The 'Asian' dress style was associated with 'tradition' and 'culture', and 'English' dress style was associated with 'modernity' and 'Westernisation'. It is worth noting that these categories seemed to be considered exclusive, fixed and bounded.

These findings are especially interesting as a demonstration of how dominant, Western discourses about Muslim, young women were being negotiated by Muslim women even prior to the 9/11 terrorist attack. However, discourses around them may have altered or become more prominent following this date, as it may have added the association between Muslims and terrorism (Afshar, 2008).

Mythen, Walklate and Kahn (2013) exemplify how both the terrorist attack on 9/11 and the following 7/7 bombings in London led to an increase of Muslim stigmatization in Britain. Indeed, Muslims were being portrayed as problematic and 'risky others' by the media, senior politicians and also the judiciary (ibid).

Furthermore, through the longitudinal analysis of 104 different surveys on majority attitudes towards British Muslims and the religion of Islam, Field (2007) found that the hijab had been significantly more contested and debated in Britain following the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and 7/7.

In a later article Dwyer (2008) discusses the public debates on veiling practices in Britain post 9/11 and 7/7, building on arguments from her study in 1999. She emphasizes how these debates still display Muslim women and girls' dress choices as such a contested signifier of conflicting views and debates concerning Muslims, and the failing in taking account of the contested and complex dynamics of veiling. Dwyer (2008) argues that veiling practices should be seen as an embodied, *spatial* practice acted out in various contexts, and should be analysed through the socio-economical and political climate in which Muslim identities are being negotiated and conceptualised in Britain. Dwyer (2008) also reflects on the women in her 1999 study, suggesting that due to their wider political context in the decade that followed, many may have altered their opportunities to negotiate dress style in the same way. Such actions would have given the women an opportunity to actively challenge the stereotypic assumptions of their identities from people around them through dress style.

Anti-Muslim behaviours and opinions may also have impacted the participants, perhaps either influencing them to minimize their visibility as Muslims, or to get even more determined in demonstrating their identity through clothing. This way, veiling could be seen to express political stance or religiosity, as well as a challenge of the narrow assumptions about social

belonging of confident British Muslim women. Dwyer (2008) suggests that debates around Muslim integration and belonging should be focused upon measures of employment and education, instead of women's choices of dress.

Zine (2006) found that Muslim women were very much aware that they were representing Islam when wearing Islamic clothing, and therefore tried to give a good impression of themselves and Islam to non-Muslims. As I have mentioned in the introduction, this was also the case with my Afghani friend Sofia. However, Endelstein and Ryan (2013) showed that even educated, professional Muslim women living British 'modern' lifestyles would be defined as 'outsiders', even as potential threats to British society, when they wore their hijabs or other religious clothing. As was shown by Dwyer (2008), veiling becomes an object of stigma and suspicion.

The findings of Endelstein and Ryan (2013) imply that Muslims who wore religious clothing were especially prone to become subjects of discrimination. One of their Muslim participants explained how she had noticed a change in the non-Muslim public reaction to her once she started wearing her hijab. She felt like people in her social surroundings would treat her differently and become more 'wary' around her in social encounters. The participant got frustrated that people no longer saw her as the same person (ibid). Endelstein and Ryan (2013) conclude that for Muslims, religious clothing creates a gap between them and the majority. Furthermore, this complicates their position within a Western liberal context, and despite the attempt to convey a positive self-representation in daily interactions, the majority could still interpret them negatively due to wider socio-cultural factors. Many of the participants had experienced physical and verbal abuse, but this especially accounted for the ones wearing religious clothing (ibid).

Like other research mentioned, Ryan (2011) also discovered that clothes could impact on negotiations and experiences of stigma. In line with my own findings, the Muslim participants of her study often brought up the topic of clothing in relation to stigma and normality, implying that wearing Muslim clothing would leave women much more open to experiences of labelling, stigmatization and verbal abuse. Ryan (2011) also argues that media discourses and political rhetoric often illustrates Islamic extremism with images of veiled women. In so, she claims that the everyday efforts of Muslim women to reduce stigma and be seen as

'normal' members of British society are highly challenging. The participants in Ryan (2011) also shared a sense of frustration and anger over general Muslim stigmatization, even those who had not personally experienced it themselves (ibid).

Bilge (2010) draws critically on current debates around veiled, Muslim women. She finds it almost paradoxical that these women are being portrayed as passive victims of religious and cultural patriarchy, while at the same time as active threats to 'modern', Western culture. Such narratives frame veiled, Muslim women and girls as both having agency and at the same time not having it, depending on the narrative in question. Regardless, they are looked upon as entailing undesirable and *'too different'* qualities or features in regards to Western cultures of freedoms (See Gullestad, 2002). As Bilge argue; "Underpinning this dichotomy is the claim that accommodating Muslim minorities imperils gender equality, sexual freedoms and secularism – a claim endorsed by some strands of feminism" (Bilge, 2010. p.10). Thus, to Western culture the veil still appear to represent a symbol of either women's submission to men, or as an opposition to modern, Western values (ibid).

Göle (2003) draws on the concept of *'Islamic stigma'*, in order to understand how such bodily signs and practices, like veiling, might work as a signifier of social difference and public exclusion. As mentioned, stigma refers to a sign which discredits a person, potentially leading his/her being less accepted – or disqualified – by society. Thus, like Dwyer (2008), Göle (2003) explains how the Islamic veil contains information of both the individual who chooses to wear it, but is at the same time subject to perceptions of the public. What we can learn from the veil then is the motivation of the veiled individual who embraces it, as well as the perceptions of others who reject it. This is how Göle (2003) interpret Goffman's argument of the necessity to "understand a language of communication of relationships, and not just attributes" (Goffman, 1963, P.3).

In order to get a broader understanding of the potential stigma attached to the Muslim veil and other practices, I will now discuss the radical right wing- politics and public debates in Western Europe which may have played a role to the more negative discourses.

3.9 Discourses of Islam and Muslims within politics and public debates

Even though the theme has been mentioned earlier in this chapter in regards to Haldrup et al. (2006) and Dwyer (2008), this section goes further into how political and public debates are part of what constructs the discourses around who Muslims are, and how incompatible Islam is with non-Muslim societies. Such debates are regularly featured in the media, and so I question how influential these might be on the lives of both Muslims and non-Muslims. More specifically, how much it may be contributing to the stigmatization of young, Muslim girls in Norway. Other scholars have discussed such public and political debates, and so I will provide an overview here of their findings. Specifically, how the debates have contributed to the constructions of difference between 'us' and Muslims.

Emphasizing the differences

In looking into immigration politics in Norway and the Netherlands, Akkerman and Hagelund (2007) bring attention to the general political trend which moves away from the focus on multiculturalism, and towards a stronger emphasis on integration. Akkerman and Hagelund (2007) suggest that influences from radical-right populist parties have shaped the appearance and discussion of issues in political and public debate, leading policies regarding immigration and integration towards a more nationalistic and restrictive direction, which has dominated recent debates and elections in both Norway and the Netherlands (ibid).

In Norway, the Progress Party have been the most eager to problematize cultural and religious diversity, especially in relation to Islam. Together with the contribution of various academics and activists outside the political party, discourses surrounding Muslims have had an influence on the current debates (Akkerman & Hagelund, 2007). For instance, there is an indication from general public opinion which shows that Europeans consider Muslims to be the group that are the most socially distant from themselves. Consequently, there also seems to be a growing sense of alienation among the younger generations of European Muslims (Savage, 2004).

Despite that Norway had not officially adopted multiculturalism, one could still detect a shift to the increase in interventionist and active integration policies (Akkerman & Hagelund,

2007). As part of this shift, women and children of immigrant backgrounds are being subjects of suspicion in relation to conservative family structures that could potentially prevent them from various rights and opportunities (ibid).

Political debates concerning Muslims are primarily focused on the differences their religion and culture entails, and to what degree this represents a challenge for Western cultures (Betz & Meret, 2009). According to Betz and Meret (2009), the rhetoric used in particular by radical right-wing political parties in Western Europe could be compared to that of American nativists in the nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. The main concern for nativism was how the cultures of "the others" would fit in and assimilate the majority community (ibid). Betz and Meret (2009) argue that nativist parties have framed discourses which emphasise the divisions between 'us' and 'them', and the need to defend what is 'ours'. As they point out: "for the nativist right, Muslim immigrants lack both the basic ability and the willingness necessary for assimilation, for the principle reason that Islam itself is entirely incompatible with the principles of western civilization" (Ibid, p.317)*. Some parties, such as the Danish People Party (Danske Folkeparti), even claim that Islam *must* be seen as a major threat to values and cultures of the west, which make accommodation of any Muslims a potential danger to society.

By blurring the lines between Muslims and Islamists, the nativist right wing parties condemn anyone belonging to the religion of Islam as 'potentially dangerous others', using terrorist attacks like 9/11 as justification (Ibid). As Betz and Meret (2009) show, the Danish People Party was quick out to question Islam's ability to comply within the liberal democracy framework. The Norwegian Progress Party has emphasized the importance of 'freeing immigrant women' by suggesting policies that would enforce the adoption of 'Norwegian values' upon immigrants (Akkerman & Hagelund, 2007). These nativist right-wing parties have various stances to which Muslim integration in Western Europe should be reversed, using the campaigns against the Muslim veil as an example (Betz and Meret, 2009). These parties are fronting themselves as defenders of western, liberal values in regards to feminine principles like women's rights and gender equality among minority groups like Muslims (Ibid).

3.10 Stereotypes and prejudice views on immigrants and Muslims

Here I would like to present some of the studies regarding stereotypes and prejudice concerning both Muslims and immigrants in Europe. As the participants of this study are first generation immigrants as well as more or less visible Muslims, they are likely to be exposed to prejudice or stereotypical views for both of these features. In this section I will therefore look into how some scholars compare and contrast the stereotypes and prejudice of Muslims and immigrants. Doing so aims to illustrate how features of ethnicity and religion may correlate with each other, but also how it may be problematic for those persons embodying and enacting such features.

Prejudice

Strabac and Listhaug (2007) define prejudice as: "an openly expressed negative attitude toward a social group, or negative attitude toward an individual that is based on that individual's membership in a social group" (Strabac & Listhaug, 2007, p.269). Their work found that Muslims were prone to become targets of prejudice in Europe even prior to 9/11.

Four main themes were detected by Richardson (2004, in Strabac & Listhaug, 2007) in his analysis of the British broadsheet press' representations of Islam. Namely:

1) Countries with a high Muslim population posing a military threat
2) The threat of extremism and political violence
3) Authoritarian Muslim political leaders and parties, in which could pose an (internal) threat to democracy
4) Muslim gender inequality and the social threat of it to society (Richardson, 2004, in Strabac & Listhaug, 2007, p.270).

By reducing these four themes into two groupings of negative stereotypes, we get one group that is based on a presumed military and political threat against the non-Muslim world, and one that is based on issues of Muslim culture in regards to gender relation and family life (Strabac & Listhaug, 2007). As most of the Muslims from Somalia, Iraq and Iran that have migrated since the 1980's are refugees and asylum seekers, the negative anti-Muslim

stereotypes mentioned thus come in addition to Muslims immigrant status. Their immigrant status, however, is also often another source of prejudice and discrimination (ibid).

Anti-Muslim prejudice in Europe can therefore be said to involve two main features. The first, 'generic anti-immigrant', has evolved from the unsuccessful integration of non-Western immigrants since the 1950's, whilst the second, 'specific anti-Muslim', has resulted from stereotype-generation processes within the last couple of decades (ibid, p. 270).

In what is presumed to be the first statistically significant evidence of an increased level of prejudice against Muslims in Europe, Strabac and Listhaug (2007) found that the aggregate level of anti-Muslim prejudice was considerably higher than the corresponding level of anti-immigrant prejudice. The data accounted for thirty countries in both Western and Eastern Europe and demonstrated only a weak indicator of prejudice being related to the country's economic situation, and no indication of it being related to the size of Muslim population.

Strabac and Listhaug (2007) suggest further that the relation between the majority population and the Muslim minorities within a European country depend on two crucial sets of factors. The first factors are very much under national control, such as the handling of controversial issues and policies on how to deal with integration of Muslim immigrants and so forth. The second set of factors involve international issues beyond the immediate control of the country, however, it would still influence attitudes and relations towards the Muslims (ibid). Such forms of influence would include the terrorist attacks in Western countries, the political situation in the Middle East, and so on. Despite the fact that attitudes towards immigrants quite often are impacted by international events, the study by Strabac and Listhaug (2007) indicated that this was especially the case in regards to Muslims (ibid).

There appears to be an agreement among scholars that negative or sceptical feelings towards immigrants or Muslims often tend to be quite interrelated, Spruyt and Elchardus (2010) further this observation, and examined whether anti-Muslim feelings are indeed more widespread than anti-foreigner feelings. In line with their anticipations, the findings indicated that anti-Muslim attitudes are far more common than those of being anti-immigrant. Based on a discourse analysis of the critique of Muslims and Islam, Spruyt and Elchardus (2010) suggests that the explanation for their findings could be that criticism of Islam and Muslims

are often expressed as a defence of western liberal values. This includes critique from feminist stances, as well as critique of cultural difference. Their participants appeared to associate Muslim immigrants cultures as incompatible with Western culture, more so than non-Muslim immigrants, which Spruyt and Elchardus (2010) argue could be based on the emphasize of discourses of Islam scepticism.

3.11 Reactions and resistance to stigma, stereotypes and prejudice among Muslim immigrants

This chapter has very much been concerned about the ways in which stigma, prejudice and stereotypes around Muslims occur, develop and is experienced. The final point of discussion looks further into the effects stigma, othering and prejudice could have on Muslims, and how they navigate around and resist stigma. I will present some of the findings of others scholars which will further the understanding of how the participants of this study may be influenced by stigma, prejudice and stereotypes and the ways they might responding to it.

The stigmatized

Although anti-Muslim sentiments and acts have received a lot of attention from researchers, especially in the last fifteen years (see Kunst et al. 2011), there remains to be limited studies which show the *effect* such religious stigma has on Muslim minorities, and their identity formation (ibid).

Kunst et al. (2011) conducted a cross-sectional survey study to examine the extent Muslim participant's experiences and perceptions of religious stigma, and negative media representations of Muslims, would impact their national and religious identity as well as their national engagement. To understanding whether these relations depend on cultural and contextual factors, the study compared the results from two of the largest Muslim minority groups in two Western European countries; German-Turkish and Norwegian-Pakistanis. There was a total of 426 participants altogether from these two groups, with the majority being young adults. The participatory percentage levels were also higher for Sunni-Muslims, females, and second-generation immigrants. The results indicate that Muslim's lives, and the

experiences of stigma and prejudice, was connected to context and culture. Various types of religious stigma would, in certain ways, impact a Muslim's national identity *as well as* their engagement in the public and private sphere. As for Norway specifically, in comparing the two groups Norwegian Muslims seemed to feel more attached with their nation than in the case of German Muslims (ibid).

Endelstein and Ryan (2013) used a Goffmanian approach in their qualitative study concerning individuals' accounts with self-presentations when belonging to a stigmatised religious group. As May (2008) point out, Goffman's work remains to have great influence on the way we interpret moral career, self-presentation, and management of stereotypes and stigma in our everyday lives. Endelstein and Ryan (2013) emphasize how, even when people try to represent themselves in a certain way, the social surroundings may still interpret them differently. As an example, in a context such as those of veiled Muslim women in Western Europe, people might consider them as 'different' (Endelstein & Ryan, 2013). According to Goffman (1963), religious affiliation could make a person stigmatised, stereotyped and labelled by the social surroundings, which may lead to discrimination and the experiences of marginalisation, hatred and threats. Other people's reactions and impressions of the person's religion could this way spoil his or her representations of having a 'normal' identity (Goffman, 1963).

Through in-depth interviews Endelstein and Ryan (2013) try to gain understanding of the deliberate and measured choices made by members of a collectively stigmatised group, in their attempt to manage their impressions on others. In order to compare two different religious minorities in a Western European context, Endelstein and Ryan (2013) focused upon Jews in France and Muslims in Britain. In line with Yang et al. (2007), Endelstein and Ryan (2013) suggest that the collective stigmatization of all Muslims implies that wider socio-cultural factors are involved. Such would include government policies and the media and, arguably, this could impact on all Muslims and in various ways (ibid). For example, the Muslim women in their study appeared to be especially worried about the impact of negative media coverage through the Internet and the television. Of particular concern were incidents of violent extremism like terror attacks and war, and how this might reflect badly on all Muslims. Some women explained how they felt hated by the public when reading online news

or other forms of news stories concerning Islamic terrorism, which Goffman (1963) describe as a common experience among stigmatized people (ibid).

Research gap?

According to Ryan (2011), there is a research gap in studies involving Muslim women. As people in their own right, their voices are rarely represented in public debates concerning Muslims in Britain (Bilge, 2010). Thus, in a recent study examining Muslim women's reactions to collective stigmatization in Britain, Ryan (2011) draws upon a Goffmanian framework in the analyses of how these women are resisting stigma.

The data was collected through focus group discussions and individual interviews with 31 women living in London, from various Muslim backgrounds and ethnicities (ibid). Ryan (2011) suggests that a Goffmanian framework might give a more nuanced way of understanding the complexity in the interactions between different social groups like Muslims and non-Muslims. As such, Ryan aimed to explore upon how these diverse Muslim women experience and negotiate stigma in everyday encounters in British society, and particularly reflect on the ways in which they claim Muslim 'normality' (ibid).

One of the findings of the study of Ryan (2011) was that the participants seemed to be especially sensitive to how incidents of violent extremism, such as terrorist attacks like the 7/7 bombings in London, reflected badly on all Muslims. This was related to the ways in which the mainstream media presented Muslims, and in particular how media tended to incline such violent extremism as an 'Islamic' issue (Ryan, 2011, p.6). Some of the participants highlighted the diversity in everything from culture, linguistics, and religion among British Muslims, and how this was often ignored by the stereotyping of all Muslims belonging to the same dangerous and threatening social group (ibid. p.7). Ryan (2011) found that these women used a number of different strategies in order to challenge stigma, one of which was actively 'pointing out' the isolated minority of violent extremists. Another example includes the narratives and distinctions between Islamists and 'real' Muslims.

Ryan (2011) suggests that this way of denying extremists to get defined as Muslims, and emphasizing the ways in which they go against what is written in the Qu'ran, could be understood as social distancing. Normality and integrity was imposed upon themselves by separating Muslims 'in general' and the small group of extremists, the stigmatized 'other' (ibid p.7). Yet, another strategy was to represent themselves, as well as 'all Muslims', as good members of society. The participants would use the terms 'us' and 'them' in relation to Muslims and non-Muslims, so that 'they' would be seen to represent all Muslims in general (ibid, p.8).

In line with other scholars (e.g. Vertigans, 2010), these findings may demonstrate how the apparent stigma and generalizations of all Muslims in political and public debates does not just simplify the diversity among Muslims, but may also strengthen a sense of community and identity among them.

3.12 Summary

Throughout this chapter, I have explained how negative discourses around Muslims and Islam have had an impact on non-Muslim societies. I attempt to demonstrate how public and political debates, including the media and everyday interactions, construct and reinforce the perceived differences between those we consider part of 'us' and 'them'. With concepts such as stigma, othering, orientalism and racism, I wanted to give a better understanding of how various social forces can impact on the childhood of young Muslim girls in Norway. Further, there has been some account of how the visible features such as veiling and different clothing styles might work as strong signifiers of difference and lead to experiences of stigma. I have also introduced some of the more recent studies on stigma, prejudice and stereotypes in regards to Muslims living in non-Muslim societies. These are all important aspects in gaining a more comprehensive view on the childhood of the young, Muslim girls in this study, and how they - as children - experienced, navigated and resisted stigma attached to their minority status in Norway.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

In this chapter I will account for the methodological choices of this thesis, presenting the participants of this study, as well as some of the ethical and practical challenges experienced as a researcher in the field. The chapter will also reflect upon the implications of my own positioning in relation to the research themes and participants.

4.1 Qualitative research

As the aim of this thesis is to understand Muslim women's experiences of stigmatisation during their childhood and youth years and in Trondheim, I have chosen to follow a qualitative research design.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2013) qualitative research is influenced by particular ontological, epistemological, and methodological approaches. The word *qualitative* stresses qualities and meanings that cannot be examined in terms of intensity, amount, frequency or quantity. This includes things such as memories, and specific ways of analysing thoughts and opinions which is the main focus of this thesis (ibid). Qualitative methodologies are distinguished by in-depth, intensive approach (Limb & Dwyer, 2001). The social world is viewed as something constructed through the intersection of social, cultural, economic, and political processes, and something that is dynamic and changing (ibid). In other words, qualitative methodologies attempt to find how social experience occurs, and how it is given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). It focuses on *context* and takes place in the natural world of the ones being studied (Neuman, 2011). By choosing qualitative methods, the researcher recognises knowledge as something that is constructed and negotiated between the researcher and the researched. As a result of this knowledge, there is also an awareness of the reflexivity of the research encounter, which I will explain further with examples from this fieldwork (Limb & Dwyer, 2001; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Atkinson, 2015).

4.2 The fieldwork journey

In this section I will explain some of the challenges that I encountered in the field. The experiences throughout this research process have been shaped by ups and downs, and I would like to make an account of the journey that eventually led to this study.

In the beginning of the thesis' development, the primary aim was to research young, Muslim children in Oslo, aged 10-12. I approached various Muslim organisations, Mosques and congregations via email and telephone calls to contact an appropriate gatekeeper to the children. I explained my intentions and the aims of the thesis, and assured them that I would do my best to avoid any unnecessary inconveniences for the participants and their families if they chose to take part. I also visited the Facebook pages and other websites of Muslim networks in an attempt to contact anyone willing to help with the project, particular to connect me with possible participants and their parents. Fortunately, I received a reply from a youth leader of a Muslim congregation in Oslo who, after further discussion via email, invited me to come spend some time at the Mosque in August/September.

For five weeks I took part in several observational and participatory events, including joining with the Friday prayer with the women and girls, but also observed the male youth gatherings. Additionally, I engaged in several conversations with the youth leaders and some of the women belonging to the congregation.

As a result of the growing relationships from these experiences, I was able to have an email with information of the study sent to parents, via the youth leader. Also, information sheets were given to members of the youth clubs and mosque whom I had already made contact with from the observations and participatory occasions.

Through informal discussion within this community, I was able to meet a group of boys to explain the study, and to also give them their own information sheets and consent forms. However, despite being met with great warmth and interest by the parents of these boys, consent was only given for one individual interview. As a result, it was decided to seek elsewhere for participants.

Sampling difficulties

I have spent some time reflecting on why it proved so difficult to get consent from more children during my five weeks in Oslo.

First of all, it was the beginning of the school year, and with this come parents meetings and different after school activities. This means less spare time for both children and their parents. However, in discussing with the youth leader prior to my stay, we agreed that doing it any earlier would be even less convenient, as it would be in the midst of the summer holiday.

Secondly, even though the children and parents said they would like to take part in the study, being a participant might not be their highest priority. Perhaps they would postpone, change their mind, or even completely forget about taking part.

Thirdly, perceptions of children's capabilities (Punch, 2002) may have had an effect on the lack of consent from parents. Getting participants below the age of 13 can be a challenge as this age group is considered vulnerable, perhaps not mature enough, or less reflective on matters relative to topics like stigmatisation and religion (James & James 2012). One father in particular with whom I spoke seemed very concerned about such issues. I will discuss this, and the matter of age and consent, further in the chapter.

Lastly, though the youth leader - who was the main gatekeeper to these children - gave me plenty of access at the mosque, he could not help me outside of it. I was limited to meeting only those who were present at the times of the mosque.

Additionally, during fieldwork there was no youth gathering for girls, and so I had no opportunity to talk to them in person like I did with the boys. This made it difficult to become more familiar with the people belonging to the congregation and, consequently, to gain consent from their parents (Christensen 2004).

Quite naturally, people are more likely to give their consent to a familiar face than to a strangers name on a sheet of paper. I wish I could have spent more time getting to know people in order to better convince them to take part of the study. As Corsaro and Molinary

(2008) experienced, it takes time to be accepted among children when doing research with them. Perhaps if I could have stayed for a few more weeks I would have made more progress. I contacted the administrative offices of primary schools, those which I had received tips from a writer and former researcher that there would be a high proportion of Muslim children. With a school as the research site, it was assumed that agreeing on suitable meeting times and places for the individual interviews would be less of a challenge. If allowed, I could conduct all of the interviews within the school setting. Changing the research site from the Mosque to a school involved altering my methods and research objective slightly from my original idea.

Unfortunately, getting access once again proved difficult. The schools who did reply explained that they could not find the time to help me as it was the beginning of the school year and busy schedules for both employees and children. With no further budget to prolong my stay in Oslo, immediate action had to be taken.

Snowballing and Facebook to the rescue

In reassessing the issues faced with consent, I realized the importance of building on your own network. I happened to know a nineteen-year-old Muslim girl in Trondheim and decided to contact her on Facebook, explaining the difficult situation to her. She replied quickly, very eager to help me get in touch with her Muslim peers in Trondheim.

Her peers were older than the age group the research was originally aimed at, but it was decided that I could adjust the research design to suit young people. Furthermore, the economical benefits of doing fieldwork in the city in which I lived were at the time a definite plus.

Shortly after I had been in contact with my friend, the snowballing method was in development. The potential participants were being contacted by my friend, who also them contacted other potential participants that they knew of (Boeije, 2010). This turned out to be a useful method for getting access to many people from my target group, whom had proved difficult to get in touch with (see Boeije 2010, p. 40).

Once a desirable amount of people had been contacted, my friend created a Facebook group conversation in order for easier access to the information about the study. This online conversation also gave me the opportunity to explain the aim of the thesis and answer questions from those who considered being my participants. Later, we used this conversation to arrange the times and places for both the interviews and the focus group.

Baltar and Brunet (2011) argue that there are many advantages of using Facebook as a sampling tool. As my experience demonstrates, it is a great tool to reach many people on a very short amount of time, also giving people the chance to 'get to know me' via my Facebook profile (ibid). I was no longer just a name on a sheet of paper, and within days I had eight confirmed participants. Resulting from this news, I could leave Oslo with new prospect for the research.

I will now aim the attention to the fieldwork and research in which this thesis primarily is built upon. This fieldwork took place in Trondheim with the eight participants I got in contact with by using networks, snowballing and Facebook.

4.3 Participants

The thesis draws on fieldwork carried out with eight young Muslim women in Trondheim. All of the eight participants were young women in the age category of 17 to 22, thus falling into the United Nation category of 'youth'[9]. Currently they either work or study for their higher education, except for the youngest who is still in high school[10]. None of them are born in Norway, but most of the women have spent either their entire or the majority of their childhood and teenage years in Trondheim. They all speak fluent Norwegian with a Trondheim accent.

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[9] The UN Secretariat uses the terms youth and young people interchangeable to mean age 15-24 with the understanding that member states and other entities use different definitions.

[10] Referred to as 'videregående skole' in Norway

Some of the girls are Sunni Muslims and some are Shia, coming from various cultures and countries in East Africa and the Middle East. Some wear religious and cultural clothing such as hijabs and skirts on a daily basis, while other only occasionally or not at all. Willis (2006) points out how targeting a diverse group of people is important in order to discover the range of opinions and perceptions they could have based on their various contexts. Yet, two of the participants are related, some are friends and some are barely acquaintances.

I had anticipated that most of them would know each other, considering that I used a networking method in order to contact them. The fact that the participants belong to the same network, and live in the same city, might lead to them having similar experiences and opinions. However, the varied ways in which they dress and practice their religion, as well as their ethnic and cultural dissimilarities, could influence their perceptions differently.

4.4 Methods

The main qualitative methods chosen in order to address the research questions were focus groups and semi-structured, individual interviews. The research aims focus to how and what other people have experienced and felt throughout their childhood and youth. Articulation and meaning is therefore significant for this thesis, and the participants are the holders of this information. To learn from these informative stories, one should engage in what Brinkmann and Kvale call "professional conversations" or "conversations with a purpose" (Burgess, 1988). In line with more qualitative methodological principles, the authors explain how knowledge production occurs in the inter-action between the interviewee(s) and the interviewer, where there is a inter-change of views on a specific theme. Accordingly, one should therefore look at interviews with the perspective that they are *inter views;* the personal interrelation between the ones taking part in the interviews, and the knowledge that results from it (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Semi structured interviews

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) describe semi structured interviews as a type of interview which, in order to construct the meaning of a phenomena, hopes to engage with how interviewee's describe their life world. Choosing a semi-structured style for my interviews therefore seemed the most suitable, considering that my aim was to study other people's childhood perceptions and memories. There was no need for overly specific questions, as the participants experiences could vary considerably, and impulsive follow-up questions seemed just as important in order to obtain good data (Burgess, 1988). Similarly, Willis (2006) mentions how semi-structured interviews is a useful method to ensure that a researcher covers what he or she believes to be of importance, while at the same time as the participants have the chance to share their thoughts or ideas (ibid).

However, despite how straightforward this may seem, there are often difficulties or practical issues to overcome. As discussed below;

> "The qualitive interview is sometimes called an *unstructured* or a *nonstandardized* interview. Because there are few prestructured or standardized procedures for conducting these forms of interviews, many of the methodological decisions have to be made on the spot, during the interview."
> (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015. p.19)

This very lack of structure makes it entirely up to the interviewer to ensure that the right question are being asked, at the right time, and in the right manner. Indeed, every interview is different, and so there can be no standard rules (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Preparing for these interviews consisted of reflections on my role as a researcher, the ways in which I would present myself and my study, and which questions might probe 'good' answers for my research (Limb & Dwyer, 2001). Yet, I also knew I had to be prepared to be flexible in order to suit the various situations that might arise in the field.

Altogether eight young women participated, and almost all participated in the focus group discussion. One of the advantages with these individual interviews was that they gave me the opportunity to ask more specific questions concerning the specific circumstances to the participant. While the focus group discussion done prior to the interviews introduced a lot of

opinions, these were from a group perspective. By interviewing the participants one by one I could explore more personal issues and opinions without worrying that the the group athmosphere would make the participants uncomfortable. This was noticeable in the manner of detail some of the participants provided during the individual interviews, showing how they might have been feeling more at ease talking about certain things in private.

Though there are, arguably, some limitations to focus groups, the following section will hopefully justify my choice continuing with the method.

Focus group discussion

A focus group is a form of interview where the main purpose is to encourage participants in a group setting to come up with various views on a specific topic. The group is led by a moderator (the researcher) who introduces the topics and facilitates the discussion (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). In this study, six participants took part in the focus group discussion. Following Brinkmann & Kvale's (2015) guidelines for focus groups, I felt that the number of participants chosen would engage with some topical debates and conversations. For there to be greater numbers, perhaps the discussion would have become more incomprehensive and difficult to follow and transcribe.

There were several advantages with having this focus group. First of all, it was a useful way of gaining information on a limited amount of time (Burgess, 1996). Furthermore, a focus group clearly demonstrates the benefits of qualitative methods, as it is an on-going learning process for both participants and researcher (Bedford & Burgess, 2001). Knowledge is produced in the interaction between participants in the group, where opinions can be contested, amplified and created during the discussion (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Participants also get the opportunity to steer the conversation to a larger degree than in a one-to-one interview setting (Bedford & Burgess, 2001), and it was especially interesting to witness how the group setting had participants change their views, or remember more as the discussion went on. As an example, one of the participants first claimed she had never experienced anything negative related to her wearing a hijab as a child. However, after listening to the rest of the group, she started remembering incidents where she had felt bad about other people's reactions towards her clothing.

Before meeting up with the group I had prepared some of the themes to be discussed, and printed out keywords or 'key sentences' on sheets of paper (see appendix D). During the focus group discussion one of the keywords was placed on the floor in front of everyone, and then participants where asked to say whatever came to mind. This was done to encourage participants to discuss opinions and comments more informally and perhaps more naturally, by removing my role in the production of discussion. In contrast to the individual interviews, where I asked the participants questions, another advantage with focus group discussion is that it hopefully allowed the participants to speak more freely about what *they* believe to be important in regards to certain topics.

However, as a moderator I did have to make sure the conversation stayed relevant to the research topic, and decide when to end the discussion on a keyword and carry on with another.

Another advantage of the focus group was that it developed, and caused me to reflect on, the topics I had chosen for the discussion. The experience created new questions for the individual interviews, and being able to refer to issues mentioned in the group discussion helped me ask questions I might otherwise have felt were inappropriate to ask (Limb & Dwyer, 2001). One of the greatest outcomes of this method, in which I had not foreseen, was the gratitude I received from the participants a short while after our encounter. Apparently, it had been a nice experience for them to gather and discuss these issues and experience, feeling that their opinions mattered. These comments were especially important to me as a researcher, giving me renewed confidence in that the research was relevant and important.

On reflection, I feel that the individual interviews and focus group discussion were complementary and proved particularly beneficial in gaining richer data than if I only one was chosen. As other scholars acknowledge, using multiple methods can "…offset the weakness of one method by the strenght of the others (..)" (Abebe 2009, p.454), and in this case, combining interviews with a focus group discussion enabled me to compare and contrast data from the different contextual settings.

However, using methods that were conversation-focused, there is a need to take into account some of the limitations of the data material (Willis, 2006). For instance, this study involved researching participants' memories of experiences, views and feelings, some of which happened up to ten years ago. The replies given by the participants in an interview are based on a selection from the memories that happen to arrive from their consciousness at the time the questions are being asked. Therefore, their stories are polished and shaped by surrounding narrative structures to make sense of perceptual information, which consequently results in the loss of certain experiences which do not fit within the chosen narrative (Gudmundsdottir, (1996). Additionally, one must bear in mind that when researching previous incidents, the manner in which a participant may remember it might change over time. For an adult, a childhood memory might be viewed differently from how it originally was, and retold in a different manner to its origin light (ibid). The data from such memories could be considered unreliable, if the aim of the research is to collect factual information about specific incidents.

Yet, as the aim of this study is to look at participant's experiences and perceptions, the way in which their memories is being perceived and retold is an important aspect of the data. In some settings, this may even prove an advantage in exploring certain memories (Gudmundsdottir, 1996). As an example; a child might not understand the concept of racism and is therefore unable to detect a racist situation if it occurred. However, with more understanding of the concept, as the child develops, her or she might remember the situation and consider it racist.

Audio recordings

I decided to use audio recordings and written notes during my encounters with the participants. The use of audio recordings makes it easier to concentrate during the interview, because there is no longer a need to think about remembering things being said (Willis, 2006; Boeije, 2010). I enjoyed how it gave me the freedom to focus on the participants in a more natural, conversational manner, which I believe made it easier for the participants to open up.

I recorded the interviews and focus group discussion with my own Iphone recording app, which is both practical and simple to use. During the focus group discussion I had everyone sit in a circle with the Iphone in the middle, which made it easy for the device to capture all of their voices. In the beginning of the group discussion I asked the participants if they could

state their names before they spoke. This made it easier for me to link the different voices to the correct pseudonym later on during the transcriptions.

However, there was some food served during the focus group, which sometimes made it challenging to hear everything being said, despite the fact that the participants were sitting close. Similarly, the interviews conductet at the café's also had some background noise in the recordings. I made sure to take a few notes throughout the field work, as well as after, in order to remind myself of incidents that was not possible to record through audio only. This consisted of facial expressions, body language and so on.

Locations and timing

The group discussion was conducted in the home of one of the participants. In talking to the girls online prior to the meeting, we agreed this location would be useful, as most of them knew where it was and/or lived nearby. I was also able to gain a useful insight of the neighborhood and household in which some of my participants lived (Willis, 2006, p.148).

We stayed in the basement living room, a large room with no disturbance from noise or other members of the household. Some of the individual interviews also took place here, and some at more neutral places, such as cafés, around the Trondheim city centre. The cafés were more convenient for a few of the participants, but the challenge with conducting the focus group was finding private spots with no one around to overhear our conversations. My biggest concern was for the participants to feel too uncomfortable to speak freely. However, once we found an appropriate and quiet spot, it did not seem like the participants felt uneasy with the setting.

Both the café and the home setting appeared to, in my view, make for a more relaxed athmosphere and took away some of the 'stiffness' of the interviews. Holt (2004) and (Abebe (2009) mention how the research site could impact upon the expectations, power relations and relationship between researchers and participants. Perhaps the café and home setting felt familiar to the participants, which created a 'safer' and more relaxed atmosphere. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) argue that the knowledge produced through interviews is very much linked to the way in which the researcher is able to create a safe atmosphere for the participants.

Due to the fact that my participants had work and school during the day, all of our meetings took place in the afternoon or in the night. Id al-Adha - a religious holiday for Muslims - ocurred in September, which was the month most of the fieldwork took place. This was unfortunate, as some of my participants were fasting at the time and felt weak during our group discussion meeting. I therefore arranged with those who were fasting, so that they would do their individual interviews after Id al-Adha, and told them to quit the group discussion if they felt the need to. This did lead to some of the interviews being postponed, and as it was more difficult to meet up with them individually than in groups, it took a while to finish the last interviews.

Contextual knowledge from Oslo and Trondheim

While waiting for consent forms from the children belonging to the Oslo congregation, I spent a lot of time at the mosque. Thus, regardless of the lack of participants, my time in Oslo was beneficial in gaining useful information and contextual knowledge for the research conducted in Trondheim. I got to take part of the Friday prayers with the women at the congregation and be present at a youth gathering for young Muslim boys. From the informal conversations with parents, other members of the congregation and youth leaders at the mosque in Oslo I was able to gain a deeper insight of the religious practices and community life of Muslims. It increased my understanding of what growing up Muslim and belonging to a Muslim congregation might involve.

As some of the interviews were conducted at the home of a participant in Trondheim I got to meet and talk to a few of the participants' other family members. The participant's family and I watched a home video from a Muslim wedding and I had a longer conversation with the mother about stigma and othering. Informal conversations prior to, and after, the interviews with the participants also led to further understanding of their life and childhoods.

All of the information I gathered from my time spent with Muslims during my fieldwork has been useful for the analysis process.

4.5 Data Analysis

Transcription

Once the interviews and focus groups were finished, the audio files were transcribed into written text for the analysis. During this process all the non-verbal information to some extent got lost (Boeije, 2010), however, I used my fieldwork notes and created my own signs for pauses, sighs, laughter, tone of voice etc. As a result, when the files were transcribed I was able to remember the manner in which things had been said. This was an important part of the preparation, as I did not want to run the risk of misinterpreting the participants. After all, my research is almost entirely language-oriented, so this type of information is very valuable (ibid).

I removed names of schools, siblings, friends, home countries and city areas mentioned in order to keep the data confidential. I used pseudonyms for the participants, but as most of the women participated in both different methods, they were provided with two. Doing so made it less confusing during the analysis; however, only one name was used in the analysis chapter for anonymity. The transcribing process made me more familiar with my data, and I kept writing notes as ideas for the analysis came to mind.

Engaging with the data

In order to get a better understanding of data analysis, Boeije (2010, p.75) outlines three general and abstract principles:

1) constant comparison
2) theoretical sensitivity
3) analytic induction

The thematic analysis of the data had ocurred to some extent during the fieldwork and transcription, but the primary analytical stage of the research was more systematic. Data was analysed by re-reading and coding with appropriate themes. This included writing down notes

of patterns, recurring themes, links, similarities and contradictions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; (Ennew et al., 2009a). I then colour coded the data in order to highlight and separate the fragments of text that was significant or interesting relative to the research objectives. Once I had colour coded the fragments of interest, the data was then placed into segments (Boeije, 2010), where some fragments would be grouped together under one theme, and themes would be grouped together into categories. Broad, inter-relating categories were developed through the combination of a deductive and inductive process. This includes concepts such as 'stigma', which had emerged in accordance with the research objectives, but also others which emerged from the data (ibid). Once I started writing the analysis report, I kept re-reading the data to refresh my memory of the context and find new ideas.

4.6 Methodological reflections

Considering that this study is based on the qualitative research assumption that knowledge is a product of interaction, I have reflected upon several factors that may have impacted on the interaction between the participants and myself. In this section I will explain some of the obstacles and concerns I experienced while being in the field in Trondheim.

The issue of positionality

Mohammad (2001) discusses how a researcher's own positionality within the field, in which she is an 'insider' or a 'outsider' might influence knowledge production;

> "'Insider'/'outsider' refers to the boundary marking an inside from an outside, a boundary that is seen to circumscribe identity, social position and belonging and as such marks those who do not belong and hence are excluded" (Mohammad, 2001, p.101).

What is being shared, and how it is presented, in an encounter between a researcher and a participant might be influenced by whether the two parties see each other as similar or different from themselves. Mohammad (2001) argues that the positionality of a researcher is varying and contextualised, considering the complexity of the identities of both researcher and participants. Being a white, middle-class student with an ethnic, Norwegian background, I

definitely count as part of the 'majority' and differ from my participants, which could position me as an outsider.

Yet, certain barriers may be reduced if the researcher and the participants are similar in age, gender, socio-economic status, language or ethnicity (Ennew et al. 2009b p. 2.11). The participants and I were living in the same city, had the same gender, age group and language. Perhaps these factors contributed to me being positioned as an insider to some degree. After all, we were all 'Trondheim-women' belonging to the same generation, which in some aspects may lead to common understandings of the world. Our similar way of phrasing ourselves, acting and behaving socially I believe made it more comfortable for the participants to talk to me (Clark, 2005). Furthermore, with only two of the participants being under the Norwegian legal age of eighteen, there was just a few gate keepers I had to go through in order to get everyone's consents. This was yet another aspect of the fact that I had gotten in touch with them through my own network, rather than an institution such as a school, a constitution and so on.

This is not to say, however, that the concerns linked to majority-minority status should be overlooked. Despite feeling like the connection between us was of certain strength throughout our meetings, I noticed how they referred to themselves as 'us', and to me as 'you Norwegians'. This implied that even though we interacted in a way that made me feel like an insider, there were some sort of division between us, as the participants still referred to me as an outsider.

Such a complicated relationship might have had an impact on the knowledge produced during our encounter. For example, I felt as though some of the participants tried to defend both themselves and 'Norwegians' in certain contexts, like they were afraid I would judge their opinions too harshly, or overanalyse what they said. As our conversations went on, the participants gave me the impression that they trusted my knowledge of Islam and Muslims more, and seemed less worried of any misunderstanding. Similar to what Sørheim (2003, p.74) discovered when researching immigrants in Norway, my knowledge as a researcher on this particular field gave me a sort of trust, as someone who was genuinely interested in their opinions and understood more than what 'the outsiders' normally would.

I experienced something similar in Oslo during my conversations with the youth leader. On our first meeting he was concerned with my knowledge of Islam, especially on the differences between culture and religion. This is understandable, as these two concepts tend to get mixed up by 'outsiders' and lead to stereotypical views regarding 'all Muslims'. By proving my knowledge through our conversations I gained more trust. As none of the Trondheim participants asked me such questions at the beginning of our interactions, it took more time for me to prove my ability to be trusted. Again, this argues for the advantage of time to become familiar with participants during research.

As mentioned, the fact that my research role would prove an advantage in this particular research setting was unexpected, as I had been concerned about the possible power-imbalance and awkwardness between 'the researcher' and 'the researched' (Holt, 2004). I feared that the participants would consider it strange having a person their own age 'study them', and that they would simply feel like objects of research. Instead, I got the impression that my role as a researcher, as well as my age and gender, definitely helped in making them feel more understood and respected.

In a way I got this confirmed after the group discussion when a few of the participants told me how some of their friends had rejected my request of participating in this study, as they feared that I would angle what they said in a negative manner. When asked why they had chosen to participate, the participants provided several answers. First of all, they trusted our common friend in that my intentions were 'good'. Secondly, they felt empathetic when hearing about my struggles in Oslo, and wanted to ensure the research continued. Lastly, this was a chance for them to correct some prejudice views on Muslim women and girls. After the group discussion two more people accepted my request to take part in the research, which I hope was a sign of further acceptance and trust. To me this is yet another example of the advantage of knowing and having the trust of an insider in order to get participants, *especially* when you as a researcher is not considered an insider yourself.

My own influence

During the interviews it became clear just how much my own behaviour would impact the manner of response from the participants. Body language, facial expressions, and tone of

voice all have an effect on a social situation and the outcome of a conversation (Gudmundsdottir, 1996). For example, at one point during the group discussion I was taken back by a story and expressed my feelings and resignation towards it in a rather obvious manner. This did not go unnoticed, and seemed to stir up the other participants to mention similar stories with much more passion and negativity than prior to my reaction.

These experiences was also evident of the phenomenon of wanting to please the researcher by telling them what they think they want to hear (Willis, 2006, p.150). Despite that my reaction definitely probed some stories that I otherwise might not have been told, I was aware that it had come as a response to my behaviour, and not because they themselves had considered it important to share. This was unfortunate as it makes the interpretation of the data much more complicated (Gudmundsdottir, 1996).

Though I had explained the need (and interest) to hear their honest opinions, it seemed like they tried to stay in line with what they believed to be my expectations. More than once I got asked what I 'preferred' to hear. For instance, when I asked how they had experienced growing up in Trondheim, several of the participants asked whether they should mention only the negative parts. In a way I can understand their confusion, because I sometimes needed to guide the conversation back to topic whenever it went a little 'overboard'. A common issue was that they often ended up talking about experiences from their adult years which, however interesting, was not too relevant for the aims of this study. After explaining why we had to return to the issue of childhood, the participants were happy to change the conversation, and even interrupted and corrected each other whenever someone got off topic.

Validity and Reliability

"Issues of reliability and validity go beyond technical or conceptual concerns and raise epistemological questions about the objectivity of knowledge and the nature of interview research" (Brinkmann and Kvale, p.278).

In assessing the research conducted, I am particularly concerned with the reliability of the data. The main aim has been to give a trustworthy and consistent presentation of the participants' views and experiences (ibid). As mentioned, only one focus group was run, and

thus missed the opportunity to compare results from two different groups. However, I was able to have the participants read through and approve my analysis report about seven months after they were conducted. Every one of the participants approved of how they were represented, and gave solely positive feedback on my analysis. This has given me confidence in that, despite not having many participants, I have at least managed to represent the participant's views and stories in a fairly accurate way.

As Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) argue, one way of being objective may be to express loyalty to the phenomena, by "expressing the real nature of the object studied" (ibid, p.279). My research findings cannot by any means be said to be generalizing. The research is conducted with a constructionist approach, and the findings are socially and historically contextualised (ibid). I define validity as the degree to which the methods of this study has investigated what it intended to (ibid), and it is believed that by using keywords rather than questions in the focus group discussion, I avoided steering the conversations.

Furthermore, by using the data from the group discussion to shape questions for the individual interviews, I engaged with the participant's own conversational topics (Limb & Dwyer, 2001). As mentioned throughout, I believe that conversation-led discussion is key to knowledge of experience, and the best methods for gaining such knowledge is through the method conducted.

4. 6 Ethical considerations

"The interaction of interviewer and interviewee is laden with ethical issues, and publishing interview research entails broader sociopolitical concerns" *(*Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 22).

Researching the experiences of young people brings forward particular ethical issues which must be addressed. For instance, as there is no distinct method of conducting qualitative research, or evaluating it, the researcher must be aware of the potential issues in evaluating knowledge in a research situation.

Consent

All of the participants were given a consent agreement (see appendix B) at our first encounter. These forms were signed before any of the interviews or the group discussions took place. The form included the option to choose between taking part of only the interview, the focus group discussion or both, and the participants could tick off what they wanted to participate in. The 17-year old was given a slightly different consent agreement with spaces to sign for both herself and her parents/guardians (see appendix C). They were all informed that they could end their participation in the study at any given time before the print date of the thesis, and that they would remain anonymious throughout. I also explained that I would be using a tape recorder, and approximately how much time the focus group and interviews would take before they decided to participate, prior to our first meeting.

Anonymity

All the participants picked their own pseudonyms during the individual interviews when they were alone with me. Being anonymous was important in order for participants to feel at ease with sharing experiences in the individual interviews that they otherwise would not share in a group. However, as many of them participated in the group discussion, they might remember who said what, and this way reveal each other's identity.

I therefore decided to give them different pseudonyms for the group discussion in order to avoid this problem. In her study, a woman told Sørheim (2003, p. 70) that she had recognized a family member in a research paper just from the descriptions from Norway and home country. As Trondheim is quite a small city, the Muslim community is rather small, making it even more crucial to be careful around the participants' identity. I chose not to share any specific information surrounding their home countries, exact ages, current occupations or names of schools they have gone to in Trondheim (see Ennew et al. 2009b p. 2.17). Similar to Christensen (2004), I made a routine of explaining how I was planning on hiding their identities before starting the audio recordings to assure them, but also to make sure they were comfortable with the terms.

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Doing research on a minority in my own city

One of the challenges of qualitative research is to remove oneself from preconceptions about what is to be studied. When I chose to do research on a minority group, in my very own city, I was fully aware of this issue. However, having awareness does not in any way remove such challenges (Rose, 1997). The upside of researching in my city is that I already know a lot about the society in which the participants live. Yet, as Sørheim (2003) points out, even though the fieldwork is placed in the researchers own society, it is not the same as doing research on his/her own culture. My knowledge of this society has come about through my own interpretation as a non-minority group member, and shaped in the light of my own culture which differs from the participants. As my aim is to focus on how my participants experienced society around them during their childhoods, my own interpretation of this society could disrupt the analysis of my findings.

More than once I took things being said in interviews and conversations for granted, without double-checking if my interpretation of what had been said was at all accurate. By doing the fieldwork elsewhere, I might have been able to avoid some of these preconceptions. With this being said, one aspect of living in the same city as my participants is that I got the opportunity to meet them again in order to go through some of my findings, and make sure my representation of them is justifiable. By including my participants in this way, and making them more active contributors to the research process, there is potential of gaining "…a more conscious and analytical use of text production as a tool in the research process [...]" (Rugkåsa & Thorsen, 2003, p.19).

In my view, involving participants is the most ethical way to go about research on other people's experiences, memories and feelings. After all, I am interested in their interpretation, not my own. I believe it is my responsibility as a researcher to make sure my participants are represented in a manner that is recognisable as well as acceptable for them.

Crossing boundaries

One of the difficulties of doing research with people is determining the boundaries one has as a researcher, as well as sticking to these boundaries throughout the fieldwork. Abebe (2009)

emphasize that fieldwork is a personal experience, and describes how it can prove challenging to distinguish between ones subjective and objective actions. This is what I experienced first-hand on more than one occasion, both in Oslo and in Trondheim. In these situations I had to both consider my ethical responsibilities as a fellow human being, as well as my rather objective role as a researcher.

The first situation was definitely the most difficult. I had just sat down on the Oslo tube after spending time at a Mosque as part of my fieldwork. Next to me was a woman wearing a hijab, accompanied by a little girl approximately six years of age. I noticed an elderly woman arrive on the train, and so I offered her my seat. She then pointed at the little girl and yelled "Her! She is the one who has to move!" to which I insisted on letting her have my seat so that the little girl could stay next to what appeared to be her mum. Yet, the elderly woman was determined that I should sit down again. She pushed me back down, grabbed the girl by her shoulder and off her seat, and started shouting about *them* having to learn how to behave in *our* country.

As the hijab-wearing woman and the little girl appeared to be Muslim, I now had the perfect opportunity to observe this incident (which was highly relevant for my thesis) in the role as an objective researcher. However, looking at the girl who was clearly shaken up by the whole thing, I simply could not get myself to stay neutral and let the aggressive woman continue with her behaviour with no one interfering. I ended up throwing my objective role out the tram window in order to defend the girl and her mum, and attempted to make the aggressive older woman calm herself. Whether this was an appropriate move or not is questionable. To me, it felt indicating just how emotionally effected I had become from the incident. This also shows how subjective feelings sometimes gets in the way of acting neutral in the research field.

The second situation relative to my role as a researcher was quite different from the one in Oslo. During my conversations with my participants in Trondheim, I felt a strong need to comfort them as they spoke about their negative impressions of Norwegian attitudes from things they had seen online. I wanted to explain my thoughts on this, in order to make them feel better. However, in this situation I concentrated on the role as researcher, because I believed it was more appropriate that I stayed neutral and objective during my time with the

participants. Acting less like a 'researching friend' and more like a 'friendly researcher' was difficult when the topics became emotional. Also, when dealing with such emotional and sensitive topics, a concern is to find a balance between obtaining knowledge while at the same time ensure that the respect and integrity of the participants remains (Brinkmann & Kvale 2015, p.20).

Despite the fact that the participants in this study are active participants, with the opportunity to decide for themselves what to share and not, there is a risk they will regret revealing so much later on (Alderson 2004). Even letting them read through the analysis to ensure they are comfortable with their own representation might not be of any help in the case of regret after the thesis have been published. The ways in which I choose to interpret and write about our conversations are therefore something that should be considered.

4.6 Summary

In this chapter I have described the research process, methodological framework, sampling, methods, ethical reflections and analysis process of this study. I have explained the complex ways in which knowledge about Muslim girls is produced and the moral and social dilemmas of researching such a problematic topic. The chapter also presented a reflection on the ethical dimension of involving research participants in the process of data collection and how my own role as researcher influenced the process of data collection interpretation and presentation of findings.

Chapter 5: Somewhere in between?

Introduction

In both chapter 5 and chapter 6 I will present the report that has developed from the data analysis. My main concern has been to represent the participants' experiences and reflections in a rightful and true manner. With fragments from our encounters, my own reflections and theoretical discussions, I hope to provide a fascinating case of Muslim girls' childhood in Trondheim. This chapter will present and discuss the findings relative to how the participants encountered and navigated their 'differentness' within their social spheres while growing up in Trondheim. The chapter is mainly concerned with the participants' own experiences with minority status, religious and cultural practices, as well as veiling and Muslim dress styles in a primarily non-Muslim society.

5.1 Experiences from relationships and social encounters

I would like to begin by making an account of some of the experiences my participants had with friends, peers and other parts of their social environment during their childhood years in Trondheim. These former social encounters and relationships may provide a better understanding of if, and how, they may have experienced any stigmatisation within their own social spheres.

This was a topic we talked quite a lot about during the individual interviews. I was especially interested to learn whether the participants had any thoughts concerning their religious belonging or minority status in relation to social encounters. If so, would this impact on whom they chose to spend their time with?

"I didn't know if I would be accepted"

An important factor concerning most of the participants was that they had moved to Trondheim and Norway at different ages during their childhood, one of the women had only

been two months old, and another thirteen years. I learnt that this also meant that most of them spent their first few years in Trondheim in international primary schools with other children with immigrant backgrounds. Such took place so that they could learn the language and prepare for the Norwegian schools. However, this might have had an impact on their choice of friends, and so it is rather natural that they mostly hung out with non-Norwegians during their first years in the city. It is not to say that one cannot have friendships outside the school sphere, but it may be something to consider when discussing choice of friends at a specific stage.

Yasmin gave me the impression that friendships and schools was rather connected. When I asked her if she could recall having more Muslim friends than non-Muslim friends when she grew up, she explained it as something mostly related to which schools she had gone to:

Yasmin: Noooo…or yes. It was really a lot. Because I went to [name of school], and there it is kind of…there are mostly foreigners going to that school. And the first one I became friends with was actually [name of other participant] and she even came from the same country as myself! And then I did not know the language either, so I was mostly with her and…and then I started on [new school] and then there was only a few Muslims there. It was actually just one in my class who was a Muslim. And she was from another country, so I was actually the only dark one in the class, who wore hijabs and skirts.

Yasmin appeared to have been aware of the fact that she stood out by being the only one who wore skirts and hijab, and had a darker skin tone than her classmates. In the theory chapter, I present the argument by Dwyer (1999) that veiling, and the Muslim dress style in general, function as strong markers of difference, thereby contributing to the establishment of discourses of Muslim women/girls being passive victims of an oppressing religion. For Dwyer, it creates social boundaries between groups of people, as veiling gives certain impressions of the one being different.

Yasmin mentioned that when she first began to wear hijab and skirts it was slightly difficult. However, the difficulties seemed to have been more about the fact that this had been a big change to her personally, and less about disapproval from her social surroundings. Yasmin said she got a lot of ethnic Norwegian friends in her new school, and did not think dressing differently had ever been a big issue for her in regards to friendships. Also, the change of

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clothing style was done on her own initiative, which she claimed had made the process easier. It is fair to assume that Yasmin could not have been too anxious of what others were thinking, as she may not have changed her dress style at all.

For Meena, who also used to go to a more international school, things were a bit different. She talked about how the challenges of being Muslim started to appear when she changed schools:

Meena: Yes. It came a little later though! I noticed. At least when you…have a different background. And then, from…I changed school like, and I started on a school where there were not that many Muslims, or, multicultural students. So then I felt a little left out and stuff. So you feel, either you have to *join in* and become like them, or you have to keep to your own culture and all that. So then it gets a little, like "who am I?" who am I…at this stage? Between them, or my parents, or…am I something else? And it was a little difficult and challenging then.

In contrast to Yasmin, Meena appeared to have struggled more with the feeling of not belonging to the same social group as most of her peers. While Yasmin may have felt more secure in her identity as a Muslim, and did not consider her minority status and 'differences' as something that could affect her social life or friendship with others, Meena described that she felt stuck between her Muslim identity and the acceptance of her non-Muslim peers. This meant separating herself from her culture and religion.

Meena told me that she chose to concentrate about her schoolwork, which was important to her, and not worry too much about making close friends. This finding correlates well with the study by Dwyer (1999), where one of the young, female participants felt uneasy with the experience of being perceived as belonging somewhere in between the 'Asian' and 'English' categories. Such was due to her Muslim identity which was often associated with 'Asianness' at her school (Dwyer, 1999, p.13).

Similarly, Meena may have experienced 'Norwegian' and 'Muslim' as rather closed up categories, in which crossing the boundaries between them would have seemed difficult and confusing. In Dwyer's (1999) study, girls tended to either wear clothes in order to claim their belonging to a certain category, or to challenge and resist the constructed boundaries between

such categories. As a child, Yasmin may not have had any issues in regards to being categorised as Muslim, while Meena would be more hesitant in being placed in either one of the categories. Thus, the two young women seem to have experienced a rather similar situation in very different ways.

Meena told me she only tried to wear a hijab for a short period of time, and never started using it on a regular basis like Yasmin. So, in contrast to Yasmin, Meena did not embody any visible markers of difference. There are obviously many potential reasons why these two girls did not experience their minority status in the same way. It might imply that Meena's feelings of stigma came from within, and was not related to dress style or external factors, but rather her identity and feeling of self. It could be that Yasmin felt more secure and confident in her role as a minority child, and that she had a different impression of what her social surroundings expected or thought of her. Alternatively, she might not have cared about other people's views or of which social category she would be placed in as much as Meena did.

Further along in my conversation with Meena, I asked her why she had been so hesitant about sharing and opening up about her Muslim identity with her friends at school:

Meena: I didn't know if I would be accepted or…I just didn't have as many questions either, regarding it. It was just like: Ok, I'm at school. Got friends. Done. It was never like "Oh, I have to discuss this with them" or anything like that. I just didn't have the need for it. But, when I came here [city area where she currently lives] I perhaps got more *conscious* about it. That "ok, there is a little difference". And then when I got older, then I became (..) now for example, now I can speak openly about it. That I am a Muslim and such and such and such! So it is all good now.

In my view Meena said two different things here:

a) She had a perfectly fine social life and did not reflect much over the fact that she was Muslim until she moved
b) She feared that she might not get accepted if she had been more open about her Muslim identity

Such implies that Meena experienced the feeling of being different, or *othered,* among her peers at school.

As mentioned earlier, this could not have been due to her dressing differently, as she did not wear any clothes that could be associated with Islam. Indeed, othering can occur when a dominant group fabricates ideas of people marked as members of a 'inferior' group (Schwalbe et al. 2000), and I have addressed the ways in which the Muslim identity has been attached with a line of negative discourses. Could it be that these discourses was something Meena tried to avoid by keeping her Muslim identity more to herself among her non-Muslim peers?

Also, when she finishes by saying that things are '*better now'*, she implies that something has been 'worse' at a previous stage. The fact that her answer is somewhat ambivalent is understandable, considering that we talked about incidents that happened a while ago (see Gudmundsdottir, 1996)[11]. Meena did mention that she moved around and changed schools quite often as a child, which could mean that she had various experiences from these schools. Meena now lives in an area with more people with immigrant backgrounds, and this may have made it easier to be open about her religion and identity as a minority.

Amal, who also changed schools in Trondheim a couple of times due to moving, mostly recalled good memories from the once she had gone to, especially in relation to friends. However, there was one incident in which her family had felt uncomfortable around the neighbourhood:

Amal:　　　On one school it was rather special, because there was *no* foreigners! It was people there who stared at us and stuff (...) so then we moved after a while!

I:　　　　Was that something *you* experienced? That they stared at you?

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[11] "When informants are faced with a question in an interview situation, the memories often begin to swell into consciousness. They have to make a selection because there is no way they can tell all there is to tell with equal and unbiased emphasis. They have to explain their reality" (Gudmundsdottir, 1996, p.296).

Amal: Yes, because they hadn't seen…foreigners and the like. At least in the area we lived. So they stared really nasty at us and stuff. We didn't feel…*good* kind of, when we went outside. Like…"ok".

As explained in the background chapter, Norway is a rather homogeneous country, and Trondheim does not have a very high percentage of immigrant citizens compared to the other larger Norwegian cities. So the fact that Amal and her family felt like they lived in an area where people had not interacted much with *'foreigners and the like'* is in some ways understandable.

Later in in this conversation, Amal told me that there was some other reasons why they chose to move this particular time, and that the decision had not been entirely based on the neighbours behaviour. During all our conversations, this incident were the only particular time Amal said she could remember that she (and her family) had felt uneasy in relation to her social surroundings in Trondheim. When she mentioned how there were no other foreigners in the area, she was very much aware of her minority status and 'otherness'. She perceived this as an explanation for people's staring and sending nasty looks. Amal understood people's prejudice as relative to how little they have been exposed to others with different religious and cultural backgrounds. Amal justified their behaviour, and perhaps also distanced herself, from taking it personally. When her family moved to a place where there were more residents with immigrant backgrounds, they may have simultaneously moved away from the stigmatisation and othering that could follow.

Both in relation to schools and neighbourhoods, a multicultural environment appeared to make life easier for the Muslim girls. However, in a British study by Moodod and Ahmad (2007), is was discovered that 'mainstream' Muslims enjoyed multiculturalism, but only if it considered that religion was also a positive aspect of difference. The participants of their study felt that Britain had not yet properly accommodated religion as part of the ideas around an increased multicultural society. Norway has, as pointed out in the theory chapter, not had the same focus on multiculturalism as Britain (Akkerman & Hagelund, 2007). Yet, one could see the point in how a multicultural environment alone would not address the stigma facing types of diversity in order to avoid processes of othering and stigmatisation.

Some of the participants moved to Norway when they were just new-borns, or prior to school age, and did not attend international schools. They seemed to have had mostly ethnically Norwegian friends from early on, and had not reflected much about their minority status as young children. Yet, I discovered a pattern during these conversations. With just a few exceptions, the participants told me that they had experienced a change in their group of friends at some point during their teenage years. For some Muslim girls this is a time where differences becomes more apparent in relation to clothing styles, interests and boundaries. I learnt that it is normal to start wearing hijabs and more modest clothes once a Muslim girl has reached her teens, and that some girls start praying on a regular basis.

When I asked Naima about the ethnicity of the close friends in her childhood, she told me how she had noticed a change already at the stage of middle school (Norwegian 'ungdomsskole').

Naima: It was pretty balanced really, I feel. The once I had in kindergarten were Muslims, non-Muslims with immigrant backgrounds, and…Norwegian friends. Eh…there wasn't really anyone who thought about it, we just hung out together. But…we got divided when we entered middle school. Or…yes. I didn't think middle school was any good. Because it was very like (..) the "cool" handball-girls (..) and then it was us with immigrant backgrounds and we were….a gang like. And then we had…yes, we were divided then.

So for Naima it was during her time in middle school that she noticed a split between herself and her ethnic Norwegian friends and classmates. She was not the only minority in her class, and so she recalls being in a separate gang of friends with other teenagers from immigrant backgrounds. When I asked Naima why she thinks this social split occurred, she told me that she perceived the ethnic Norwegians to be 'cold' and 'dismissive' towards the immigrant girls. She said she assumed this because they had different beliefs and did not fit accordingly with the teenage norm when it came to dress style and behaviour. In a Canadian study by Zine (2006), the Muslim girls interviewed reported similar experiences of exclusion from peers based on their deviation from the dominant discourses of young, western femininities by wearing more modest clothes and veils (Zine, 2006, p. 248). Indeed, Naima started using her hijab earlier than most of the other girls, consequently effecting the relationships sooner than the other. The symbolic stigma of wearing Muslim clothes in a Western, social environment is something I will discuss further in the next section of this chapter.

Naima refers to '*the cool handball-girls*' as the popular ones in middle school, which indicates how her own group of friends might have been seen as the less 'cool' or popular. Zine (2006) explains such experiences as peer pressure that could be seen as a form of social control, in which the socially constructed feminine identity is not to be exceeded. According to Zine, the normative standard of femininity available for Muslim girls living in Western countries are constructed through Eurocentric paradigms, and so they are limited to choose between accommodating to this identity or to challenge it (ibid p.248). Many teenagers experience a difficult time in middle school, where popularity and status appear to be more important than school itself. For Naima, this social rejection may have been perceived as othering, and thus a disregard of her Muslim identity.

Researchers have found that children's discrimination against other children of different social groups tends to happen through acts of exclusion (Brown & Biegler, 2005, p. 533). As Naima got older and started high school she claims to have met people who were more accepting of her differences:

Naima: Yes. I got a lot more understanding. I had like (..) I had a bad attitude towards Norwegian classmates, because I was treated so badly in middle school, and didn't have that many Norwegian friends either. And the ones I had I lost after a while. And…but I never thought 'yes, they are really'…like, I thought (..) I was convinced that everyone was a racist and…that they didn't like black people and…yeah.

I: So would you say you had a "*them* against *us*" attitude?

Naima: Yes. But I thought it got a lot better in high school. I made a lot of friends and…yeah. [Sigh]

The fact that Naima had such a negative view on ethnic Norwegians that she '*was convinced everyone was a racist*' implies the extent to her bad experiences from middle school. Furthermore, her way of separating between '*the Norwegians*' and '*the immigrants*' gives an impression of the social division Naima perceived to be existing in her class. She told me that she deliberately chose to get a new start on a high school where her old classmates from middle school did not attend. This demonstrates how she actively made a change in her own life by removing herself from an unwanted social situation.

Later on in this chapter I question whether such sceptics and suspicion towards the dominant group could potentially harm the social encounters and mutual trust between a minority group member and a dominant group member. However, Naima seemed to have quickly changed her opinions and impression of ethnic Norwegian classmates once she changed schools. In high school she felt more accepted for standing out and got new friends that were ethnic Norwegian. Perhaps in Naima's case the negative experiences from middle school had not affected her to such a degree that it would influence her ability to regain her trust in ethnic Norwegian peers.

When I spoke to Neriman about her friendships over the years, she had a somehow opposite experience:

Neriman: No, or it was not until the last year in high school that I got more…Muslim friends. Besides that I have…or, the rest have been Norwegian friends. And I still have those so…its like 50/50 I think. But, the ones I hang with (...) and go out with, are Muslims.

In contrast to Naima, Neriman said she got more Muslim friends in high school, but despite the fact that she told me her social group contained about half and half with Muslims and non-Muslims, she also added that the ones she spent her social time and '*hung out with*' were Muslims. This is interesting as it may reflect on what Neriman's definition of friendships is. Despite not spending a lot of time with them outside of school, she defines her non-Muslim friends as part of her friend group. But even though she does not exclusively have Muslim friends, there still appears to be a sort of division in her social life.

When I asked the Participants about this division, most said that it was easier to gain acceptance and understanding from other girls with more similar backgrounds. The fact that they could not behave or dress the same way as their majority peers was a significant factor in such a relationship. Even though many of the participants enjoyed friendships with others who were 'different' from ethnic Norwegian peers, it does not necessarily mean that everyone had felt as rejected as Naima had done. Yet, they personally felt it was easier not having to explain how and why they could not do the same activities. In some ways, it could be linked with the preference of living in more multicultural environments, as it made their differences less apparent, critiqued or questioned.

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As well as dress style – which I will come back to later on - the participants mentioned other factors which could separate them from their peers. These include alcohol, parental control, not being allowed to have boyfriends or attend parties, but also of having earlier curfews. Muslim girls tend to have a more restricted upbringing than what ethnic Norwegian girls do (Zine, 2001; Scourfield et al. 2013), and some of the participants mentioned how it was difficult to explain this to their friends. Zine (2001) looks into how Muslim values and lifestyle can be challenging to maintain in western non-Muslim societies. In Norway, teenagers often start experimenting with alcohol, dating, being sexually active, and break away more from their parents. Of course, this goes strongly against Islamic guidelines in the Qur'an (Zine, 2001).

Being accepted, according to Zine (2001), is especially important for a young minority member, arguing that "Muslim youth must struggle to negotiate an identity within three often conflicting cultural frameworks: the dominant culture, their ethnic culture, and Islam."(ibid p.404). Just like the participants in this study, the strategy of the Canadian participants in Zine (2001) would often be to maintain a strong connection with other Muslims both in schools and in the wider communities, to gain peer support and thus solidarity and resistance against the norms of their ethnic Norwegian friends (ibid, p.419). I was also informed that several of the girls found the same support and acceptance within friendships with immigrant peers who belonged to other religions than Islam. This implies that similarities in religious beliefs did not seem to matter as much as the mutual experiences of restriction and expectations that minority girls shared. However, most of the participants did mention that their ethnic Norwegian friends would try their best to respect their choices by, for example, serving them sodas instead of alcohol at parties, and being understanding of the fact that they could not attend certain events.

Yet, as Zine (2001) emphasized, the teenage years might still have been quite a conflicting time of young, Muslim girls life. When I asked Sara if the teenage years had been challenging for her, she replied:

Sara: Yes, a bit. When someone asked if I could come to a party and stuff, then…I would always make up excuses!

I: So you didn't just explain that you couldn't drink alcohol because you were a Muslim?

Sara: No. I wouldn't normally do that.

The fact that the girls would avoid telling their peers that they could not do certain things because of their religious values and principles seemed to be a repeated pattern in the data. Though, which part of their childhood and teenage years when this had been an issue for them did vary. But why would they hesitate to tell their friends about their way of life at all? The most common replies in regards to this would be the worry of not being socially acceptable, or understood, by their peers. Yet again I would argue that this could be explained as a teenage related issue, in which any sort of difference that could make someone stand out runs the risk of them being socially rejected and exposed to "indirect exclusionary behaviours" (James & Owens, 2005, p.84). Such behaviours would include those Naima said she had experienced in middle school. Thus, even though these girls might not be concerned about any of their friends or peers having anything against Islam or Muslims, they may have felt that the Muslim lifestyle was so distinctively different from their peers that they preferred to downplay it, or at least draw focus away from it.

5.2 Praying

During our focus group discussion, the participants also talked a lot about the issue of praying during the day. For some, conducting the four prayers was something they would begin with as teenagers. Some of these prayers take place during school hours, which could be quite challenging for the participants, considering they attained secular schools. As a consequence, and to my surprise, I found that most of the girls would go about praying in secrecy.

Maiken explained that she would pray in the basement of the school so that her peers and teachers would not know or see her:

Maiken: When we are…when we are young and stuff, then we don't necessarily do it properly like. But…for *my* part, I have never…shown my prayer rug or anything, because I am afraid that the teachers will reject me, or hold me back or (..) say that "no you cannot pray on the schools property" so (..) I often did, like, pray in the basement and…[the other girls burst into laughter].

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I noticed that quite often when the group discussion touched upon sensitive topics and incidents in which the participants had been embarrassed or vulnerable, both the person sharing and the rest of the group would laugh and giggle a lot. I did not see this as a way for the group to be unsupportive or bully each other, but as a way of reducing some of the tension in the room and avoid silence.

In regards to Maiken's story about praying in the school basement there was especially a lot of laughter. It was quite clear that her story was involving something many of the participants had encountered. Other research confirms that this is not too uncommon among Muslim minority schoolchildren (see for example: Hemming, 2001 and Scourfield et al. 2013). Indeed, some of the participants recognised Maikens feelings of being worried that teachers would disapprove and keep her from praying. One of the girls said she used to pretend she needed to go to the toilet, others said they would just not pray, despite feeling bad about it. These are strategies that demonstrate how the girls exercised agency in order to fulfil their religious duties in a secular environment, but also how restricted they are in secular Norwegian schools. Hemming (2011) discuss how limited the agency of religious children are in schools, where adults and the institution in many ways control their time and space. Praying in a basement or a toilet could invalidate the prayer, as it might not be considered a 'clean' enough space, which Islamic guidelines deem important (ibid, p.213).

The fact that some of these young girls would go to such an extent to pray gives the impression that their religion meant a lot to them. Religious practices such as praying are very much connected with a Muslims self-perception of being a good person (Winchester, 2008), which emphasizes its importance and to why it may have been difficult for those who felt too restricted to do so. The participants discussed and shared their frustration over the fact that schools were not being more accepting and tolerant around praying, and that there was no suitable space for them to go pray on the school properties. Maria did, however, have the courage to pray in a classroom:

Maria: I remember in the break time, I took out my praying rug and prayed in the middle of class, in the classroom, and everybody looked at me like. Then the teachers would say "yes, then you just have to do it here then". And that's not really…]

Lisa:] That is really uncomfortable though.

Kari: You wouldn't dare to do that in middle school.

Maria: No, that's just what I'm saying. Not everyone would dare to do this. Some people have to hide. But we were a class with just girls. Eight foreigners, and there was seven Norwegians. So then I could in a way be myself a little more, and pray in the middle of the classroom.

This conversation confirms that many of the participants felt more at ease around peers who belonged to the same background or minority as them at this age. Zine (2006) found that the Muslim girls in her study enjoyed going to Islamic schools particularly due to the fact that they felt a greater sense of freedom in expressing their religious identities among like-minded peers, instead of being afraid of social exclusion and being made fun of (ibid p. 247). According to the participants of my study, this particular issue appeared to get somewhat easier with age. Like Kari said *'you wouldn't dare to do that in middle school'*. Praying was still quite new to them at this point, and like Maiken said they would not necessarily do it *'properly'* yet. In addition, praying in public spaces is quite rare in Norway, so in regards to standing out (as discussed above) this might be particularly challenging for a young, teenage girl. However, I could tell praying meant a lot to some of them, based on their eagerness to discuss this topic. Especially during Ramadan, some of the girls who did not normally pray on a daily basis would do so this month.

The fact that some girls would not pray, even if it made them feel bad, might say something about the struggle they encountered in having to navigate between religion, culture and social pressures from both a secular environment as well as their peers. Mona confirmed this in her statement about Muslim teenage struggles:

Mona: That is the worst stage because you want to do (...) you don't really want to be different. That is what is really tough. You want to be similar (…) you want to be the normal teenager. For example, if you are a little heavy you want to be skinny. You just want to…

I: Not stand out?

Mona: Yes, that no one shall look at you different. And, a lot of what teenagers do, we cannot. So then…you stand out completely, and you (…) in a way you (…) start to not give a f*** in what you believe in, anything to avoid having your friends look at you weirdly, or that (...) that you wont be like anybody else.

That is when it is very difficult. Because when you get older it gets easier. Then you start thinking "the ones who wants to be my friends get to be my friends. Because, I am like this and this, and if they don't approve they are not real friends". But when you are little, then you don't want to stand out or don't want to have any (…) comments or anything like that. You just want to be like anybody else. This is when it is difficult to be a Muslim child…or from another country too.

To receive '*weird looks*' was something several of the girls would try to avoid when they were teenagers. These feelings of avoidance, I suppose, would account for most people their age, as teenagers tend to care more about how others perceive them. However, for Muslim girls in Trondheim, the added factors of belonging to another culture as well as having a different ethnicity and religion appeared to have made it especially challenging to fit in among peers. Yet, they all seemed to have experienced that issues with standing out became less of a problem with time. Such changes were connected to middle school and high school for the most part.

These findings correlate well with the findings of Sumter, Bokhorst, Steinberg and Westenberg (2009) in that teenagers tend to resist peer pressure more as they grow older. Mona gave the impression that she had experienced an increase in confidence and belief in herself with age, and after getting to know her through this research I got the sense that she was really open and proud of her Muslim identity as a young adult.

5.3 Appearance

In addressing Muslim stigma experienced by young girls, it seems impossible to avoid a further analysis of Muslim clothing. A different lifestyle can to some degree be disguised, though a different *dress style*, on the other hand, is impossible to hide from the social environment. Most of the participants of this study had regularly, occasionally, or just for a period of time, been wearing veils and/or skirts during their teenage years. This in many ways makes them stand out in regards to the majority girls in Trondheim. I will now go on to discuss the issue of physical appearance.

As explained previously in the theory chapter, the issue of dress style appears to be significantly linked with Muslim stigma and prejudice. It was therefore not too surprising that physical appearance was continuously brought up in relation to stigmatization and challenges in growing up Muslim in Trondheim, during both the focus group discussion and the individual interviews. In line with Dwyer (1999), Endelstein and Ryan (2013) explain clothing as 'markers' of group identity that both separate group members from people outside the groups, but also express certain values, behaviours and attitudes. Clothing style was also the most common answer when I asked questions related to gender differences, as it is only the girls who wear veils and long skirts associated with being Muslim.

Zine (2006) argues that bodies come to be "gender coded and form a cultural text for the expression of social, political and religious meanings" (ibid p.242). Neriman describes this 'gender code' when asked if there was any difference between growing up a Muslim boy or girl in Trondheim:

Neriman: Yes. There is a big difference. Because…it is really the clothes. That is…

I: Because you stand out more?

Neriman: Yes. It does not say that you are pro-Islam here like [points at her forehead where her veil is].

What Neriman said makes a lot of sense, as girls who wear veils are so easy to categorize as Muslims in contrast to boys who, for the most part, wear the same clothes as the majority. Neriman explained it like wearing a sign that says "Muslim" on your forehead. In Zine (2006) the participants also felt their bodies were being marked as Muslims through veiling, and that this simultaneously would locate them as 'foreigners' and separated from the majority (ibid, p. 245). Some Muslims associate veils with culture more than religion, and several participants wanted to point this out during our conversation. Not all Muslims wear veils, and this does not necessarily make them more or less religious. Five of the participants in this study wore some type of veil that would cover their hair on an everyday basis, and among them a few would also wear skirts. The other three did not wear a veil, or only wore it during

special occasions such as the month of Ramadan. Despite of these differences, most of the girls had some experiences of wearing it in public.

The participants also discussed what they believed to be a link between covering up and the experience of stigmatisation from society. To them, it seemed like the more a girl covered herself, the more prejudice and stigma she would experience. This is in line with findings from various research on this field (See for example: Zine, 2006; Field, 2007; Ryan 2011; Endelstein & Ryan, 2013) as mentioned in the theory chapter of this thesis.

The participants often referred to *'the long one'*, which I understood to be the type of veil that covers everything besides the face. According to many of the girls, people did not dare to wear this type of veil in Trondheim. Instead, they believed places like Grønland in Oslo would be more comfortable as it is a city area with a much higher percentage of people with Muslim and immigrant backgrounds, and a space where people are more used to seeing girls cover up to this extent:

Ida: Yes they (..) it is just like you guys said, they are not used to see that many people who wear the long ones like. It is not that many who (..) actually uses it here, because they are afraid to…they wont be the *first* to start with it and…then have everyone looking nasty at them! You will get *death threats!* [Laughter] I see it in their eyes! It is frightening! [The girls starts laughing with her] So you do not dare to (..) do that, you get like (..) hate just for wearing the small one [point towards her headscarf that is wrapped tightly around her hair] Could you imagine how it would be if you wore one of those?? You would be dead man! [Laughs even more].

Siri: It is actually sad…

Kari: Yes, it is sad!

I then asked the girls if I could conclude that they thought it would be easier to grow up in Grønland, considering they believed it to be a place where they would feel more free to wear what they wanted, without receiving as many judgmental stares.

Kari: Yes, if you are planning on using the long one.

Maiken: That would have been…people are more used to it there.

Maria: Maybe one would have shown more of whom one is.

Ida: Yes. More if you were there.

As previously mentioned there was a lot of laughter in our group discussion, which made it slightly troubling to define how serious the participants really looked upon an issue. Ida was most likely over exaggerating when she referred to being *'dead'* if one would wear the long veil. If she really meant this, I doubt it would have been such a laughing matter. However, this extract from our conversation demonstrates the ways in which the participants would quickly turn from laughing about receiving *'hate'* for veiling, to becoming rather serious. Furthermore, they did emphasize how sad it was that they did not *'dare'* to dress in any way they wanted in Trondheim. None of the other girls in the discussion contradicted Kari and Siri when they mentioned this, which I understood as a sign of confirmation from the rest of the group.

Ida talked about being afraid to be the first one to wear the long veil because people in Trondheim are not used to seeing it as much. Such a comment could potentially be linked to a general fear of standing out, being too different, and become stigmatised by the majority. Yet again, the issue of people 'sending them looks' was mentioned. Though, this does not necessarily mean these are threatening looks, as people might only be curious. However, receiving such looks while being aware of the negative discourses constructed around Muslims and Islam makes it likely that veiled girls might be extra attentive to them.

One story that shocked me as far more than innocent curiosity was that of Neriman. In our individual interview she told me about her first experiences with Trondheim, and of being bullied on her way to and from school by older high school-boys on the bus stop. For months they would not just stare, but yell nasty things. Neriman also recalled that they once tried to light her hijab on fire with a cigarette. When I asked her if she believed they had pointed her out for being Muslim and wearing her hijab and skirt she answered:

Neriman: Straight up my clothes. They probably did not think it was popular.

I: Did you get comments on that?

Neriman: Yeah. Like "Eeeey!" I didn't understand what they said then but (…) I understood that they were being *nasty* (…) to me. Like. And it…was a whole bunch of adults there, and they never said anything. Just laughed.

From the way she told the story, it was clear that this was not something she enjoyed talking about. It had happened quite soon after she moved to Trondheim, when the language barrier was still a issue for her, and she was quite young. The fact that adults had seen the incident without interrupting appeared to have been particularly hurtful. Interestingly, some of the participants in Zine (2006) reported almost the exact same experiences happening to them on their way to and from school, and then especially when using the public transit system. However, the bullying Neriman experienced did not change the way she dressed, and she proudly continued to wear both hijab and skirt despite the treatment she had received from these teenage boys. As she did not appear to struggle with this memory other than being uncomfortable sharing it, I assumed that she has had better experiences since then, and that it did not affect her confidence or relationship to other ethnical Norwegians. Despite this, both her story and the ones by Zine's participants, suggests that some people might do more than just stare at girls who differ from the dominant 'norm'. With such an example as Neriman's, one could understand why the participants often spoke of the discomfort of standing out, for more reasons than simply having teenage insecurities.

During the individual interviews many of the participants mentioned that it would have been nice to grow up in a place like Grønland, or other countries and cities where more people had similar backgrounds to them. In such places the girls could see themselves growing up without experiencing the discomfort that some had felt in Trondheim. Maria and Ida stated that if they grew up in places with larger Muslim communities it might be easier for Muslim girls to be themselves more, and express the Muslim side of their identities. This implies that the girls felt that they had to hold back on their religious and/or cultural identity within public spaces in Trondheim. As mentioned in the theory chapter, Dwyer (2008) argues that one result of anti-Muslim behaviours and opinions could be that Muslim women and girls feel forced to minimize their visibility as Muslims. In my conversations with the participants I found several examples of this, including one from my interview with Meena. She told me that she did not wear a hijab, but that she had tried to start wearing it for a short while some years ago. I asked if she had felt like people would act differently around her when she wore it:

Meena: Yes. I did. People do treat you differently actually. I noticed that. At least on my school, where there was almost no one using it. It was actually none, so I was the only one. So when I was with my Muslim friends it was so much easier to use it. But when I wore it at school it was very tough.

In line with the findings of Endelstein and Ryan (2013), Meena noticed a change in the way people would approach her when she wore her veil. In her study on Muslim women's veiling in Canada, Atasoy (2006, p.214) found that some participants experienced an ambivalent struggle between the negative feelings of being perceived as an outsider by society when wearing a veil, while at the same time wanting to commit to it. Yet again, this demonstrates the difficulties Muslim girls encounter with having to navigate between several differing identities.

As Meena stated, being the only one in her school who wore a hijab made her experiences very difficult, especially because her teachers would ask a lot of questions about it, making her uncomfortable. She told me it may have been easier if she had been wearing it for a longer period of time, so that she would have had more experience and confident in answering these questions. Meena said she felt like she had to defend that she was wearing a veil to her teachers, and that they would ask if someone else had forced her to wear it. Interestingly, it was primarily the teachers who would react this way. I asked if she felt like they meant well by asking:

Meena: Yes. I believe so. But you notice that people stare at you and all that. A little more…*attention*.

I: A pleasant or bad attention?

Meena: Unpleasant.

I: How come?

Meena: I don't know, it is the way they look at you. You feel that "ok, I am an outsider. I am not like you" like, so.

It appears like Meena felt like she was being othered when she wore her veil. The attention she received in regards to looks and questions felt uncomfortable, and even though she never

understood it as something negative, she still disliked the feeling of standing out. She stopped wearing it after a short period of time, as she did not feel it was 'right' for her.

Many of the participants mentioned that if they should choose to wear veils on an every day basis, it had to be for the '*right reasons*' and, if not, one should not wear it. These right reasons appeared to be related to how ready and comfortable the girls were in fully devoting their lives to Islam. Furthermore, dressing in Muslim clothes increases some of the pressure for girls to behave well and give a good impression of Islam to others (Zine, 2006). Meena had felt like she only wore it because her Muslim peers outside of school would do so, and decided that this was not a good enough reason for her personally. A common prejudice by non-Muslims seemed to be that girls were forced to wear veils by their parents or religious community. Like Meena, several of the participantss told me how they got frustrated with adults who asked if they had made the choice themselves and considered it rather insulting. Maria said the following in our group discussion:

Maria: You get sick of it in the end! You get…eh…tired of it, because it's like "huttduttduttduttduttduttdutt!" Now I'm *sick* of it, just stop asking, it's *my* choice!

During the focus group discussion, the participants also mentioned the change in the amount of compliments they would receive in regards to their looks when they did *not* wear veils, compared with when they did wear it. Despite not receiving a lot of judgment from friends and peers when they had it on, some of the girls recalled that it had been slightly hurtful to only receive compliments whenever they took off their veils:

Maria: It doesn't make it any easier you know. Because (…) it is a choice you make. For example, I don't wear hijab, my mum don't wear hijab, but when I mentioned it slightly in school during fast, the day I took on the hijab, then it was like "oh, but you are so much prettier without the hijab" and its like "Yes. I *know* that, but (…) I would like to wear it". In a way it is (...) it is something inside of me kind of…to me it feels right when I take it on. To *me*. But that I don't wear it, it may be because of the people around me…their comments…

Lisa: I felt the exact same way. Like, I felt that I got more comments when I didn't wear it (…) its like "you are so pretty, you are so beautiful". And when you wear it, you don't get as many compliments, so (...) you don't dare to wear it in a way, it…eh…you *want* to wear it, but…[

Maria:] And I noticed it when I was out in the street that…eh…like, I was the same person but when I had on the hijab then there was more eyes on me. I…don't know. Eyes that (…) said so much. Prejudice. Like "what is this" kind of. They look at us…I don't know…so.

Similar to Meena, Maria seemed to feel like other people's comments and opinions on her looks was part of the explanation for why she was not comfortable enough to wear veils more often in public. Even though she claimed that she felt good wearing it, the attention it attracted made it difficult. Her perception of people's looks was that they would judge her more when she had her hijab on, in contrast to when she did not. As discussed previously in this thesis, her perception could be explained by the fact that connotations attached to the Muslim veil are connected to various generalizations, stereotypes and prejudice views.

Furthermore, in regards to receiving compliments from peers, one should not undermine the impact it can have on some girls, especially when they are younger. Such comments could affect their self-confidence, and their feelings of being part of the 'in-group' of their social sphere. Indeed, it seemed important for the participants to avoid being an outsider, and wearing a different dress style could potentially lead to that. Lisa explained that she would almost *"not dare to wear it"* because it made her feel like others thought she looked less pretty.

It appears that though the issue of dress style might be considered insignificant to an adult, for a young girl it could be very much connected to social status. As veiling and Muslim dress style is associated with religious tradition, being in rather stark contrast to the more 'modern' clothes of their non-Muslim peers (Dwyer, 1999), it may be more challenging to be accepted as a 'modern' pretty girl.

In the individual interviews I asked the participants if they thought growing up in Trondheim would have been any different if they were not Muslims. Some answered that it might have been easier, mainly because of all the negative attachments to their appearance. For Maiken, however, it was never really a problem to wear a hijab:

Maiken: I grew up with hijab like (…) since I was little. And used it more like a headwear and took it off and on as it pleased me. But (...) I never had any

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problems using it, while some of my friends have expressed (...) a discontent and they say that they struggle to start using it. For example (...) they have a low self-esteem or they are afraid of what others may say and scared to…so they just can't do it. But I think it is easier, because I have always used it.

Just like Meena suggested in the individual interview, girls who have been wearing veils for a long time may feel more confident in doing so. Maiken did indeed appear to consider that this had been an advantage to her. Perhaps an early start had made her feel like the hijab was more a part of her and her looks, instead of going through the rather significant change as a teenager.

Like Maiken, Amal did not find it any difficult to wear a hijab in Trondheim. She perceived people's looks as plain curiosity, and said she rarely felt uncomfortable with it, despite noticing them.

Amal: Well, it may be that they think its weird that we cover up like. That we cover our hair and…that we are not supposed to show it.

I: You mean they are just curious?

Amal: Mhm. But I actually think, that if we had been more open towards them about why we have it on, they might have thought it was less strange.

It was interesting to hear all the different perceptions of other people's behaviour, and how the way in which the participants perceived them seemed to impact how comfortable they felt about wearing veils around others. Amal interpreted that looks from the majority may be a result of curiosity, and thought that if people would just receive an explanation of the hijab then they would stop. Others, as mentioned, understood the looks as connected with prejudice and stigmatisation.

Chapter 6: It is mostly the media

This chapter will present and discuss the findings in regards to the participants' thoughts on negative media representations, generalisations, stereotypes and prejudice views on Muslims. It looks into how non-Muslim views on Muslims and immigrants, as well as anti-Muslim sentiments, impacted upon the participants' childhood in Trondheim.

6.1 Social media and the exposure to anti-Muslim behaviours

"Media are particular technologies that facilitate the storage and modification, articulation and exchange, of signs, be they texts, images, numbers or sound. Signs are tools of meaning-making, and so media may be defined as meaning-making technologies" (Drotner, 2009, p. 367).

In the background chapter of this thesis I present an abstract taken from an article on the SIAN webpage, where Islam is presented as 'evil', a 'beast' and a 'threat' to Europe (See page 19). Comments like these are part of the process of othering Muslims, and can be seen regularly online in the comment sections beneath chronicles, news articles, pictures, videos and other media discussing Muslims, Islam or immigration. The participants of this study belong to a generation who grew up with the Internet and social media as part of daily life. Considering the frequency of anti-Muslim opinions against Muslims in social media, I was curious to explore just how exposed Muslim girls were to such opinions in their childhood. Most of all, I wanted to explore the extent to which this may have impacted upon their life.

"Would you tell me this to my face?"

During our focus group discussion, two of the participants expressed how the comment fields on online newspaper articles, and the shared video/images on Facebook, had become an area of interest for them at a young age. These girls described social media as a factor which directly affected their social identity. It was a social space where they could discover the opinions and abuse directed towards their own minority group, by strangers belonging to the dominant majority in Norway. Goffman (1963) explains how stigmatized individuals tend to

feel unsure of how other 'normals' receive and identify them. Thus, the stigmatized worry about what people are *really* thinking about them (ibid, p.24), which may explain how the girls' interest of searching for such comments originated.

When I asked whether searching for comments online would take up much of their spare time as children, the two of them replied with *'a lot'*.

Maiken: Yes. I could have…spent a whole night on reading through the comments. And opinions (..) that people had written about eh…themes, that were related to us.

Kari: Actually…it has been like (..) I did not bother to read (..) the whole case, but I read the comments instead, because I know (..) how people think and…I don't know, it was just how it was.

I: Was it because you were curious of what others thought?

Kari: I was curious yeah. Mhm. Still am.

I: What kind of emotions did you experience from what you read? What did you get out of it?

Kari: That actually (...) Norwegians aren't…who they (...) portray themselves to be really. I don't know (...) you know how it can be…that they are kind to me when I am (...) there. But….[

Maiken:] They have ulterior motives.

Kari: I thought like, what is this, why (…) don't I see…the *realities* like, when I am out. *This.* I wondered. And I still ask myself; Why don't you dare tell me these things, that you write (...) to my face?

Maiken: Yes…when I read a lot…of comments, then…I didn't think *anything* of what was written made sense. So then it was just something they thought...it was just rubbish what they wrote like! And…and I intended to write "this is wrong!" and such, but then…they just attack you even more, and say "get back to where you came from!" and so on. And…it is *a lot*, like that, in…the media.

The fact that Kari and Maiken claim to have spent quite some time reading through comment fields and sites gives the impression that the girls view people's opinions about Muslims as an issue to be aware of, both now and when they were younger. These online searches also demonstrate that children can be exposed to discrimination, prejudice, othering and verbal

abuse in non-physical spaces. Drotner (2009) states that "the internet pushes boundaries between public and private issues and between children's personal and peer uses, to a degree which radio and television do not". As such, Drotner also claim that childhood is no longer bound to particular sites, due to children's new access to virtual worlds (ibid, p.364).

I would argue that the availability of social media today makes it far more challenging to prevent anti-Muslim opinions and behaviours to reach Muslim children, and thus impact upon their self-perceptions. Virtual hate material can be found by children at all times, wherever they may be (Drotner, 2009). Brown and Biegler (2005) argue that "perceiving oneself to be the target of discrimination is likely to affect individual's identity formation, peer relations, academic achievement, occupational goals, and mental and physical wellbeing" (ibid, p.533).

Kari and Maiken talked about having mistrust to ethnic Norwegians, and an impression of them as 'false' when they behaved nicely in a face-to-face interaction. So, what are the consequences of such mistrust? How may it effect or shape their interaction and relationships with people outside their own minority group, such as friends, neighbours, teachers and so on? In the first section of this chapter, I described how some of the Muslim girls in this study felt uneasy with flaunting the Muslim side of themselves to their non-Muslim peers. Furthermore, they often felt more accepted among peers with similar backgrounds. Perhaps these are reactions that might, to some degree, be shaped by an underlying perception of how majority members might be constructing negative stereotypes about their own social group?

As mentioned in the methods chapter, I was told that some of the young people who had rejected my request of taking part in this study did so partly because they were suspicious to how I would present them. They knew I was an ethnic Norwegian, and so they feared I would present their views and opinions in a negative light. As I was unable to talk to them directly, I cannot conclude that this was linked to experience, with reading or hearing negative things about Muslims, or whether it was just an excuse to avoid being part of this study. However, unlike Kari and Maiken, most of the participants who *did* take part in this study said they never knew - or cared - about negative media representations or online verbal abuse against Muslims when they were children. Like Lisa explained in the same discussion:

Lisa: *Now* I know that media (...) like, it can be something positive, and it can be negative (...) and I feel like (...) in the media, Islam is used in a negative way.

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But it is now as an adult that I am seeing this. But when I was a child, I didn't even watch TV. Just watched the children's shows and such!

Lisa's response indicates that she notices negative media attention towards Muslims today, however, she did not recall having any knowledge of this as a child. Yet, though the majority of the participants said they shared Lisa's experiences, this does not mean that one should disregard the experiences of Maiken and Kari, and the impact this knowledge may have had on them. Maiken gave the impression that she was frustrated by prejudice views and misrepresentations of Muslims, as well as the need to correct people and defend the Muslim side of view.

Goffman (1963) explains how stereotypes, prejudice and generalizations of a religious group could spoil a religious member's own representation of having a 'normal' identity. Considering that the negative discourses around Muslims involves wider socio-cultural factors (Yang et al. 2007; Endelstein & Ryan, 2013) Muslim girls like Maiken and Kari might feel powerless in the attempt to manage their 'spoiled identity' within the none-Muslim majority domain (Goffman, 1963). Scourfield et al. (2013) argue that Muslim children's need to defend Islam might be related to the pressures that often follow religious children from any religion living in secular societies (ibid p.132).

Maiken appeared to have experienced that people would get even more aggressive when Muslims argued against their prejudice and stereotypical views. Perhaps she had experienced this through participating in the online discussions herself, or seen other's do so. Despite the fact that such online comments, prejudice, abuse or even threats rarely represent the majority, it is understandable that viewing or receiving such threatening or negative comments may be overwhelming, especially if one belongs to the minority target group. Just by being aware that these opinions exist may have had an effect on the ways in which these girls viewed and perceived ethnic Norwegians.

From the time I spend with Kari and Maiken, my impression was that they had the most experience with negative encounters with non-Muslims. Perhaps there is a link between being very conscious about prejudice views and how one experience such encounters? If so, there could be a risk that suspicion may turn in to a self-fulfilling prophecy for both those who are sceptical towards Muslims, as well as for Muslims being sceptical towards non-Muslims. If

this were to be the case, it could partly explain why there seems to be a growth in alienation among younger generations of Muslims in Europe (Savage, 2004). In line with this, Crozier and Davies (2008) argue that problems with Muslim youth not mixing with their ethnic majority peers could be a matter of experiences with marginalisation and/or enforced exclusion rather than self-segregation (ibid, p.286). In their British study with South Asian Muslim youth, Crozier and Davies' (2008) findings suggest that believing the youth's white peers resented them for their social group membership made them wary and suspicious of them. This suspicion appeared to increase in line with the increase of abuse and racism in schools since the terror attacks on 9/11 (Ibid, p.296).

6.2 Prejudice, generalizations and stereotypes

Meena appeared to have thought a lot about the issue of anti-Muslim sentiments. In our individual interview she gave the impression that she had been aware of some negative media attention towards Muslims, but that she had considered non-Muslims' views on Muslims to be more nuanced. When I asked her what she perceived non-Muslims opinions about Muslims may be, she explained that she felt this was strongly connected to what people was used to, and how much they had been around Muslims. As presented in the background chapter, findings from SSB (2015e) imply that Norwegians who have less to do with Muslims do have a tendency to be more sceptical towards them. Meena might therefore be right in assuming such a connection.

Meena: [Chuckles a little] Hmm…yes. Well, it is rather different. Kind of like I said, that the ones who have grown up with it perhaps have a little…more understandable view…they seem like they understand me more and…a little like that. There was one in our class who (…) he said something exciting. Anyways, he said that he understood things very clearly. He said; what the media, like *present us*, is not necessarily what we know (…) and that all Muslims are not necessarily like how the media portray them to be, and then I was really like "Wow! Finally! There is someone who knows!" So that was great to hear. So there is a lot who understands actually, there are…many who have knowledge at least. I feel. So that's really good!

At the same time as Meena seemed surprised and happy that someone would '*finally*' grasp that the impression about Muslims could be overly generalising, she also stated that she was aware that a lot of people knew better.

In this conversation she also added that she felt like older people would have more negative views about Muslims, and that people her own age, like the boy she mentioned here, would be more open and knowledgeable regarding this matter. This too correlates well with the SSB (2015e) findings mentioned above and in the background chapter.

The Norwegian word "fremmedfrykt" which translates into "fear of the unknown" also implies that people have a tendency to be more negative and suspicious towards cultures, religions and practices that they are not accustomed to. Considering that Muslim migration to Norway first started in the 70's there were hardly any Muslims living in Norway when the older generations grew up. As a result, most of the elderly in Norway have spent little time around Muslims, which indicate that the media may have shaped most of their impressions of them as a social group. In the theory chapter I have described in more detail how both the media and public and political debates have constructed images of Muslims as incompatible with modern, Norwegian values, and a threat to the Norwegian society. Friends, classmates and neighbours of Muslims in the other hand, might have a different impression.

"It hurts that they would feel sorry for us"

Through conversations on issues like media representations, social relationships, and appearance, I got some impressions on whether the participants viewed themselves as part of a stigmatised group or not, and to which extent this had affected their childhood years spent in Trondheim. During these conversations, I had the opportunity to ask them more direct questions in regards to their interpretation on prejudice views on Muslims, and whether this was something they had noticed as children. Experiences with prejudice can be varied depending on the interpretation of a social situation, as well as the interpretation of prejudice overall. I will now make an account of my findings on this matter.

During the individual interviews, I asked the participants how they perceived non-Muslim attitudes towards Muslims. Neriman thought for a while before she replied:

Neriman: I don't know how to explain it, but…it's mostly the media like. Normal people don't ask. Or, they do ask, "why do you do that?" and "wow, isn't that weird?" and then you think, I am sitting right here! Why would you say such things? But like, I do get them, because they don't have a clue and they say…"Ramadan! Oh my god, are you going to fast?" and then they think, "man, I'm glad I'm not…" That like, I believe they look down on me. That I am stupid. Who chose *that* religion. But…do you know what I mean?

It appears that Neriman had a negative view on what non-Muslims thought of her choice of religion. She excused it to an extent by stating that people *'don't have a clue'*, and that it is *'mostly the media'*, but at the same time she seemed to believe that people thought she was stupid for being Muslim. As she emphasized *'that'* religion, I assumed she referred to belonging to Islam in particular, and not other religions. As studies have shown, discourses around Muslims tend to be more negative than discourses of other social groups in the West (see theory chapter page 38).

During the group discussion, while talking about identity, some of the participants mentioned how they felt like other people would degrade Muslims to just a few stereotypical characteristics, instead of seeing them as individuals:

Maria: But what is funny about identity, is that the first thing they see, its like "oh yes, there's those people who don't eat pork meat, those who don't drink beer, those who doesn't have sex before marriage", its…its kind of hilarious! They have only gotten a few, like, *cues*, but not more of whom we *are*.

Some of the girls agreed, while others argued that this only applied to a few non-Muslims, and that these people might not know any Muslims, which made it difficult for them to have any more information. Maria never claimed that this stereotyping was a particularly difficult part of being Muslim, but instead spoke of it as *'hilarious'*. Perhaps because she mainly felt that these stereotypes only came from people she did not really know, and vice versa, it did not affect her too much. For instance, it might feel worse to be stereotyped by someone within your own social sphere.

Mona told me she in a classroom setting had experienced having a teacher who spoke of Muslim girls in a way that Mona highly disagreed with. However, when I asked her if she protested or said anything, she told me that she had felt too embarrassed:

Mona: I didn't say anything because it was humiliating. Because…it was in the middle of class and…they all knew I was a Muslim so (...) I don't know, I just chose not to talk and just listen to what the teacher said. It's not that easy to say something when you're in (…) a class. And, to disagree with the teacher, you kind of need some courage.

The fact that Mona felt too embarrassed to speak up, partly because everyone knew her religious belonging, this might indicate that she thought the topic was too personal to discuss in the classroom. Like she said, it takes courage to stand up to a teacher, and it might be even more intimidating if it feels like one could end up standing alone against the teacher, and maybe even the rest of the class.

In the group discussion, Maiken said she believed there was quite a lot of 'hidden' racism, and that even though she did not think too much about it when she was in her early childhood, she would now look back on certain episodes from school and perceive them differently. When she was about twelve years old, Maiken also experienced an incident with a teacher:

Maiken: Eh...my teacher from primary school, had among other things said to me that I would never get a job when I got older with "that hijab of mine". And then, there was this other girl, who also had a Muslim background, and she liked my veil and tried it on one day…but the teacher came and ripped it off her and said "take it off! This is just bullshit" like.

In the theory chapter of this thesis I have described some of the stereotypes and prejudice non-Muslims in the West tends to have of veiled girls. One of these prejudices is that the veil is forced upon young girls as a result of patriarchal oppression from the men in their family, and/or their religion (see theory chapter page 37). I have also given a few examples of the ongoing political and public debate concerning whether to ban veiling in primary schools in Norway due to its apparent 'sexualisation' of young girls. Relating these theories to the thesis, Maiken's teacher appears to have had quite a negative view on veiling, and perhaps this was

influenced by some of these prejudices. By stating that Maiken would never get a job if she were to keep veiling, the teacher might also have believed that future employers would share such views.

I asked Maiken if she could remember her reaction to this when it happened to her, and if she could recall how she had felt about it at the time:

Maiken: Yeah. *That time* I noticed that it was negative, because (…) well you're twelve years old and you do understand a little more of what the teachers mean and…what they are saying. And she had a really negative attitude and…it was really like "you are immigrants" and…yeah. And it was kind of like "you and us" during classes and…but when I told her then (…) it got a little better, she excused herself but (…) that she…hadn't known how badly it had impacted me, but…so yeah.

What Maiken was describing here may be what Haldrup et al. (2006) termed 'banal orientalism' (see theory chapter page 32). This type of orientalism occurs from the use of small linguistic markers that continuously reconstruct the image of 'the other' as separated from 'us'. Maiken said she perceived her teacher to be using such dichotomies and seem to have disliked it, as she describes it as a '*really negative attitude*' towards immigrants. The memory seemed rather clear to mind when she spoke about it, so perhaps this was one episode that had made an impact on her. Maiken did also explain that when she was twelve, she had begun to '*understand a little more*', and perhaps become a bit more aware of what stigma and prejudice was about.

In regards to the second episode, where the teacher had ripped off the veil of her friend, it is hard to grasp which setting this was in, and what reasons the teacher had for doing what she did. Yet, unless it was interrupting or disturbing any classroom activities, it is difficult to say why she felt it necessary to interfere. Some teachers dislike pupils wearing headwear such as hats or caps' inside the classroom, and this could be one explanation. I do, however, assume that the teacher was aware that the girl who tried the veil on was Muslim, and that the use of religious headwear was and is allowed in Norway. Regardless, the teacher had moderated her behaviour after Maiken spoke to her, and so she may not have been aware of the way in which she was contributing to the 'othering' of her immigrant students. Furthermore,

Maiken's ability to stand up for herself and her immigrant peers, is another example of children's agency to impact their social surroundings.

During their childhood years, several of the participants had experienced teachers, and especially social workers, who would approach them with various concerns about their family situation, culture or relationship with parents. The participants explained it as quite upsetting that adults would worry about them more than they appeared to worry about children belonging to other social groups, because of what they assumed to be prejudice views in regards to their Muslim or immigrant background:

Maria: I think they felt sorry for us. I feel like they felt sorry for us for being from *'there'* and that we were so lucky to be living here now, and that we got to (…) but is wasn't like that though! It *hurts* that they would feel sorry for us because…it was not like they thought in a way. The prejudice they had. It was due to their lack of knowledge. They didn't want to get to know our parents, but they wanted to get to know *us* because they wanted to make us a little more like *them*. Do you understand?

Some of the participants argued that these concerns had good intentions and was just a way of watching out for them and making sure they were okay. Based on stories the participants had heard of other immigrant girls who had been beaten up by their fathers, pressured into arranged marriages, or enforced genital mutilation they claimed to understand that some adults in caretaker positions would be concerned. However, Maria still questioned why Norwegian children were not approached with issues that she considered specifically related to the Norwegian culture:

Maria:] But they wouldn't ask (…) Norwegians about "are your parents heavy drinkers?" If you get me? Its like, there could be alcoholism, but they wouldn't go asking around about that. But they asked *us*, they were more concerned about us. What *we* did.

The frustration that Maria expressed here is not necessarily just due to the generalizations or prejudice against Muslim or immigrant families per se. Instead, she had experienced it rather unfair that ethnic Norwegian children would not be asked sensitive questions related to their culture or religion, unless there were more severe reasons for concern. The apparent natural obligation to ask Muslim girls in particular such check-up questions was the basis for Maria's

frustration. The fact that minority families are being subject of suspicion and generalizations more so than majority families may be explained by the double standard mentioned by Gullestad (2002) (see theory chapter page 34).

Again, the issue of generalization and mixing culture with religion was brought into discussion during the focus group. The participants explained how people would often misinterpret acts based on culture, to be something connected with Islam:

Lisa:] Yes. That is what ruins a lot for Islam. That (…) many people use *culture*, and then they say it is Islam, but it isn't Islam. Because (…) in Islam it is (…) the name Islam does mean peace kind of. It (…) it isn't a religion that does any harm in a way, it is a very…*kind* religion, and many countries uses their culture (…) and make Islam appear like something it *isn't*. That is what makes (…) this is why I believe many have (…) or is displeased with Islam, because many people use culture.

Maiken: But it isn't just culture, it is (…) people don't know as much. They say "oh, Muslims. They are the ones who kill and…"[

Maria:] Yes, but even *we* do not know as much about our religion, even we (…) are mixing in culture with our religion. So it…if we do that, what do you think the Norwegians…? They don't know.

Defending Islam and adjusting some of the misconceptions people may have of the religion seemed important to some of the participants. Maiken stated more than once that people in Norway should have more knowledge of Muslims and Islam before engaging with any conversations about it. However, as Maria argued, perhaps one cannot expect ethnic Norwegians to understand the division between culture and religion if Muslims themselves sometimes struggle to do so?

6.3 You Norwegians

Just like Muslims in general, the participants in this thesis came from various countries and cultures. What is interesting to me then, is that they almost without exception used the terms *'us'* and *'Norwegians'* throughout our interviews and discussions. *'Us'* appeared to refer to all Muslims, regardless of origin or cultural belonging, and *'Norwegians'* would refer to

everyone who is not Muslim. Goffman (1963) explains how many of those who find themselves within the same stigma category in a society tend to refer to themselves as a 'group', by using terms like 'us' or 'our people' (ibid, p.35). Personally I tried to use the terms *'Muslims'* and *'non-Muslims'* during our encounters, in an attempt to highlight the religious division only. However, the participants seemed to find it natural to separate between Muslims and Norwegians, as if the two were completely incompatible and could not fall into the same category. In addition, the participants spoke of *'us immigrants'* several times, which also seemed to work as the opposite to *'you Norwegians'*.

As Scourfield et al. (2013) explains, most Muslims in Western countries belong to a visible ethnic minority. Furthermore, "the formation of minority identities is a complex process, with identity being both ascribed by others (and by the State) and also achieved by subject." (ibid, p. 16). Even though it is religion that groups these girls together in the same stigma category, Scourfield et al. (2013) suggests that there might be a continuing overlap between religious identity and ethnicity for Muslims (ibid). Thus, ethnic Norwegians might be taken for granted as excluded from the same religious identity group as their own.

In addition to this, I noticed during our conversations that when participants got asked about their childhood feelings or experiences of stigma within their close, social surroundings (such as friendships, peers, teachers and neighbours) they had far less negative things to say or share than if I asked them more generally about Muslim stigma and prejudice. Even though the participants did not have too many real-life experiences with stigma from their Trondheim childhood, their awareness of stigma towards the overall Muslim population might still be present.

Regardless, when we spoke about stigma and prejudice on behalf of Muslims, quite often the participants would refer to what *'they'* (or *'Norwegians'*) did, said, or thought, instead of anyone they knew or had encountered with in real life:

Ida:] Yeah. If one Muslim is doing something bad, then it is like "Oh, all of them
                do it". If for example (…) someone who actually bombs, like. What happened
                with Anders Breivik! They thought it was us straight away, thought that had
                something to do with Islam! [Looks elated, but smiling] [

Lisa:] Yes if that had been…if that had anything to do with anyone of us, then we would have had to move! [

Kari: In that case we would have been doing it poorly today! I'm just saying…[

Ida:] Yeah then we'd be forced to move! They don't think that (…) they think, if (…) if anything bad happens like, they think that "oh, its those Muslims who…surely must have done it" so (…) they never seem to think about…there could be Norwegians who does things like that and (…) its not *just* us who do bad things!

This conversation demonstrates the tension experienced by the participants in regards to *'Muslims'* and *'Norwegians'*. They seemed to think that any big incident like a new terror attack, of which someone with a Muslim background or belonging would have caused, meant that all Muslims would be targeted and suspected. This tension could explain how even though the participants do not experience stigma or prejudice on a regular basis, the awareness of the stigma attached to being Muslim might still cause an impact in their lives in some ways. It is however difficult to say if this awareness impacted their childhood, or just their later years. Ida referred to the terror attack of 22/7 in Norway, and seemed to have experienced that Muslims got suspected before ethnical Norwegian Anders Behring Breivik was found to have caused it. The terror attack occurred in 2011, and Ida was a young teenager at the time. She appeared annoyed by the fact that ethnical Norwegians so easily would accuse Muslims above other social groups if anything happened.

"It's not your day"

Later in the group discussion Lisa mentioned how 17th of May, the Norwegian national day, was the time a year that she would feel the most excluded from the Norwegian majority. In Trondheim, like anywhere in Norway, this day includes most people being out celebrating in the streets dressed up. This often includes wearing traditional Norwegian costumes such as the 'bunad', and either watching or participating in a big parade. It is a day in which pays homage to the country and its history and, as a result, perhaps this day may be extra tough for those who are born in another country, or feel like an outsider due to her minority status. Such feelings are present below:

Lisa: The one time I feel the most like (…) an immigrant, is when it's the 17th of May. Because it's a little like (…) on 17th of May, I want to go out like, because, I feel like (…) I live here too. So I want to be a part of 17th of May. But I feel that I get these bad (…) like, I get eyes on me! [

Maria:] Like, "it's not your day".

Lisa: Yes! Like "its not your day". And its like, I don't know (…) you speak Norwegian all the time, yeah, you're not even aware about it! I speak my first language too, but (…) you think you speak your first language but then you speak Norwegian! And the food that you eat, you eat Norwegian food, and your dress style, its just like everyone else's. So it (…) you do kind of feel at home here, but on 17th of May, it's the only time I don't feel like (…) I don't even want to go outside! Even if I go with my friends, I just feel that it is unpleasant to get these looks…

Ida: I feel the opposite! [Some of the girls gave signs of agreeing with Ida]

In the theory chapter I mentioned the study by Kunst et al. (2011) where they examined the impact of negative media representations of Muslims and the experience and perceptions of Muslim stigma on Muslim's national engagement. The study concluded that Norwegian Muslims seemed more nationally engaged than German Muslims (see theory chapter page 43). Yet, this study was only conducted with Muslims with a Pakistani background. Considering that Pakistanis belong to the Muslim immigrant group that has stayed the longest in Norway, the result might have been different if the participants were from other Muslim groups. Lisa is not Pakistani, but instead from an ethnicity that is still quite 'new' to Norway. Furthermore, the fact that the participants of this study belonged to many different ethnicities might explain why the national engagement varied among them.

It seemed like the majority of the girls did not think that the national day was any particularly difficult and, like Ida, some even said they really enjoyed it. However, there was something so gripping about Lisa's feelings that I felt it necessary to make an account of. It appeared like it was not her own relationship with the day, but rather the looks she perceived from others that made her feel like she was not welcomed in the festivities. Lisa wore a veil on a regular basis, and was one of the participants that could be described as a very 'visible' Muslim. This could potentially make her stand out more in such a setting where a lot of people would be wearing very traditional, Norwegian outfits. Perhaps this may explain why she would experience getting more such looks on this particular day.

In order to find out how long she had been feeling this way, I asked whether she had taken part of the children's parade during her primary school years:

Lisa: Yes, but back then I wouldn't think like that, but the older you get…[

Maiken:] the more attentive you become.

Lisa: Yeah so you get more aware. When I was a child I loved 17th of May, like. I walked in the parade, ate ice cream, and we always went to the fun fair. But as I grew older, I felt that I'd get these (…) these nasty looks. I feel them, and it gets uncomfortable to go out on 17th of May.

Kari: I don't really care that much about it really, what others think of me.

Ida: You just have to show them that you support…[

Lisa:] Yes, but when you get such mean looks like "yeah, this is not your country" then…

It seems that such feelings of exclusion was not as big of an issue during their early childhood years. Rather, its seems that those who experienced the feeling of not belonging in society, or being 'the other' in relation to the majority in Trondheim, would mostly feel this way once they had gotten a bit older. Furthermore, in regards to the national day, most of the girls did not seem to feel similar to Lisa. Ida argued that the national day was a great opportunity to demonstrate that you are indeed a part of the Trondheim society and appreciate it just as much as ethnic Norwegians. Similarly, Kari made it clear she just did not care either way and therefore would not pay any extra attention to looks from others, yet for Lisa it was not that easy. At a later stage in the group discussion Lisa also said the following in regards to the feeling of being part of society or not:

Lisa: And…I would wish, like, that the world (…) wherever you might go, you should be able to be yourself. Because that, it is just that (…) like, Norway could have been in Africa! People in Norway could have been in Africa, and people in Africa could have been in Norway! It is…people in Norway came first to Norway. It was just that they came here first. The whole earth like. It belongs to all the people. That it shouldn't be like…*uncomfortable* for those who come here now in a way. I would wish that…when you came here, then it would be more 'us'. Because, the earth belongs to everyone kind of. I wish

people thought a little more like that normally, rather than "this is ours" and "this is yours".

Despite that Lisa had mostly positive things to say about her Trondheim childhood as a Muslim girl, she did mention feeling uncomfortable in relation to 'being different' both in the individual interview and in the group discussion. In the statement above, she appeared to be frustrated with the way some majority people would draw social boundaries between people, and make it harder for those not belonging to the majority to feel included in the Trondheim society. This seems to be an expression of feeling othered.

6.4 Thoughts on growing up Muslim in Trondheim

As mentioned in chapter 5, the participants told me how they felt Trondheim was a more challenging place to wear certain Muslim clothing in contrast to Grønland in Oslo, where more Muslims would be around and they might feel more accepted. The complications associated with these challenges are expressed by Lisa, who mentioned *'you should be able to be yourself'*. In my individual interview with Naima, she talked about how she believed it was Norway in general, and not just Trondheim, that did a poor job in making Muslim minorities feel included in society:

Naima: Sometimes I think about…if it hadn't been war in my home country, I'd probably grown up there, and been among people who would accept me. That would probably have been much better because I would have felt more at home in a way? And then I think that (…) I ask my parents kind of; "Why did you choose Norway??" Like, we could have been anywhere in the world and…I hear a lot about other Muslims living in England and in the US. They are more open over there. More tolerant.

I: So you feel like people are more intolerant of you in Trondheim than other places?

Naima: Yes. Mhm. But it (…) I'm doing fine here too.

It is understandable that Naima would assume that growing up in her own country would have made her feel more at home. That is likely to count for most people. However, it is interesting

to find that just like many of the other participant, she believed that Norway was a lot less tolerant towards Muslims compared to England and the US. As shown in the theory chapter of this thesis, several studies imply that Muslims living in England and the US are frequent subjects of prejudice and stigma. However, the overall Muslim population in these countries are indeed larger than in Norway, and this may serve to explain why Naima and some of the other participants would feel this way. Despite still belonging to a minority in these countries, one would to a higher degree be 'one of many' in larger Muslim communities. In order to understand the extent to which Naima felt she had been stigmatized and othered, I asked her if she could imagine how her childhood in Trondheim would have been like, if she was not Muslim:

Naima: that…I'm thinking that (…) everything that has happened due to (…) my skin colour, my religion and my background (…) that those incidents would probably not have occurred.

I: Do you mean the negative experiences?

Naima: Yeah. Mhm. And…yes, I would probably not have experienced any racism or…been excluded.

Naima adds that both her skin colour and background, in addition to being Muslim, was the cause of her exclusion and experiences of racism. Thus, she does not exclusively claim that it is her Muslim identity alone that has contributed to such negative experiences.

During the group discussion, the other participants also mentioned how religious belonging was not the only reason why some Muslims girls might experience stigma and exclusion in the Trondheim society.

Maiken: But I also feel that….we are Muslims, so there is a bunch who doesn't like us. And then again, we got dark skin so there are people who might not like us for that! So, we have those who doesn't like foreigner who have darker skin, OK, then that's that, and then we have those who doesn't like Muslims, so we have double up! [the girls starts laughing)].

Lisa: Yes! We do get double hate!

Yet, it is important to add that Naima also mentioned how she has been doing just fine in her Trondheim childhood, and so did all the other participants. A few even said they preferred Trondheim as a place of growing up above any other places. The feeling of belonging appeared to be quite related to how long the participants had been staying in the city for. Sara, as an example, had spent almost her entire life in Trondheim, and told me how she considered Norway to be her home country. She never felt excluded, othered or uncomfortable in any way. When I asked her to describe her Trondheim childhood she, like many other participants, told me that it had been very good:

Sara: Yeah! And I have never felt, like…anything bad in relation to growing up here.

At the end of our group discussion, I wanted to hear whether the participants had any concluding thoughts on what we had been talking about, and if our conversations had made them reflect more upon what they believed an ideal Muslim childhood in Trondheim should be like. I hoped that these reflections would also bring forward issues concerning their own Trondheim childhood, and what they thought could have been better or different in any way:

Lisa: That you could pray. That it would be…normal. So, that it wouldn't be like "why should you go pray?" from people, so you had to hide. But that your teacher would think it was perfectly fine that the pupils would pray. That praying would just be considered a normal thing.

Siri: Yes. That you could wear hijab and skirt without being…well in a way (…) given nasty looks?

Kari: I want to say that (…) I would wish that I would feel (…) simply put, that I would be in my home country. Where I feel safe and no one would say anything mean against me. Simply that (…) everything I do would be all right with people.

Maiken: If I should think…I kind of thought that people should be more accepting, and that it would be all right to stand out. That you shouldn't…feel (…) eh…uncomfortable and such. That it would be OK like.

Kari: Just because you look different, doesn't mean you're evil.

All of these answers imply the participants' wish to be accepted for who they are, what they do, and how they look. I would argue that this wish reflects on the participants' experiences

with being othered in their Trondheim childhood. Even though the participants made it clear that their childhood had been predominantly good, the feelings of being stigmatized seem to have been present in their lives. As Kari stated in the end: "*Just because you look different, doesn't mean you're evil*".

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine Muslim girls' experiences with stigma and othering relating to both their religion and their minority status during their childhood years in Trondheim. In this chapter I will discuss the findings of the study in accordance with the research questions formulated in the introduction chapter. I will then add some of my own reflections, as well as recommendations.

7.1 Summary of key findings

Question 1: How do young Muslim girls encounter challenges in relation to their minority status in a predominantly white and non-Muslim society?

The findings demonstrate that the ethnic majority's social constructions of what is to be considered 'other' and 'different' leads to challenges for Muslim minority girls in Trondheim. This is especially the case during the teenage years, as this is a time were most girls prefer to be perceived as having a 'normal identity' (Goffman, 1963) and not stand out.

The ethnic majority emphasises their 'imagined sameness', such as culture, origin, and ancestry (Gullestad, 2002). What they define as 'us' becomes the normative standard in regards to those who differ from it (ibid). Thus, some of the Muslim minority girls who deviate from the dominant discourses of young, western femininities experience processes of othering. Some also feel socially excluded from their ethnic Norwegian peers during their teens, which is the period (the teenage years) often being the time where 'differences' become more apparent.

This study illustrates how religious practices such as praying, veiling and stricter parental control are examples of the "deviations" from the western standard for teenage girls in Trondheim. Muslim minority girls struggle to navigate between their own minority identities and the expectations from their social environment. Some girls choose to diminish their

Muslim identity around non-Muslims peers by hiding their religious and cultural practices, but also seeking friendships with other minority members in the city. However, the study also indicates that these challenges are both perceived and dealt with differently among individuals.

Question 2: What are the effects of anti-Muslim attitudes and behaviours on Muslim girls and how do these girls negotiate those effects in everyday life?

The data indicates that some Muslim girls are aware of anti-Muslim sentiments and negative media representations of Muslims already in their early childhood. This is especially due to social media sites such as Facebook and comment fields in online newspapers. However, it seems that most Muslim girls do not become aware of this until later in life when they are teenagers and young adults. It also seems that the effects of these experiences on Muslim girls varies.

For only some of the participants, when they read anti-Muslim opinions and 'hate' directed at Islam and Muslims at an early age, this lead to some suspicion and distrust of ethnic Norwegians. For others, they received uncomfortable 'looks' from the public – particularly when wearing veils or other forms of Muslim clothing – resulting in anxiety towards majority persons. Interestingly, only a few of the participants have experienced what they perceived to be overt racism or anti-Muslim behaviours during their childhood years in Trondheim.

The findings also show that some Muslim girls become frustrated with how they are perceived by non-Muslims, both in the media and in their social spheres in Trondheim. This frustration is made apparent by the participants' sense of duty – or need - to defend their religion and correct majority persons' misinterpretations.

Question 3: How are the experiences of Muslim girls' childhood in Trondheim shaped by stigma and othering?

It was clear from the participants' self-stories and discussions that the stigma connected with being Muslim in a non-Muslim secular society like Trondheim impacted how their childhoods were influenced – or 'spoiled' Goffman (1963) – by majority group members. Individual

Muslim children becomes suspects of the generalizations, stereotypes, and prejudice views of Muslims and Islam. The participants experience being stigmatized and 'othered' for their dress styles, religious belonging, skin tones and ethnicity. As a result, they were perceived as 'other' or 'different', leading to challenges covered in the findings of research question 1.

Significantly, the dominant constructions of 'us' and 'them' by the majority makes some Muslim girls feel as if they are not considered part of the Trondheim society. Some believe that their childhood would have been better if it took place somewhere with a larger percentage of Muslims and minority groups. However, the findings vary and indicate that such experiences do not account for everyone.

7.2 Policy and research recommendations

The findings of this study indicated that personal faith seems to be ascribed by the Norwegian majority as something which belongs primarily to adults. This is also demonstrated through Norwegian laws on religion, which constructs and refers to a child's faith relative to his/her parents beliefs (see background chapter page 10). Arguably, this gives the impression that a child's personal faith is not autonomous or decided by their own agency, but instead, that it is enforced by their parents. As my findings show, some Muslim children struggle to find acceptance for their wish to practice their religion in the school and other public spaces. In addition, the Norwegian public schools are distinctively secular, implying that the schools do not have any obligations in relation to a single student's religious practices. I would therefore recommend for future social policies to become more aware of, and respect, children's agencies in relation to religion. This does not necessarily mean that the Norwegian public schools should take any responsibility for children's religious practices. However, such recommendations may include ensuring that there is a space in schools where religious children feel comfortable enough to pray. Doing so would at least give them a opportunity for religious expression and agency, on their own initiative.

Another recommendation concerning social policy is the need to address the current constructed divisions between majority and minority members in Norway. With more

refugees and asylum seekers from countries with a high Muslim population entering the Norway, it is crucial to avoid social constructions of 'us' and 'them' as they produce difficulties relative to integration and inclusion. Othering and stigmatization of those who are not ethnic Norwegian, as well as more serious anti-Muslim or anti-immigrant sentiments, may be produced if such constructions are not challenged. Relative to this, the findings demonstrate how many Muslim girls feel more comfortable – and more accepted - among other minority members, thus preferring to live in areas with a higher percentage of minority inhabitants. In order to promote integration and fight racism, therefore, there is a need to diminish the social processes that may contribute to self-segregation among minority members. This could be achieved by promoting a focus on people's similarities, rather than differences, in public and political debates. Furthermore, children are by no means ignorant of public opinions, much due to their access to social media. I therefore suggest that there is a need to conduct more research on the impact public opinions has on Muslim children and Muslim childhoods in Norway.

This study does not in any way cover all the aspects of growing up as a Muslim, minority girl in Trondheim. If anything, it has demonstrated that the experiences of Muslim girls are very individual, and varies greatly. There are therefore many factors to consider in order to achieve a broader understanding of this complex issue; ethnicity, culture, the amount of time staying in Norway, demography, age, sex, degree of religiosity, and so on. Indeed, these should all be accounted for in a larger study. Yet, it still appears that some of the findings do show that some Muslim girls indeed experience stigma and 'othering' growing up in non-Muslim societies. As the participants in this study pointed out: it is the lack of knowledge that leads to generalizations, prejudice and stereotypes of Muslims and immigrants.

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I

Appendix:

Appendix A: Ethical approval letter NSD

Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS
NORWEGIAN SOCIAL SCIENCE DATA SERVICES

Tatek Abebe
Norsk senter for barneforskning NTNU
Loholt Allé 87, Pavillion C
7491 TRONDHEIM

Vår dato: 02.07.2015   Vår ref: 43634 / 3 / AGL   Deres dato: Deres ref:

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 02.06.2015. All nødvendig informasjon om prosjektet forelå i sin helhet 01.07.2015. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

43634	*Norwegian, Muslim children's experience of life in Oslo*
Behandlingsansvarlig	*NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder*
Daglig ansvarlig	*Tatek Abebe*
Student	*Ingrid Berg*

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 15.05.2016, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Vigdis Namtvedt Kvalheim
                                        Audun Løvlie

Kontaktperson: Audun Løvlie tlf: 55 58 23 07
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.

II

Forespørsel om deltakelse i studentprosjekt

"Growing up Muslim in Trondheim"

Bakgrunn og formål

Hensikten med prosjektet er å finne ut mer om muslimske ungdommers opplevelse og erfaring med det å vokse opp i Trondheim. Det vil undersøkes om fremmedfrykt og/eller fordommer rettet mot muslimer og det muslimske samfunnet har påvirket deres barndom, og om deltakerne har noen tanker og refleksjoner rundt dette.

Studentprosjektet utføres i forbindelse med masteroppgave i Childhood Studies, ved Norsk Senter for Barneforskning, NTNU.

I den anledning ønsker jeg samtykke til ditt barns deltakelse som informant i prosjektet.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?

Datainnsamling forekommer gjennom intervju og fokusgruppe-diskusjon. Deltakelse vil innebære å stille til intervju, - eventuelt fokus-gruppe diskusjon med andre deltakere. Intervjuet vil neppe overskride en time. Gruppediskusjonen kan komme til å ta opp mot to timer, avhengig av antall deltakere. Det vil bli benyttet skriftlige notater og lydopptak.

Temaene som vil bli tatt opp i intervjuet og gruppediskusjonen vil omhandle oppvekst i Trondheim og utfordringer knyttet til det.

Om ønskelig kan deltakere og foresatte motta intervjuguiden på forhånd, med forbehold om at intervjuformen er ustrukturert, og at spørsmålene dermed vil kunne endres.

Hva skjer med opplysningene som samles inn?

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Det vil kun være undertegnede som har tilgang til disse opplysningene. Opptak vil lagres på en ekstern harddisk og sammen med notatene oppbevares i låst skap.

Den ferdige masteroppgaven vil bli arkivert og publisert i NTNU Open av NTNU Universitetsbiblioteket. Deltakere vil derimot ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjon, ettersom navn anonymiseres.

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes 15.05.2016. Når prosjektet er levert vil alle personopplysninger, opptak og notater slettes og fjernes fra ekstern harddisk.

Frivillig deltakelse
Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og man kan når som helst trekke sitt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom du trekker deg, vil alle opplysninger bli anonymisert.

Dersom du har spørsmål til prosjektet, ta kontakt med Ingrid Berg på tlf. (+47) 97190337 eller via e-post: inber@stud.ntnu.no.

Veileder i masteroppgaven, Tatek Abebe, kan kontaktes på tlf. (+47) 73596247 eller via e-post: tatek.abebe@svt.ntnu.no

Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS.

Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

For deltaker:

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien og samtykker til min deltakelse i prosjektet gjennom
(*sett kryss ved en eller flere*) :

Individuelt intervju   Fokus gruppe diskusjon

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

For foresatte:

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien og samtykker til at…………………………………….
deltar i prosjektet gjennom (*sett kryss ved en eller flere*) :

Individuelt intervju   Fokus gruppe diskusjon

(Signert av prosjektdeltakers foresatte, dato)

Forespørsel om deltakelse i studentprosjekt

"Growing up Muslim in Trondheim"

Bakgrunn og formål

Hensikten med prosjektet er å finne ut mer om muslimske ungdommers opplevelse og erfaring med det å vokse opp i Trondheim. Det vil undersøkes om fremmedfrykt og/eller fordommer rettet mot muslimer og det muslimske samfunnet har påvirket deres barndom, og om deltakerne har noen tanker og refleksjoner rundt dette.

Studentprosjektet utføres i forbindelse med masteroppgave i Childhood Studies, ved Norsk Senter for Barneforskning, NTNU.

I den anledning ønsker jeg samtykke til din deltakelse som informant i prosjektet.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?

Datainnsamling forekommer gjennom intervju og fokusgruppe-diskusjon. Deltakelse vil innebære å stille til intervju, - eventuelt fokus-gruppe diskusjon med andre deltakere. Intervjuet vil neppe overskride en time. Gruppediskusjonen kan komme til å ta opp mot to timer, avhengig av antall deltakere. Det vil bli benyttet skriftlige notater og lydopptak.

Temaene som vil bli tatt opp i intervjuet og gruppediskusjonen vil omhandle oppvekst i Trondheim og utfordringer knyttet til det.

Om ønskelig kan deltakerne motta intervjuguiden på forhånd, med forbehold om at intervjuformen er ustrukturert, og at spørsmålene dermed vil kunne endres.

Hva skjer med opplysningene som samles inn?

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt. Det vil kun være undertegnede som har tilgang til disse opplysningene. Opptak vil lagres på en ekstern harddisk og sammen med notatene oppbevares i låst skap.

Den ferdige masteroppgaven vil bli arkivert og publisert i NTNU Open av NTNU Universitetsbiblioteket. Deltakere vil derimot ikke kunne gjenkjennes i publikasjon, ettersom navn anonymiseres.

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes 15.05.2016. Når prosjektet er levert vil alle personopplysninger, opptak og notater slettes og fjernes fra ekstern harddisk.

Frivillig deltakelse

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom du trekker deg, vil alle opplysninger om deg bli anonymisert.

Dersom du ønsker å delta eller har spørsmål til prosjektet, ta kontakt med Ingrid Berg på tlf. (+47) 97190337 eller via e-post: inber@stud.ntnu.no.

Veileder i masteroppgaven, Tatek Abebe, kan kontaktes på tlf. (+47) 73596247 eller via e-post: tatek.abebe@svt.ntnu.no

Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS.

Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien og samtykker til at jeg deltar i prosjektet gjennom (*sett kryss ved en eller flere*) :

             Individuelt intervju   Fokus gruppe diskusjon

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix D: Themes in focus group disussion

Fokus gruppe diskusjon:

(Et og et ark med stikkord/setninger legges på gulvet foran deltakerne som sitter rundt i en sirkel)

1. Diskuter følgende stikkord eller setning fritt:

"Muslimsk barndom" "identitet" "oppvekst i Trondheim" "utfordringer" "fordommer" "hijab" "media" "drømmebarndom"

2. Er det noe mer dere ønsker å ta opp angående det å vokse opp i Trondheim som muslimske jenter?

Focus group discussion:

(On by one, the sheets of paper with keywords/key sentences lays down on the floor in front of the participants who are sitting in a circle)

1. Feel free to discuss these keywords or sentences in any way you want:

"Muslim childhood" "identity" "growing up in Trondheim" "challenges" "prejudice" "hijab" "media" "dream childhood"

2. Is there anything else you would like to discuss in regards to being Muslim girls growing up in Trondheim?

Appendix E: Interview guide for individual interviews

Intervjuguide for individuelle intervju:

1. Hvordan vil du beskrive din barndom i Trondheim?
2. Hvis du hadde hatt mulighet til å vokse opp et hvilket som helst sted, hvor ville det ha vært? Forklar hvorfor?
3. Hvordan hadde livet ditt i Trondheim vært annerledes, om du ikke var muslim?
4. Hvor mange av de nærmeste vennene dine i Trondheim var også muslimer?
5. Hvordan ble temaet religion tatt opp i samtaler med jevnaldrende, lærere etc?
6. Kan du huske å ha opplevd noen utfordringer da du vokste opp, i forhold til det å være muslim i Trondheim?
7. Hvordan oppfatter du andres (ikke-muslimers) syn på muslimer?
8. La du noen gang merke til fordommer, rasisme eller diskriminering mot muslimer da du var mindre? Hvis ja, hvordan? Hvordan påvirket det deg som barn?
9. Tror du det er forskjellig for gutter og jenter å vokse opp som muslimsk i Trondheim?
10. Er det noe mer dere ønsker å ta opp angående det å vokse opp i Trondheim som muslim?

Interview guide for individual interviews:

1. How would you describe your childhood in Trondheim?
2. If you had the opportunity to grow up anywhere you'd like, where would that be? Explain why?
3. How do you think you life in Trondheim been like, if you were not a Muslim?
4. How many of your closest friends in Trondheim were also Muslims?
5. How did the topic religion brought up in conversations with peers, teachers etc.?
6. Can you remember experiencing any challenges growing up, in regards to being a Muslim in Trondheim?
7. How do you perceive non-Muslims views on Muslims?
8. Did you ever notice any prejudice, racism or discrimination against Muslims when you were younger? If yes, how? How did it affect you as a child?
9. Do you think it is different for boys and girls in growing up Muslim in Trondheim?
10. Is there anything you would like to add in regards to growing up Muslim in Trondheim?