Staying on the Straight Path

Religious Identities and Practices among Young Muslims in Norway

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Preface 7
Acknowledgements 9
A note on translation and transliteration 11

Introduction 13
Issues and perspectives 16
Research imaginaries and project design 24
Outline of the thesis 30

Chapter one
Situating the study: comparative themes, theoretical orientations, and epistemological challenges 35
Understanding 'Travelling Islam' 35
Towards an anthropology of Islam in Europe 35
The (re)production of religious identities and practices in the context of migration and globalization 39
The nation-state and politics of identity 43
Islam as discursive tradition 47
Individualization, authority and the formation of Muslim selves 50
Some epistemological and methodological concerns 55
Religion and the problem of cultural translation 55
Reading across disciplinary divisions 57
Gendering the approach 59
On 'naming' and the problem of essentialism 61

Chapter two
Muslim Youth and Students in Oslo: envisioning unity, coping with difference 64
Presenting the organizations 65
The Muslim Youth of Norway (NMU) 67
The Muslim Student Society (MSS) 71
New forms of Muslim cooperation 76
Promoting Muslim unity 78
The revivalist influence 83
Gender 86
Gender mix and separation 87
The gender of leadership 89
Age and generation 91
Muslim 'youth' and 'students' 91
A new generation 97
Education, work and social status 100
The rural/urban distinction 100
The importance of having an education 102
Creating new Muslim spaces 106

Chapter three
Who are 'we'? Multiple 'horizons of action' 109

A global community of Muslims 111
The global imagined umma 111
Sisters and brothers in Islam 115
Global imaginaries in religious practice 119

Situating Islam in Europe and Norway 123
Euro Islam and European Muslims 123
Norwegian Muslims 130
The 'vernacularization' of Islam 132

Family, kinship and the 'ethnic diaspora' 138
Journeying through multiple horizons 143
Multiple horizons: heterogeneous spaces 146
(Re)imagining Muslim identity 149

Chapter four
The politics of recognition: (re)constructing identity/difference 151
The dilemmas of contemporary politics 152

The faces and logics of misrecognition in the Norwegian context 155
Defining the 'Other': culturalism and neo-realism in contemporary social imaginaries 159
The emergence of Muslims as the Other 163
Constructing and contesting Ourselves as the Other 168

The NMU, the MSS and the politics of recognition 172
Identity politics and the problem of essentialism 174

Religious practice in identity politics 177
Jihad and dawa in identity politics 178
The Hijab in identity politics 182
Gender and generation in the quest for recognition 185

Engaging the Norwegian public sphere 190
Representing Islam and Muslims 190
Muslim and Norwegian citizen 197
Citizenship and human rights 202

Identity politics and socio-economic inequality 205
The politics of recognition and the emergence of new political subjects 209

Chapter five
The Quest for Knowledge: individualization and religious authority 212

Religious knowledge and reflexivity 214
Umar disputes his father 214
The objectification of Islam 217
Coming to know Islam: the family, the mosque and the school 220
From person to print: new arenas of Islamic education 225

The normativization of Islam 230
Normativization and the gender of knowledge 232

Individualization and authority 235
Young Muslim voices 'speaking Islam' 235
The contestation and re-assertion of authority 240
Interpreting Islam 246

Feminist interventions 250
Debating Islam and gender 253
Exemplary models and authority in marriage 256
Knowledge and belief 260
The signs of God: Islam and science 263
The quest for knowledge: a reflexive adhesion to Islamic authority 267

Chapter six
Becoming Muslim: working on the Self 271
Who are you? Muslim by Nature: returning to Islam 273
Noor's return to Islam 276
Becoming Muslim: continuities and ruptures 278
Gendering the return: hijab stories 281
On identity, exteriority and interiority 287
The formation of pious selves 291
The gender of desire 294
Different forms of self-realization 296
Ibadat as techniques of the self 300
Ethical formation 304
Having the right intent 307
Choosing what is good, and its reward 312
Moving on; but where to? 319
Self and religious practice in young Muslims' 'return to Islam' 322

Chapter seven
Elaborations 325
The anthropology of Islam or Islams 326
The essentialist – anti-essentialist controversy 326
Questioning pluralization as an anti-essentialist strategy: some lessons from feminism 330
Re-considering the 'essence' of essentialism: An anti-essentialist approach to Islam as a 'discursive tradition' 332
Authenticity, tradition and modernity 336
The invention of tradition 337
The discourse of authenticity and the reform of tradition in modernity 341
The making of individualized religious subjects 344
The individualization of religion in modern societies 344
The values of autonomy and the production of self-governing individuals 350
The discourse of autonomy and the problem of agency 357
Politics and epistemology in migration research 361
Anthropology as cultural critique 361
Methodological nationalism in immigrant research 365
The continued need for a methodological relativism 368

Conclusions 370

Glossary 379

Literature 381

Preface

> I don't feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it? What is true for writing and for a love relationship is true also for life. The game is worthwhile insofar as we don't know what will be the end (Foucault 1988: 9).

How to "write up" the social worlds and lives of young Muslims in Oslo has been a major challenge, and has required the adoption of a variety of perspectives and ways of narrating. In shaping chapters out of years of researching this topic, I am mindful of the many directions that I have been unable to pursue. Some of these I have pursued in earlier publications (Gressgård and Jacobsen 2003; Jacobsen 2002; Jacobsen 2004; Jacobsen 2005a; Jacobsen 2005b), others will need to be developed in the future. The thesis importantly builds on and continues my investigations from an earlier IMER/Bergen research project financed by the Norwegian Research Council, and which resulted in the publication of *Tilhørighetens mange former: Unge muslimer i Norge* (Jacobsen 2002), as well as my former work on young Muslim women in France (Jacobsen 1999). As such, it is part of a journey of which I still do not know what will be the end.

Choosing to focus on the people I worked with as "Muslims" and on their relationship to "Islam" has been decisive for my writing. Of course this does not mean that other issues are not addressed, as "religion" cannot be understood in isolation from social life more broadly. However, the relationship of young Muslims to the Islamic tradition, remains the organizing tropes of the thesis, and as a consequence, many other dimensions receive less attention. This should not be seen as an attempt to "totalize" Islam as the only relevant factor with regard to understanding the complex dynamics of the lives of young Muslims in Oslo, but as a pragmatic choice in order to emphasize one aspect of those lives that has largely remained unexplored. I am aware of the dangers of such a project, in that by turning the gaze towards the dimension of their lives that currently mark young "Muslims" as "different" and "Others", it risks contributing further to such constructions. However, I hope to show that the "religious dimension" in itself, needs to be "opened up" and dealt with in terms of diversity, multiplicity and process.

In writing up this thesis, a greeting from the Muslim Youth of Norway has been sitting next to my computer, reading "Thank you for the company! A warm greeting from all of us in

the NMU, we hope you will not forget us…". Considering the amount of time I have spent working on this thesis, the worry that I would forget appears unfounded. And yet, the greeting has served as a constant reminder not to forget the "real people" I met during fieldwork. As the last few decades' debates in anthropology have stressed, turning the lives of "real people" into "data" and "ethnographic material" inevitably entails to exert a form of "symbolic violence". In this respect, this thesis in itself embodies an unresolved dilemma. One of the concerns that the young people I worked with conveyed to me, was precisely that of being "represented" in ways, words and manners that were not their own. This thesis inevitably adds to such external representations. What I hope for is that the young people I came to know will feel that they have been listened to and taken seriously. However, I am in no doubt that there will be objections to parts of what I have written, and I cannot guarantee that none of the young people who so generously contributed to this study will not feel "misrepresented".

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It is of course a truism to say that this thesis would not have been possible without the generous cooperation of the young Muslims I came to know in Oslo; in the Muslim Youth of Norway, in the Muslim Student Society, in the mosques, and elsewhere. I want to thank every one of you! To those of you to whom I am particularly grateful for your companionship over the years: I cannot name you by names, but I am sure you are aware of my great debt to you. Thank you for your willingness to teach me, explain to me, and share your stories, and for your patience! Thanks also to the people who generously welcomed me in their homes during my field trip to Nador and Al Hoceima.

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Several colleagues and friends have read and given valuable comments on drafts for chapters. A warm thanks to Cecilie Ødegaard, Hilde Danielsen, Cathrine Holst, Tone Hellesund, Schirin Amir-Moazami, and Nadia Fadil. Special thanks to Monica Aarset, for our close cooperation during fieldwork in 1999, and for our many useful exchanges over the years. Thanks also to Vivienne Knowles for valuable help with proof-reading, and to Karianne Drangsland for helping out with typing when my arms just could not take it anymore. For useful discussions and comments over the years I also owe my gratitude to a number of scholars and friends who I will not endeavour to mention by name here.

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I dedicate this work to the memory of my mother whose years of struggle against cancer taught me to endure and never to lose courage.

A note on translation and transliteration

Several languages have been involved in the production of data, and in the process of writing up this thesis. Norwegian was the primary language of data production in the field, but some of the interactions and interviews took place in English. In an earlier book that I published in Norwegian, drawing on some of the same data material, I preserved the colloquial language of interactions and interviews, reflecting the particular style of speaking of the group of young people in question. In translating into English I have not recreated this particular style, thus giving the language a more standardized and written form than it originally had.

My topic of study being young Muslims and their relationship to Islam, Arabic has been present both in the field and in the process of writing up, mainly in the form of certain Arabic Islamic expressions. Although it could have been an advantage, for instance when I participated at international Islamic conferences, it was not necessary to learn Arabic in order to conduct fieldwork. The young had a variety of different linguistic backgrounds themselves and spoke Norwegian together.

Regarding transliteration of Arabic terms, I follow the strategy proposed by the authors of *Making Muslim Space* (Metcalf 1996b). Where an established English spelling of an Arabic word exists, this spelling will be preferred over a "correct" Arabic spelling. My reason for choosing this strategy relates to what may be referred to as the "vernacularization" of Islam. In his book *Toward Islamic English* al Faruqi (1986), suggests the term *Islamic English* as a way of referring to the inclusion of untranslatable Arabic terms into English. Al Faruqi saw this development as a way of enriching and enlarging English and other languages. Later on writers like Metcalf (1996b) and Schmidt (1998) have adopted Al Faruqi's concept of *Islamic English* to refer to the emerging standardization of Islamic expressions in English (American) language texts.

Young Muslims increasingly speak and write about Islam in Norwegian, and central religious concepts are either translated or incorporated into the Norwegian language, while simultaneously being transformed through Norwegian spelling and grammar. In so far as young Muslims speak and write in Islamic Norwegian, there is scant reason why I as a researcher should be concerned by a correct transliteration of Arabic words and grammars. The Islamic Norwegian vocabulary is still "chaotic" and largely undetermined, however. For instance, the usage of diacritical signs to mark e.g. long vowels or the Arab letter *hemza* is irregular (one may find the forms *alim* or *ʼālim*), as is the way of spelling different words. To make the text more accessible, I have chosen to use "simplified" versions where they exist.

Furthermore, I try to adopt one consistent spelling of words such as *hijab* (and not *hidjab*). Islamic Norwegian words are translated into Islamic English words. Endings and plurals are made according to common Islamic English standards. Such words are in general italicized, but for the sake of readability the most common words are only italicized the first time they appear in the text.

In the text, Islamic English words and English translations are both used, partly depending on the language use of my discussion partners in particular contexts. There are good arguments both for translations and for the use of Arabic terms. Translations may be seen to foreground familiarity rather than difference, and may thus be less "exotifying" and avoid the construction of "radical alterity" (e.g. by using God instead of Allah). On the other hand, making notions more familiar also runs the risk of "assimilating" or distorting the meaning of a term, and thus of complicating rather than furthering understanding (e.g. the translation of *deen* into religion, hijab into veil, *salah* into prayer etc.). Furthermore, translations may reinforce the power relations involved in writing ethnography, in that the languages of the people being studied submit to forcible transformations rather than the other way around. In a challenging essay on cultural translation, Asad (1993) has urged anthropologists to transform their own language in the process of (cultural) translation, rather than the one of the people they study. The frequent use of untranslated words in this dissertation is thus based on a realization of power difference between the majority language and the minority languages, and a wish to allow European languages to accommodate an emerging Islamic vocabulary, guided by the actual language use of young Muslims.

Following a suggestion from one of one of my discussion partners in the field, all references to the Quran are to the translation by Dr. Muhsin Khan and Dr. Muhammad Al-Hilali, available at www.quran.net.

Norwegian organizations are referred to by their Norwegian acronyms in the text (e.g. the Muslim Youth of Norway as the NMU and not the MYN).

Introduction

Bismi Allahi alrrahmani alrraheemi
Alhamdu lillahi rabbi alAAalameena
Alrrahmani alrraheemi
Maliki yawmi alddeeni
Iyyaka naAAbudu waiyyaka nastaAAeenu
Ihdina alssirata almustaqeema
Sirata allatheena anAAamta
AAalayhim ghayri almaghdoobi
AAalayhim wala alddalleena [1]

The young man finishes his measured and rhythmic recital and pushes the play-button of the tape recorder standing next to him. "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His messenger": the *shahada*[2] is pronounced in Thai, French, Bosnian, Somali, Arabic, and English as "Sing, children of the world" by Canadian artist and educator Dawud Wharnsby Ali fills the room. Stencils with the English lyrics are distributed to the 25 girls and 15 boys that are gathered: "Oh, sing children of the world, come together and hear the call! Sing children of the world, Islam will unite us all! Subhanallah, walhamdulillah, wallahu Akbar (Glory be to God, All Praise to God and Thanks to God)".

The venue is Deichmanske Library in Grünerløkka, a multiethnic former working class neighbourhood in Oslo lately grown trendy with students, intellectuals, and artists, and at the time hosting about eight Muslim organizations. In the meeting room, boys are seated up front and on the left hand side, girls at the back and on the right hand side. Ages range from early teens well into the twenties. People are casually dressed in jeans, skirts, T-shirts, shirts and pulls. A couple of girls wear *shalwar kameezes* with *dupattas*[3], and roughly half the girls

[1] In the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.
All the praises and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the Alameen (mankind, jinns and all that exists).
The Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.
The Only Owner (and the Only Ruling Judge) of the Day of Recompense (i.e. the Day of Resurrection)
You (Alone) we worship, and You (Alone) we ask for help (for each and everything).
Guide us to the Straight Way
The Way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger (such as the Jews), nor of those who went astray (such as the Christians).

[2] The Islamic profession of faith.

[3] The *shalwar kameez*, or *shalwar* suit, consists of a *kameez* (long shirt) and *shalwar* (wide trousers). It is a dress traditionally worn by both women and men in various parts of south-central Asia. Today, *shalwar kameez* are inspired by both eastern and western fashion and may be found in a variety of fabrics, cuts and styles. The girls wearing *shalwar kameez* in the NMU are mostly of Pakistani origin, and boys do not usually wear them on these

cover their hair with *hijabs*[4] in different colours and patterns. As the song finishes, we are welcomed to the General Assembly of the Muslim Youth of Norway (henceforth the NMU).

The young man of Moroccan descent reciting so eloquently the opening Sura of the *Quran*, presents himself as the leader of the NMU and introduces the other members of the committee. Two women in their late teens are the treasurer and the secretary. The meeting agenda is presented, and a "sister" and a "brother" are appointed to chair the meeting and to take notes. The activities of the previous year of 1998/1999 are summarized. Every other Sunday there have been *darses* (lectures on Islam). During *Ramadan* a study circle was held for both "brothers" and "sisters", and an *id*-party[5] marked the end of the fast. Representatives from Youth Against Violence and the Urtehagen Muslim Private School have been invited to talk about their work in the Muslim community, and a youth-delegation from Palestine has visited the NMU. There have been a variety of outings, including a bicycle tour, a trip to the woods, and ice-skating. A special highlight was the yearly trip to Sweden, when eighteen young women and men attended the international Islamic youth conference arranged by the Muslim Youth of Sweden.

Past and upcoming activities of the Islamic Women's Group in Norway and the Muslim Student Society, including a seminar on Muslims in Europe by Rached Gannouchi, are announced. Proposals for future activities in the NMU are encouraged, but only one is voiced: more trips abroad. A committee is put together to make further plans. The first issue of the NMU's own Muslim youth-magazine, *Explore*, is presented. The editor is a young woman of Afghan descent who is also one of the founders of the NMU and the current treasurer. The front page poses the question: "Who are you? This is a thought that often haunts us. But where do we stand?" Inside, there are articles on parenthood, friendship, death, the life of Prophet Mohammed, a description of a member's journey back to Afghanistan, and an

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occasions, although they might wear them at weddings, religious festivities etc. *Dupatta* is a long scarf that is used together with the *shalwar kameez* and other Indian and Pakistani women's suits. The *dupatta* has long been a symbol of modesty in South Asian dress. Traditionally it is worn across both shoulders, but in current fashions, the *dupatta* is frequently draped over one shoulder, or over just the arms.

[4] *Hijab* literally means "a veil", "curtain", "partition" or "separation". It has come to be used as a general term for the practice of dressing modestly, and more specifically for a particular Islamic headgear. The young women in the NMU use the term *hijab* to refer to the different headgears that they wear in a variety of colours, fabrics, patterns and manners, and that they tie in a variety of ways, from small scarves covering only the hair to larger square scarves which are folded diagonally and worn to cover the hair, ears and throat, and sometimes also the chest. In the literature concepts such as "the modern hijab" (Vogt 2004), "the new veil" (Thorbjørnsrud 2004), and "the modern Islamic dress", are often used to distinguish contemporary forms of veiling, associated with Islamic revivalism, from existing customary traditional clothing practices around the Muslim world. Debates and contestations regarding the hijab and what is "traditional" and "modern" will be discussed further on in the thesis.

[5] *Id-al-fitr*: the feast marking the end of the fasting in Ramadan.

account of an NMU berry-picking outing in the woods. *Explore* is said to respond to a growing need of Norwegian-language material on Islam on behalf of the "second generation": "We who are second generation immigrants need to read things in Norwegian to learn more about Islam", the editor asserts. She recounts how her own experiences of having to defend Islam, especially during discussions at school, made her wish to gain more knowledge of her religion. Through *Explore* the NMU wants to make such knowledge available to youth who have similar experiences. Some boys and girls volunteer to be in the editorial committee for future issues. Everyone is encouraged to contribute with writings.

Subsequently, issues of membership are addressed. In the previous year only a few paid the registration fee, and as a consequence the NMU was not entitled to financial support from the State.[6] To encourage more people to pay, it is decided after a vote to reduce the registration fee from NOK 100 (approx. Euro 12) to NOK 50. Accounts from the previous year are presented, and the treasurer explains that interest earned on the bank account is "washed" (made Islamically legal) through donations to charitable causes. Issues of membership and the economy are followed up by a political question engaging many Muslims in Norway at the time: the recent introduction in primary school of a new model of religious education called "Knowledge of Christianity with information about Religion and Life Stances" (KRL).[7] Information is given on the court case initiated by the Islamic Council in Norway and the Norwegian Humanist Association against the State, and the young Muslims present are encouraged to speak up about their experiences with religious education in order to support the case.

The former leader of the NMU, a man of Tunisian descent who is a bit older than most participants, and who is also one of the founders, closes this part of the meeting with a pep talk about the needs of the second generation for knowledge of Islam. He says that people need to know what Islam really is, and not only get their images of Islam through the media.

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[6] The NMU was at the time a member of The Norwegian Youth Council, an umbrella organization for Norwegian non-governmental organizations for children and youth, through which organizations may apply for financial support provided that they have a certain number of registered members.

[7] In Norwegian primary school there is a Christian objects clause. Until the introduction of the new subject of religious education (KRL) in 1997, pupils outside of the Church of Norway could be exempted from Christian education in school. Sometimes they could opt for "Life Stances" as an alternative. KRL was initially drawn up as an effort to develop an objective and neutral, obligatory communal subject in religions and ethics, and was widely supported by school representatives, politicians and representatives of minority religions and life-stances. The result however, was different, and many saw KRL as it came to be formulated as a violation of the freedom of religion. With KRL only partial exemption is granted, and this was a central question in a court case raised by the Islamic Council in Norway and the Norwegian Humanist Association against the State. The Islamic Council and the Humanist Association lost in the Norwegian court system, but a subsequent UN-evaluation recommended that KRL should either be changed, or minorities be given full access to exemption. See e.g. Gullbekk (2000) and Borchgrevink (2002b) for a broader discussion of the KRL and the court hearings.

As a result of the negative images in the media, young Muslims lack self-confidence. You should not let this happen, but have confidence in yourselves, Aydin encourages the listeners. To obtain this, knowledge of what Islam really is must be spread, and this requires active participation on the part of young Muslims. The NMU is an arena for such participation. As the time of *salah*[8] approaches, Aydin's pep talk ends and people leave to perform *wodo*[9] in the corridor bathrooms. A prayer mat is unfolded on the floor, facing the direction of Mecca. About half of those present, boys to the left and girls to the right, line up behind the former leader of the NMU and prostrate in unison before Allah. The others sit together and speak in low voices or busy themselves with preparing for the more informal social gathering that will follow after prayers.

Upon finishing *salah* the young gather to talk more informally and food prepared by one of the mothers is served. Someone tells that he and his family just moved to another part of town, another that she is going on a vacation soon. In the kitchen, a boy and a girl tease each other and laugh out loud. The atmosphere is relaxed and informal. Some people already know each other, while others meet for the first time. A couple of mothers have been invited to come and see that the NMU is a safe place for the children to be. They are reassured, and impressed by the orderly way in which the meeting is organized. After the meeting, the committee and a few others stick around to tidy up the meeting room. The male head of the NMU does the dishes on the request of the female treasurer, joking to me about the current changes in gender relations. When everything is tidied away, no traces are left in Deichmanske Library revealing that it has hosted the General Assembly of the Muslim Youth of Norway.

Issues and perspectives

Mainly due to migration from the late 1960s and onwards, Islam now represents the second largest religion in Norway. While there is by now a considerable body of "immigrant-studies" in Norway, religious engagement, ritual practices and the establishment of Islamic institutions have so far been the least researched parts of immigrant lives in Norway (Vogt 2000). This study is concerned with exploring the religious engagement of the children of Muslim labour migrants and refugees who were about to reach adulthood in the 1990s. The religious engagement of these "second-generation immigrants" or "young Muslims" has actualized a

[8] The ritual prayer. The second pillar of Islam.
[9] The ritual ablutions that Muslims perform before the daily prayers.

series of new and not-so-new questions among social scientists as well as in the media, among politicians, and in the population at large, e.g. about identity, culture, and religion. This thesis addresses such questions in focusing on the (re)production of Muslim identities and practices in a context of international migration and globalization. My focus is on the assertion of Islam among a particular group of religiously engaged Muslim youth. This assertion takes many different forms, in personal as well as public life; from attention to everyday religious practice (e.g. dress, prayer and ethical considerations) to the emergence of religious youth and student organizations.

My study, as I discuss in more detail later in this introduction, is based on fieldwork undertaken among youth and students who participate in two Islamic organizations; the Muslim Youth of Norway (NMU) and the Muslim Student Society (MSS). Although a couple of studies mention the two organizations (Leirvik 2002a; Vogt 2000), there have been no in-depth studies of such Muslim youth and student networks in Norway, apart from my own previous study (Jacobsen 2002). The NMU and the MSS attract only a small number of Oslo's Muslim youth and students, and are not representative for this category. Their importance lies not in numbers, but in their active engagement in defining the Islamic tradition, Muslim identity, and its future in the Norwegian context. Whilst the ethnographic focus of the thesis is thus on the participants of two particular organizations, the thesis also has a wider address. The analysis deals with issues that are of a more general importance to understanding the religious identities and practices of Norwegian Muslims and Muslims elsewhere in Europe.

An important point of departure for exploring religious identities and practices in this thesis is discussions and debates related to what it means to be a Muslim, what Islam is, and how it should be lived and represented. These discussions and debates are situated and analyzed in terms of the multiple social identities of those involved, the social relationships that are sustained or (re)shaped through them, and the social contexts in which they come to take particular forms. The activities of the Muslim youth and student organizations are in a sense constituted precisely around efforts to grapple with these very questions about what it means to be a Muslim, what Islam is and how it should be lived and represented. Discussion and reflection on Muslim identity and practice also appear in the everyday conversations between the young and their parents, siblings, wives and husbands, and their friends. The "local" discussions and debates refer themselves to, are informed by, and intertwine with debates in what has been referred to as an emerging transnational Muslim public sphere of

reference and debate (Bowen 2004a; Mandaville 2004; Salvatore 2004) and within what we may refer to as the official, national public sphere in Norway.

There are several reasons why discussions and debates are so prominent in this thesis. One reason is the need to deconstruct the homogenizing representations of "Islam" and "Muslims" that tend to dominate public debate in Norway as well as elsewhere in the "Western" world. In contrast to such representations, I have wanted to unfold some of the multiplicities of voices and meanings involved in the (re)production of Muslim identities and practices in a particular socio-historical context. A feature of much literature on Muslims in Europe is that research has been conducted from a top-down perspective, focusing on the institutionalization of Islam in various countries, on mosques and organization, the role of imams, and on questions concerning the "integration" of Muslims into European nation-states (cf. Grillo 2004; Nielsen 1992). While the opinions of *imams*, intellectuals and Islamic scholars, and the debates between them, have to a certain extent been documented, conversation and debate between non-experts is poorly documented in studies of Islam in Europe. In contrast, this study seeks to move from a top-down perspective to an investigation of how young Muslims increasingly engage in discussion and debate on issues that were previously mainly an area of scholarly debate. It traces how such exchanges have been made possible by mass education, mass communication technology and the emergence of new public spaces for debate.

The discussions and debates also bring out some important theoretical points. Importantly, they serve to bring out that what we identify as e.g. identity, culture, tradition, community and Islam should be seen as heterogeneous and processual phenomena that are (re)produced in and through processes of argumentation and contestation. In choosing this perspective, I am inspired by recent anthropological discourse-centred approaches to Islam (see e.g. Asad 1986; Asad 1993; Bowen 1993; Brenner 2000; Fischer and Abedi 1990; Mahmood 2005; Werbner 2002b).[10] These approaches are characterized by a focus on the social life of religious discourse; on how written texts and oral traditions are (re)produced, read and reread in different socio-historical contexts. Discourse-centred approaches to Islam acknowledge language-in-use to be constitutive, and thus as a primary means by which Islamic identities, practices and institutions are produced, maintained and enacted. These approaches are

[10] The term discourse has acquired a range of meanings in recent anthropology and other disciplines. My use of the term in this thesis draws on several of these meanings associated with the tradition from Foucault. Generally, I use it to refer to a complex of "statements" made by numerous people in different social contexts that are characterized by certain rules and regularities, allowing that such "statements" are also constitutive of the objects of which they speak. I also use it in a more precise sense in drawing upon Asad's (1986) conceptualization of Islam as a "discursive tradition" (see below).

particularly fruitful in analyzing contemporary Muslim identities and practices, because they focus on the dynamic tension between "local" ideas and processes on the one hand, and "translocal" or "universal" normative religious discourses on the other hand. By engaging such anthropological approaches to Islam, I will examine how young Muslims in Oslo in their debates and contestations engage with texts, phrases and ideas held to be part of a universal Islamic tradition and how the religious discourses come to form a basis for religious identities and practices. In so doing, I hope to contribute to an emerging "anthropology of Islam in Europe".

It might be argued that a focus on discussion and debate and the heterogeneous and processual character of identity, culture, tradition, community and Islam, under-estimates the more tacit and habitual reproduction of religious traditions and the durability and reproduction of religious identities and practices over time (cf. Bredal 2004; Prieur 2002). However, an argument of this thesis is that discussion and debate should not be seen as *per se* synonymous with rupture or change, or as an opposite to "tradition". The discussions and debates that I focus on point to the existence of "discursive formations" in the form of historically sedimented practices, institutions and forms of authority, within and through which such conversations and debates are played out. One such "discursive formation" will be conceptualized, in drawing upon Asad (1986), as constituting an Islamic discursive tradition. Young Muslims in Oslo are introduced into this tradition through a number of pedagogical practices that seek to instruct them on the correct form and meaning of given practices, and they acquire a set of embodied knowledges and capacities in this process. Whilst tacit and habitual reproduction is central to such processes, so is argument and debate. In this respect, the perspective I have chosen allows a point of departure for exploring continuities and discontinuities in the complex configurations of power and authority within which such discussions and debates are embedded.

My focus is somewhat unconventional from an anthropological point of view. It does not deal with a group that may be defined in terms of locality or ethnicity as "one community". The discourses I deal with are *dispersive* (Bowen 1993: 10) in that they cannot be resolved into a single set of symbols or ideas, or attached to a particular "Muslim community". Rather, I explore a wider field of discourse that is engaged by Muslim youth in Norway. This means paying attention to the subject positions that are created within such discourses, and to the ways in which young Muslims engage such discourses, both individually and through groups like the Muslim Youth of Norway and the Muslims Student Society. A central theme of the thesis is thus how the discussions and debates that young Muslims engage in e.g. about the

kinds of communities they do and wish to belong to, the values and norms that should be binding, the relationship between genders and generations, draw on a tradition of Islamic discourses that include and relate themselves to the Quran and the Hadith, and how these discourses are (re)produced, opposed, or submitted to, by young Muslims in Oslo.

In choosing this approach there are a number of issues I wish to address. One range of questions, which can be broadly perceived of as a temporal dimension, concerns processes related to social, cultural and religious continuities and discontinuities over time, and inter-generational (re)production of meaning. Another range of questions, which can be broadly perceived of as a spatial dimension, relates to social, cultural, and religious diversity in the context of migration and globalization. It is precisely at the intersection of these two broadly defined sets of issues that the central questions of the thesis arise. In what ways is the (re)production of religious identities and practices shaped by their movement across time (from one generation to the next at one level, and throughout history on another level)? And how are these temporal processes interwoven with social, cultural, and religious diversity in the context of migration and globalization, which rearrange the social spaces people inhabit, through a deconstruction and reconstruction of boundaries, identities and practices?

In pursuing these questions a major concern is to broaden the perspectives through which we may understand young Muslims' identities and practices. In order to do so, I follow a number of different threads in un-packing the ethnography, and in relating the discussion to bodies of scholarship and constituted debates that cut across disciplinary divisions and established "fields" of research, involving notably Islam, migration, globalization, gender, ethnicity, nationalism, diversity and multiculturalism. A substantial discussion of all these fields of theorization is not intended, nor is the construction of an overall integrated theoretical framework. It is primarily in and through ethnography-based discussions that this thesis contributes to ongoing debates, in anthropology, and more broadly, about the ways people in different locales live, experience and understand their lives, and the ways in which these lives are shaped in the context of broader socio-cultural, political and economic configurations.

One way in which this thesis attempts to broaden the perspectives through which young Muslims' identities and practices may be understood is the attempt to question "methodological nationalism", and to inscribe young Norwegian Muslims' religious identities and practices in a broader context of globalization and transnationalism (cf. Lithman 2004; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). I have already indicated how a discourse-centred approach allows one to investigate the dynamics involved in how people link their Muslim identities

and practices discursively to texts, phrases and ideas held to be part of the universal tradition of Islam. Furthermore, we need to investigate how such texts, phrases and ideas, and the diverse media through which they are transmitted, circulate and are appropriated in different contexts. My insistence on the transnational dimension is due not least to my previous fieldwork among young Muslim women in France, and the comparative context it offers (Jacobsen 1999; 2005a). Although a systematic comparison between these two contexts could have offered important insights to the issues at hand, I have chosen not to pursue such an explicit comparison, mainly because of the need to give an account of the Norwegian situation in its own right. Nevertheless, it has made me more perceptive to the ways in which Islamic discourses have increasingly come to be inscribed into transnational spheres of reference and debate, that are shaped by broader economic, political and social forces, and the continuities in the identity discourses and religious practices it produces across localities. This impression of important continuities between young Muslims in Marseille and Oslo, is also confirmed by studies from other European countries (e.g. Amir-Moazami and Salvatore 2003; Fadil 2005; Fadil 2006; Otterbeck 2000; Schiffauer 1999; Schmidt 2002). I will draw on insights from such studies of young Muslims elsewhere in Europe, thus making the findings in this thesis relevant to the broader comparative field of studies of Islam in Europe.[11]

A further reason for wishing to question "methodological nationalism" is the way in which studies about Islam in Europe have tended to privilege the nation-state as the main unit of analysis, notably in their concern with "integration". As a result, adherence to Islam has often been seen as either facilitating or (most importantly) impeding adaptation and integration in the immigration context (cf. Waardenburg 2004).[12] A central concern of this thesis is to move beyond such a reductionism in descriptions of young Muslims' identities and practices. This

[11] Another comparative approach that could have been illuminating would be to deal with similar religious youth and student groups within the Christian majority population. Such an approach would have the advantage of "de-exoticizing", and could have contributed to bring out more clearly the structural conditions and processes that affect not only contemporary Muslim identities and practices, but also those of other religious traditions, and how these converge and differ from each other. When such a comparative context is not offered, it is due again to the necessity of giving an account of the situation of young Muslims in Norway in its own right.

[12] The argument that Islam hinders integration has been developed in the Norwegian context among others by Kaya (1998) and Wikan (1995). Kaya (1998: 89) writes that; Islam has an enormous power of resistance that works against integration in the process of adaptation. Furthermore, Islam is said to "protect against cultural influence from the host country" and to be a shield "when the cultural pressure of the host society is experienced as a direct threat to one's own form of life" (Kaya 1998: 90). Similarly, Wikan (1995) criticizes Muslims in Norway for resisting integration by "hiding" behind arguments about culture and Islam. Although Islam may no doubt be mobilized as a "resistance" to integration and adaptation, these interpretations are problematic on several accounts. For one thing, they do not sufficiently problematize the idea of integration, but seem to operate with the tacit idea that "integration" or "adaptation" of immigrants to a national Norwegian society, culture and community is a given normative direction for future development. Furthermore, they do not pay sufficient attention to the ways in which Islam may also be mobilized in a way that stimulates rather than hinders integration, to use the terms internal to this debate.

does not mean, however, that I disregard the fundamental importance of the contemporary nation-state order to the ways in which contemporary Muslim identities and practices are (re)produced. On the contrary, each national context continues to produce certain social imaginaries and opportunity structures, which Muslim immigrants have to deal with and respond to. A major engagement of this thesis is thus the concern with understanding issues related to diversity in the context of modern nation states. How does the Norwegian nation state (as an "imagined community" as well as a form of government) structure the lives of young Muslims, by defining and shaping the "multicultural" landscape of Norway and the categories of differentiation through which it operates, and through allocating resources and "rights" to different groups? While focusing on the consequences for young Muslims' identities and practices of the way in which "diversity" is imagined and managed in the Norwegian context, the thesis also points to the ways in which the nation-state is challenged by and responds to social, cultural and religious diversity.

This concern with questioning nationalist methodologies also resonates importantly with broader debates about the ways in which anthropologists conceptualize the relationship between place, community and culture (e.g. Appadurai 1996; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Hannerz 2002; Malkki 1992; Trouillot 2003). The analysis in the thesis illustrates the importance of critically assessing epistemological and ontological assumptions about an isomorphism between a place, a community and a particular culture or form of Islam. In order to understand the religious identities and practices of young Muslims in Oslo I draw upon perspectives that in different ways problematize the production of identity and cultural and religious forms in the spaces created by contemporary migration and globalization. I pay attention to how the lives of young Muslims in Oslo must be understood both in relation to differences within particular localities and communities, and to the interconnectedness of different localities and communities. These perspectives are brought to bear on a discussion that has been central to "the anthropology of Islam", notably with respect to unity/diversity and whether the religious beliefs and practices among Muslims in different localities should be approached as different local "Islams".

The thesis identifies two major processes or dimensions along the lines of which the religious identities and practices of young Muslims in the Muslim Youth of Norway and the Muslim Student Society need to be explored. Somewhat schematically, these may be referred to as "identity/difference" and "internal reform". It is in the dynamic relationship between these two dimensions that I wish to situate the NMU and the MSS, and the discussions and debates young Muslims engage in about what it means to be a Muslim, what Islam is, and

how it should be lived and represented. While these dimensions are analytically distinguishable, in practice they are deeply implicated in each other, and are examined as they articulate across a variety of social contexts. The first dimension relates to the ways in which young Muslims' religious engagement is shaped within processes related to the (re)production of difference and identity. This implies a focus on how young Muslims are positioned, and position themselves, in fields of discourse that inform their understanding of who they are and the kinds of "communities" they belong to. Young Muslims' identities are shaped in a dynamic, processual, relational and contextual manner, within particular institutional arrangements and relationships of power, as they orient their lives across several "horizons of action" (see chapter three). The way in which such processes of identity formation articulates as a form of identity politics, constitutes one important context for unpacking the ethnography.

The "internal reform" dimension relates to how such processes of identity formation are inscribed into a process of revitalization and reform of the Islamic tradition. Current formulations of a Muslim identity, and their articulation as identity politics, among young Muslims in Oslo, as elsewhere in Europe, proceed with reference to and in relative continuity with reformist discourses as they were developed in the Muslim world from the late 19th century on, and may thus be seen as part of an ongoing reform of the Islamic discursive tradition (cf. Amir-Moazami and Salvatore 2003). The "internal reform" dimension implies a focus on how Islamic traditions are reproduced, contested, and (re)interpreted by young Muslims in Oslo, and on the changing "conditions of possibility" that give rise to a set of discussions and debates about Islamic authority and normativity. This dimension thus illuminates the modalities through which young Muslims' identities and practices are shaped within a wider field of religious discourse, as they go about to interpret themselves and live their lives in light of the knowledges and norms that are interpreted and debated in diverse pedagogical settings where Islamic traditions are transmitted and taught. Of crucial importance in this respect, is how the intergenerational and gendered dynamics intersect with processes of internal reform as Islam becomes both a means for reinterpreting identity/difference and certain elements of "migrated traditions", and for constituting oneself as an "ethical subject" within the theological framework of the Islamic discursive tradition (cf. Foucault 1997; Mahmood 2005). It is my contention that investigating "identity/difference" and "internal reform" as simultaneous and mutually implicated dimensions, better equips us to understand what makes Muslim identity and practice powerful and meaningful to young Muslims in Oslo.

Through the ethnographically based analysis, the thesis addresses questions that are at the centre of contemporary social science theorizing about socio-cultural and religious diversity in the context of the modern nation-state order, about the relationship between tradition and modernity, and about religious continuities and discontinuities in the dynamics of migration and globalization in the contemporary world. In so doing, it offers ways of understanding why Islam continues to be so relevant to the lives of some young Muslims in Norway, without assuming it to be simply a part of the "cultural baggage" that is brought along with migration. It explores the particular "conditions of possibility" within which young Muslims' religious identities and practices are shaped, and in so doing deals with question regarding how subjectivities are shaped, the relationship between individuals and collectivities, and how "authority" is shaped and reshaped as the Islamic tradition is appropriated under particular socio-historical conditions.

The questions that I deal with are not only shaped by my theoretical and methodological orientations, however, as both my interests for and production of knowledge is inscribed in a wider socio-political field. When I started to work with young Muslims in Norway in 1998, the issues of "Islam" and "Muslim immigrants" were already a part of public debates in Norway, debates that have increased in force over the years. These have been an important part of the context in which I have been writing, in the same way that (as the analysis will show) they are an important part of the context in which the young Muslims I worked with live their lives. I have not attempted any systematic analysis of these debates, but my own engagement in them, and that of the young people I worked with, have importantly shaped my understanding of the discursive context in which my work is situated.

Research imaginaries and project design

Given that this thesis sets out to examine a field of dispersed discourses, debates and contestations, it is necessary to say something about the research imaginaries and methodological choices that inform this approach. While prolonged fieldwork among localized socio-cultural groups continues to define the anthropological discipline, the notion of "the field" has increasingly been subjected to critical scrutiny. The critiques of fieldwork that sprang up on the 1980s confronted empiricist epistemologies and naïve notions of space upon which certain kinds of fieldwork rested (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Marcus 1998; Marcus and Fischer 1986; Trouillot 2003). It was argued that "fields" do not exist "in-themselves", "waiting to be observed and written" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 125), but are

constructed in a complex interplay between different historical, political, social and cultural understandings of the relationship between places, communities, and cultures. The analytical and theoretical questions that anthropologists ask, and their methods and research imaginaries, further contribute to construct the "field". The "field" is thus the result of specific processes of historical, political and ethnographic imagination and delimitation. Trouillot rightly argues that this is not a problem of fieldwork per se, but of "the taking for granted of localities upon which the fetishization of a certain kind of fieldwork was built and the relationship between such isolated localities and supposedly distinct cultures" (Trouillot 2003: 125). In this respect, Trouillot usefully distinguishes between different meanings of the "field" as an object of study, as an object of observation, and as the place within which observation occurs. In my case, Oslo is the place in which most of the participant observation occurred, but it is not the "object of study" or "object of observation". The "object of study", circumscribed as the religious identities and practices of young Norwegian Muslims who live in Oslo, stretches far beyond this particular locality.

In 2003 the Muslim population in Norway was estimated to approximately 115 000, which equals about 2.5% of the Norwegian population.[13] Most Muslims in Norway are either migrants (including labour migrants, asylum seekers and refugees) or descendants of migrants. Although migration to Norway from Muslim countries started comparatively late, it followed a pattern similar to the "Muslim migration cycle" as described in other West-European countries (Alwall 1998; Cesari 1994; Kepel 1987; Leveau 1990; Leveau and Kepel 1988; Nielsen 1992; 1999; Opsal 1994). From the late 1960s, mainly male migrant workers started to arrive from Pakistan, Morocco and Turkey. A majority of the largest Muslim group, the Pakistanis, came from the rural Punjab area, but also from urban areas in Punjab and elsewhere. As for the Moroccans approximately 80% were Berbers from the rural areas of Northern Morocco, in the vicinities of Al-Hoceima and Nador (Vogt 2000). From Turkey, a majority came from the Konja area. Migrants from Turkey also include a quite large group of Kurds. The labour migration to Norway from these three countries largely took the form of a "chain migration" that is currently sustained through transnational marriage practices. After the ban on labour migration in 1975, the Muslim population was added to mainly by family

[13] The most common way to estimate the number of Muslims in Norway is to view immigration statistics in relation to the percentage of Muslims in a given country of emigration. Leirvik (2004) estimates the number of those who have a Muslim background in 2003 to 115 0000. In addition to those with a background in Muslim countries, comes an approx. of 500 converts (Leirvik 2004). Statistics related to minority religions and immigrants more generally are contested, as they are made the basis of competing political arguments. With respect to "counting Muslims" the statistics do not provide any information about how many consider themselves to be Muslims, and the diverse ways of being Muslim that such identifications encompass.

reunification and refugee movements, but also by a modest number of conversions (approx. 500). Among the important refugee groups are people from Bosnia, Kosovo, Iran, Iraq, and Somalia. In addition, there are some 15 000 Muslims from other countries in the Middle East, North Africa, Asia and Africa (Leirvik 2004). Oslo has attracted a larger number of Muslim immigrants than other parts of the country.[14] The spatial distribution of immigrants in the city is closely related to existing socio-economic structuring, and the bulk of Muslim immigrants, and non-Western immigrants in general, live in Oslo Centre East and the eastern suburbs (Blom 2002).[15] Muslims are a visible part of the Eastern city centre, with some 30 mosques and organizations concentrated here, and with the first Scandinavian mosque specifically built for that purpose.

Whereas anthropological studies of Muslims in Europe have tended to focus on Muslim groups or organizations defined by their shared national background, and/or in a particular neighbourhood or local community, I have chosen to focus on two Muslim youth and student organizations that gather youth from a variety of national backgrounds and from different parts of the city. Inspired by work on the cultural creativity of youth in multi-ethnic youth-groups, and by my previous knowledge of how Muslim communities in Europe were currently being restructured in a way that transcended ethnic boundaries, I wanted to choose a methodological procedure that challenged a priori assumptions of sameness conditioned by ethnicity, thereby avoiding taking a pre-defined "ethnic group" as my point of departure. Being composed of youth with a variety of ethnic and national backgrounds, the Muslim Youth of Norway and the Muslim Student Society were good starting points for exploring such processes. The internal heterogeneity of the NMU and the MSS in terms of ethnicity enabled me to explore new forms of identities energized by migration and globalization, but made it impossible to trace and inquire into all the multiple and complex historical, political, cultural and social frames of reference that operate within and between different "ethnic

[14] 43% of those who are categorized as non-Western immigrants in national statistics, including descendants, live in Oslo, whereas Oslo contains 11% of inhabitants in Norway as a whole (Melve et al. 2003). They thus make up some 18% of the city's population. For some groups, the concentration in Oslo is even larger, such as in the case of the Pakistani population of whom about 80% live in Oslo. These statistics are problematic in several ways. For one, the category of "non-Western immigrants" is closely related to the fact that European and North American immigrants are not included in the Norwegian immigrant discourse. There is a tendency to single out those who are assumed to be "culturally remote" as "the immigrants". Most "non-Western" immigrants come from Muslim countries, and – as will be discussed later on, "immigrant" has recently become virtually synonymous to "Muslim" in everyday language.

[15] Originally, immigrants settled in the traditional working class neighbourhoods of Eastern inner city, but with the current gentrification of these areas there is a tendency for immigrants, who may also wish to buy something of their own and need more space, to move out to the Eastern suburbs where prices are generally lower (Blom 2002; Melve et al. 2003).

groups" and "neighbourhoods". My focus was not primarily on investigating the importance of family-relations for the construction of religious identities and practices, but on how identities and practices were (re)constructed in the context of the youth and student groups. I therefore did not examine family-relations on the level of day-to-day live-in participant observation.[16] This does not imply that I regard such relations as insignificant in shaping the religious identities and practices of young Muslims. Rather, my focus on intra-generational arenas of sociability is a pragmatic choice of perspective that aims to bring out other aspects than those of more conventional anthropological studies that focus on the family, the ethnic group or a particular neighbourhood.

How to do "fieldwork" in an urban context where people and ideas move continuously between localities, is a challenge that anthropologists must increasingly face. Choosing to focus on a group of people that was not localized together in a particular neighbourhood where I could do "participant observation", posed some challenges to the construction of data during fieldwork. The organizations were relatively stable sites, but regular activities there were limited in terms of frequency. I thus had to be active in establishing other sites, and in building up a network of people who would alert me to important events and take me along to listen to some Islamic lecture, to a picnic with a group of friends etc. In the NMU and the MSS I participated regularly in *darses*, seminars, festivities, trips abroad and social outings. I also "followed the people" of the organizations into other arenas: home, work, the university, with friends and travelling abroad. As fieldwork progressed, this came to include not only active members in the organizations, but also those stopping by from time to time, as well as relatives, friends, and people linked to other Muslim organizations in the broader Islamic landscape in Oslo and beyond.

In the course of fieldwork I attended cultural arrangements, mosques,[17] weddings and communal religious rituals and festivities within and outside of Oslo. The international Islamic conferences in Oslo and Stockholm were privileged sites for exploring the transnational aspects of young Muslim's lives. In order to follow up on the transnational dimension in relation to migration, I also carried out a two-month period of fieldwork in

[16] Also for practical reasons, I rented my own apartment in Oslo instead of trying to find a family to live with. Most of the time I spent in homes was with young families who had established households independently of their parents – one in which I stayed on most of my shorter visits to Oslo – and only occasionally involved interaction with "the parental generation".

[17] Mosque (Ar. *Masjid*. a place of bowing down) is the commonly used term for all kinds of established public Muslim prayer-spaces in Norway. There is only one mosque in the narrower sense of the term, as referring to a particular architectural construction. Most mosques in Norway are thus flats, lofts and basements, and some warehouses and old factories, converted schools, and houses with gardens (cf. Naguib 2001).

Northern Morocco, one of the "back home" countries. Material from this fieldwork is not included in the final text of the thesis; it was a part of the research process that mainly served to give me a better understanding of young Muslims' relationship to "back home". In addition I followed up on the Muslim groups that I had previously been working with in France, one of which is an international partner of the NMU in a Federation of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations. The Internet was another important arena for social interaction, which needed to be explored. The e-mail discussion lists and homepages of the organizations, as well as other frequently visited sites such as diverse Islamic pages, chat rooms, and Islamic discussion groups, were important in producing data.[18] Similarly, the texts produced and distributed by the young Muslims in the form of *dawa* material, the magazines of the NMU and the MSS, the newspaper commentaries written by the participants etc., were valuable sources. In addition novels, the national media, statistics, as well as other academic literature provided not only a contextual backdrop for the study, but were also part of the material from which people constructed their lives.

In order to find out more about the lives of young Muslims, both in terms of a larger time-span and in terms of their experiences in arenas in which I did not do any systematic participant observation, I made semi-structured, open, in-depth interviews with many of the members and some non-members, individually and in groups. Interviews proved important not least to elicit young Muslims' own reflections on developments and changes in their "religiosity" over time, and on the ideas, norms and conceptions that they deemed central to their Muslim identities and practices. The individual interviews included 20 young women and 10 young men, and an additional 20 young women and men participated in the group-interviews, two of which were conducted together with Monica Aarset – who was also doing a fieldwork among young Muslims in Oslo at the time.[19] With some of those I interviewed I met only once, whereas with others I developed long-term relationships. In writing up the thesis, my preference has been to quote frequently and extensively from my interviews as well as from printed texts produced by the young Muslims. This is not because interviews and

[18] The use of Internet as a site for the production of ethnographic data raises important methodological questions with respect to e.g. veracity and the social contextualization of texts. Although such questions are also important with respect to this thesis, it may be worth noting that my inquiries into the Internet as a site for the production and circulation of Muslim identities and Islamic knowledges has been importantly informed by the cyber-paths established by the young Muslims I worked with. The texts that are discussed are thus mainly either produced by someone I have also had face-to-face interaction with, distributed within their social networks, or - in the case of chat-spaces and discussion forums - are produced in Internet spaces where the young Muslims participate on a regular basis.

[19] Sharing a field raises several methodological and ethical issues; e.g. about "trading information" between anthropologists and about the impact of a "double researcher's gaze" on the group dynamics. Aarset discusses these issues more thoroughly in her Masters thesis (forthcoming in Aarset 2006).

texts have been more important than participant observation as a means of gathering information, but because I have wanted to bring the reflections of the young Muslims into the text "in their own words" – although always already as interpreted, selected and put together by me as the author.

A major challenge to this study has been guarding the privacy and anonymity of my dialogue partners in the field. The NMU and the MSS are small and transparent networks and people may easily recognize themselves and others. After I published *Tilhørighetens mange former* (Jacobsen 2002) there were several occasions where those whom I had written about tried to figure out their own and other's pseudonyms (Am I Sarah? Who is Mohammed?). To assure anonymity, I have given all people that are referred to pseudonyms, but some might still be able to recognize themselves and others. In a few cases in which I consider anonymity to be particularly important, I have found it necessary to change biographical details such as age and place of living, but only in so far as these are not directly relevant to the understanding of the ethnographic material. In most cases, I use the same pseudonym consistently for a person who appears in several examples, so that it is possible to get some sense of continuity in the life histories. In other cases, assuring anonymity necessitates that the same person is referred to by several pseudonyms so that information will not "add up" in a way that makes it possible to identify a particular person. Citations from publicly available publications, such as the NMU and the MSS-magazines, are referred to by the authors full names, although in some cases the same person my also be cited elsewhere in the text under a pseudonym.

The "reflexive turn" in anthropology has meant that anthropologists are increasingly called upon to reflect on how they are positioned within the wider economic, social and cultural relations that structure the worlds they study, and how these structurings also serve to position the anthropologist in the field. As a white, female, middle class, non-Muslim, ethnic majority Norwegian, I came to inhabit particular positions in the sites where I did my fieldwork. But these positions were not fixed in terms of identity and difference, outsider and insider, and should not be understood in terms of totalizing concepts of difference, as absolute cultural otherness, or "radical alterity" (Keesing 1994). In part, I shared the material, social, cultural and political universe of the young Muslims I worked with, yet substantial parts of our lives were also formed and lived in sites that only rarely intersected. Doing fieldwork implied working with shifting sets of others with regard to whom I was differently positioned, both contextually in social interaction, and in terms of the structural power relations underpinning these contexts. Doing fieldwork "at home" thus implied a continual negotiation of categories

such as home and the field, insider and outsider, and identity and difference, a process that was central to the meaning that was produced in the interaction with the young Muslims.

In contrast to the recommendations that anthropologists should "write up" their material in a way that reflects this process and its consequences for the production of ethnographic accounts, I did not write myself into the text as part of the social life that I describe and analyse. Instead, I have tried to accommodate a critical self-reflexivity through the analysis of some of the value-practices of my own social and cultural background and of the epistemological premises of immigrant research in the Norwegian context. This strategy seems all the more fruitful, considering that Norwegian society is at the same time the ethnographic context of my study and "my own cultural context". In this way, I hope to be able to expose some of the "cultural biases" that may shape my understanding and analysis of Muslims in Norway (cf. Kapferer 1988: xxv). Reflexivity and "critical distance" in anthropological research is achieved not only by "cultural distance" and reflections on one's position in the field, but just as importantly by "the determined effort to refuse the couching of one's work at its very beginning - in its very conception - in naturalized, commonsense categories […]" (Marcus 1998: 16).

Outline of the thesis

Chapter one situates the major themes dealt with in the thesis in a comparative perspective, outlines the scholarly debates it addresses, and its theoretical and analytical orientations. It situates the study within scholarly debates on "travelling Islam", both as they relate to studies of Islam in Europe and Islam in wider contexts of migration and globalization. Secondly, I draw upon Talal Asad's suggestion to conceptualize Islam as a discursive tradition, as a framework for analyzing some of the complexities associated with Muslim identities and practices among young Muslims in Oslo, and for dealing with central theoretical issues related to unity and diversity in Islam, tradition and modernity, and to subject formation. Thirdly, I address some important epistemological questions about essentialism, comparison and gender. Through these discussions chapter one introduces the major theoretical, analytical, and epistemological approaches that the thesis is informed by and provides a starting point for the analysis in the following chapters. The following chapters are structured around specific themes and grounded in theme-related bodies of scholarship, while simultaneously engaging the main comparative themes and theoretical orientations from chapter one.

Chapter two starts the ethnographically based description by providing an ethnographic "baseline" for the following chapters. It presents the two Muslim youth and student organizations that are the ethnographic focus of the thesis, the Muslim Youth of Norway (NMU) and the Muslims Student Society (MSS). The ethnographic presentation of the NMU and the MSS locates them within the wider context of Muslim organizations in Norway, and shows how they represent both continuities and discontinuities with respect to previous structurings within the Muslim community along lines of age, generation, gender, ethnicity, class and education, and theology. I argue that while young Muslims come together on the basis of a shared "Muslim identity" and adherence to Islam, the internal diversity in the Islamic tradition, as well as differences related to gender, generation and ethnicity, continue to assert themselves as young Muslims organize religious activities together. The NMU and the MSS are arenas for debates and contestations about what it means to be young and Muslim in contemporary Norway. The chapter thus starts to trace how young Muslims address questions about what kind of communities they are and want to be part of, and what kind of traditions and values that should be normative and binding on these communities.

Chapter three deals ethnographically with the discourses in and through which imaginaries, communities, and identities related to being a Muslim are (re)created and contested in the context of migration and globalization. Through a consideration of a varied range of practices related to e.g. marriage, consumption, ritual, and of the young Muslim's narratives and written texts, the chapter singles out three "horizons of action" in terms of which young Muslims construct and orient their Muslim identities and practices, "the global Muslim community", "Euro-Norwegian Muslims", and "family and the ethnic diaspora". The chapter explores how young Muslims in Oslo relate to these three horizons, and how their social networks and relationships reproduce and cut across the different visions of community that these horizons offer. It also examines how they seek to realize some of the values and objectives associated with the different horizons, and the simultaneous processes of hybridization and boundary-making thus energized. Although my focus is on how young Muslims actively relate to the different horizons, I pay attention to how the horizons, and the relationships between them, are structured by complex power geometries, principles of inclusion and exclusion, and how they relate to and are energized by larger socio-political events and developments. The analysis of different horizons of action questions "naturalized" conceptions of place, community and identity and argues that in order to grasp the lives of Muslims in contemporary contexts of migration and globalization, "the anthropological of

Islam" needs to pay attention to the ways in which Muslim identities and practices are constituted across multiple and contested "horizons of action".

Chapter four discusses the NMU and the MSS as arenas for "identity politics" and to what extent this identity politics is geared towards a "politics of recognition" of equal dignity and authenticity. Central concerns for the two organizations relate to providing a "secure identity" for Muslim youth, to encourage "pride" in Muslim identity, to change existing patterns of representation in public debate about Islam and Muslims, and to demand "rights" that may secure religious practice. The chapter investigates how this identity politics must be seen as a reaction to the social, economic and cultural conditions structuring their lives in Norway, but also to transnational "ideoscapes" and political conflicts. In particular, I pay attention to the ways in which young Muslims' identity politics respond to the Norwegian state's integration policies and broader discourses on cultural and religious difference in contemporary Norwegian society. The chapter also explores how the "identity politics" of young Muslims intertwine with contemporary "Islamic revivalism" and the ways in which the active reference to and use of an Islamic framework to oppose cultural domination, nonrecognition and disrespect inscribes identity politics in the language of religious duty. It examines how "defending Islam" and being an "engaged citizen" comes to be constituted as a central part of young Muslims' religious practice. As a normative framework, Islamic discourses thus have important consequences for how young Muslims' quest for recognition comes to be shaped.

C**hapter five** shifts the focus from "identity" towards questions concerning the transmission of Islamic traditions in the context of migration and globalization. Identifying "objectification" as a major characteristic of contemporary Islamic imaginaries, I explore how Islam is passed on and made subject to reflection and debate in diverse social settings. I argue that changes in the texture and impact of migration, globalization and modernization transform the conditions for the (re)production of Islamic normativity and authority, in a way that both "normativizes" and "individualizes" Islamic knowledge. The modern conditions of mass education and mass mediation have made young Muslims more familiar with Islamic texts and doctrinal reasoning, and they engage in debate about theological and doctrinal issues that were once the provenance of male religious scholars. The chapter investigates the ways in which young Muslims invoke the authority of "Islam" and the Quran in commenting upon and criticizing prevailing understandings of what Islam is, and of Muslim practices, in debates occurring in different social relationships and contexts, ranging from conjugal relationships to meetings in the NMU and the MSS and to Islamic conferences. On the basis of such debates, I

discuss to what extent they reflect an "individualization" of the relationship of young Muslims to the Islamic tradition, and how such an individualization relates to broader changes in patterns of religious authority. I argue that young Muslims' relationship to the Islamic tradition is not individualized in the sense of being disembedded from authorizing discourses and Islamic authorities, but that references to authoritative Islamic sources provide the foundation on which opposing viewpoints are articulated.

In chapter six, I argue that knowledge of Islam is not only central to identity politics, but also to the production of Muslim subjectivities. I examine the ways in which people are made to respond to Islamic discourses and knowledges in the educational processes related to the search for "authentic knowledge", and how they are subjectivized through a set of techniques of the self. With an ethnographic base in "narratives of return", I analyse how these narratives may be seen as a technique of the self that allows the production of self-knowledge and provides a means for constructing oneself as a particular kind of moral subject. The narratives point to a variety of reorientations in religious practice, that are analysed as instruments for personal as well as social reform. The chapter also continues to probe the process of "individualization" discussed in chapter five, and in particular in relation to how the relationships between interiority and exteriority, intention and action, individual choice and religious duty are made subject to debates and contestations. It identifies an apparent duality in the normative discourses through which young Muslims come to know, reflect, and work on themselves as selves of a particular kind. This apparent duality is related to how they are exposed both to a discourse of individual authenticity, that centres on an "autonomous Self", and to an Islamic ontology, where one must strive to "work on the Self" in order to become a good Muslim and thus realize one's true human nature. The chapter sees the working out of this duality in the religious practices and beliefs of young Muslims as related to an appropriation of the Islamic tradition from within the frameworks of a (liberal-secular) modern society.

Chapter seven takes the analyses in the previous chapters further in a more theoretically informed discussion. Four major issues are elaborated. The first deals with a question that has been central to the "anthropology of Islam": how should we conceptualize unity/diversity with respect to Islam? Building on a combination of insights from the analysis made in previous chapters and a theoretical discussion of the issue of essentialism, I defend the notion that it is still worthwhile to speak of an anthropology of Islam rather than of Islams.

The second elaboration deals with the issue of "tradition". Based on the analysis in earlier chapters I discuss the question of whether young Muslims' claims to return to an authentic

Islam represent a modern invention of tradition. In discussing this, I defend a notion of tradition that does not oppose it to modernity, and that encompasses continuity as well as change, and reproduction as well as creativity.

In the third elaboration, the previous discussions are related to current debates about "individualization" as a dominant trend in European Muslims' relationship to Islam. I question the tendency to see "individualization" as the liberation of autonomous subjects from relations of authority, and the construction of Muslim youths' and women's agency in terms of a stark opposition between choice and force as related to modernity/tradition. To do so, I engage critically with the model of the autonomous subject that seems to underlie such a polarization, and argue that the process of individualization can be read as a production of a particular kind of (post)modern subjects, rather than as the liberation of autonomous individuals from tradition.

In the fourth elaboration I make some reflections of an epistemological and normative political character about the possibilities of anthropology to offer a "cultural critique" in the field of immigration studies. Discussing some "critical interventions" in the Norwegian public and academic debate and their epistemological and normative foundations, I identify some problems that concern the classical dilemma between cultural relativism and ethnocentrism. I argue that both these options have their drawbacks, but nevertheless defend an attempt at retaining a "methodological relativism" as the basis of research. This is necessary not least in order to question the "methodological nationalism" at the core of many contemporary immigration studies and studies of Muslims in Europe, where social, cultural and religious difference is made to appear mainly as an "Other" to a national imagined community.

Chapter one

Situating the study: comparative themes, theoretical orientations, and epistemological challenges

In this chapter, I will give some directions to the reading of the following chapters, by delineating some of the constituted debates with which the thesis engages, and by giving some theoretical and analytical orientations for the rest of the thesis. Last in the chapter, I will offer some brief reflections on certain epistemological and methodological challenges I have faced in writing the thesis. In order to broaden the analytical and theoretical frameworks within which young Muslims' religious identities and practices are usually examined, I have found it necessary to move in-between different bodies of scholarship and constituted debates, thus attempting to do justice to the complexities of the lives of the young Muslims I came to know during fieldwork. My point is not to try to overcome the theoretical contradictions this yields, and to resolve them into an overall integrated theoretical argument. Rather, I see the tensions as a fruitful way of retaining and making sense of the tensions and ambivalences in my empirical material, as I strive to make these perspectives critically inform the analysis. The reference to debates and contestations as a point of departure for exploring religious identities and practices, should in this sense be seen as referring not only to those that young Muslims engage in, but also the debates and contestations that researchers are involved in when trying to make sense of peoples' lives. The arguments in this thesis, and its polyphonic and at times unsettled resonance with a variety of perspectives, may in itself be seen as embodying such a theoretical debate, and to point to the inherent dilemmas in understanding and textualizing the complexities of human existence in the world.

Understanding 'Travelling Islam'

Towards an anthropology of Islam in Europe

Anthropologists have for long contributed to understanding Islam as it developed in a variety of locations around the world, but "the anthropology of Islam" nevertheless long remained associated with the ethnographic region of the Middle East (Abu-Lughod 1989; Asad 1986).[20]

[20] The extent to which Islam is still primarily associated with the Middle East in anthropology and other fields is debatable. Nevertheless, in my academic life at the University of Bergen, I have found myself following

Different sets of questions have emerged as central to anthropological studies of Islam and Muslims in different ethnographic regions, but there have also been convergences as researchers have in different ways tried to grasp localized Islamic beliefs and practices and their relationship to Islam as a text-based world-religion. Islam and Muslim lives have of course in various ways been associated with migratory processes in anthropological studies. A hallmark of anthropological approaches has nevertheless been to study Islam within different local contexts (Manger 1992; 1999), and to focus on the different religious styles that develop as Islam is embedded in local social structures and symbolic systems (e.g. Boddy 1989; Geertz 1968; Lambek 1993; Rosen 1984). This approach has much to be said for it, in particular in a climate where generalized and non-contextualized statements about "Islam" and "the Muslim world" are central to the construction of "friends and enemies" in international politics. But in a context of increased mobility of people, goods and ideas, combined with the sometimes violent imposition of local, regional and national boundaries (e.g. visa regulations, racism), the idea of "the local" has become increasingly problematic. In *The Uses of Diversity* Geertz tries to grasp the kinds of "spaces" that anthropologists must increasingly grapple with:

> […] we are living more and more in the midst of an enormous collage […] where […] rather than being sorted into framed units, social spaces with definite edges to them, seriously disparate approaches to life are becoming scrambled together in ill-defined expanses, social spaces whose edges are unfixed, irregular, and difficult to locate […] (Geertz 1994: 464).

Although Geertz attempts a general characteristic of the contemporary world, the social spaces created by Muslim immigration to Europe aptly exemplify such developments in people's life-worlds. An important challenge for the emerging anthropology of Islam in Europe is thus to develop theoretical approaches in which Islam may be theorized in relation to the internal diversity among Muslims in localities produced by international migration and globalization and to the multifaceted local, national and transnational imaginaries and networks that link people across localities.

How do we go about grasping the Muslim identities and practices that are produced in "social spaces whose edges are unfixed, irregular, and difficult to locate" and where "seriously disparate approaches to life are becoming scrambled together"? This has been one

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seminars on the Middle East at the Department of Social Anthropology (where the world is still divided, somewhat awkwardly for us who do research on migration, into ethnographic regions), participating in the activities of the Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic studies, and lecturing within the frames of the ethnographic regions of both Europe and the Middle East. However, the geographical scope of "Islamic studies" has increased significantly in later years.

of the major challenges animating recent writings on Muslims in Europe. Initially, the main concern with "the new Islamic presence in Western Europe" arose from a concern with the "integration" of immigrants in Western-European nation states (Nielsen 1992). Much literature was marked by a "top-down" perspective of comparison between Muslim immigrants from different countries, between the institutionalization of Islam in different national contexts, and the relationship between the collective identities and practices of Muslim minority groups and the State. Another line of research focused on questions central in sociological and anthropological migration studies more generally, pertaining to how different "ethnic groups" or "Muslim communities", adapted to the new "home country". With respect to immigrant and Muslim youth in particular, a major line of research revolved around such concepts as acculturation, assimilation, culture conflict, being between-two-cultures", and "identity-crisis" (Vertovec and Rogers 1998).

Two partly overlapping major reorientations came to impact significantly on studies of Muslims in Europe: the increasing concern in the social sciences with phenomena related to "globalization" and "transnationalism", and the broad anti-essentialist critique, which within the field of migration studies was importantly influenced by cultural studies, feminist and post-colonial theories, and post-structuralism and post-modernism more generally. These reorientations marked significant changes in underlying epistemological and ontological assumptions about mobility, displacement, and identity, expressed in a shift in spatial metaphors from *roots* to *routes* (Clifford 1997; Hall 1995) and *uprootedness* to *deterritorialization* (Appadurai 1996; Deleuze and Guattari 1983; Malkki 1992). The critique of what Malkki (1992) refers to as the "metaphysics of sedentarism" in modernist approaches to migration, challenged the underlying identification of place, community and culture expressed through metaphors of rootedness/uprootedness and guest/host relationships.[21] Migration instead increasingly came to be seen in terms of a culturally creative process, giving birth to hybridized spaces and identities.

Such spaces have been analysed as diasporas, borderlands, interstices, third spaces, and heterotopias, and the cultural forms and identities produced in such in-betweens seen as: hybridity, bricolage, creolization, mestizaje, mongrelization, mélange, montage and third cultures (cf. Hannerz 2002). Cultural difference at the margins of society (border zones,

[21] The "metaphysics of sedentarism" refers to the profoundly territorializing tendency to identify peoples and cultures with particular pieces of land and to isomorphically relate people and place to nation (Malkki 1992). Within this perspective children and youth of immigrant background were often described as undergoing identity crises, and as suffering from the predicament of being suspended "between two cultures", the "home-land culture" and the "host-land culture" (see e.g. Andersson et al. 2005 for a critique of this perspective).

ghettos, multicultural youth groups, diasporas) was re-conceptualized as sites of creativity and resistance (to capital, the State, racism or majority hegemonies), rather than mere exclusions from a centre. With this shift, youth cultures in (global/multiethnic) cities became privileged sites for exploring the impact of globalization on the cultural identities of migrants (see e.g. Andersson et al. 2005; Vestel 2003; Vestel 2004 on Norway; Ålund 1992 on Sweden). In particular within the so-called Cultural Studies School, attention was paid to the ways in which interstitial spaces allowed different aspects of popular culture such as food, cinema, dance and music to fuse and mix in new and interesting ways. These approaches have also been influential with respect to studies of Muslim youth in Europe. Vertovec and Rogers' edited "Muslim European Youth" (1998), for instance, was important in introducing an anti-essentialist approach to the study of identity, community and religion with respect to Muslim youth in particular. Premised on the conceptual language of multiplicity, hybridity, and cultural creativity, it challenged accounts of closed and impenetrable systems and allowed instead for ideas of permeability and transformation in Muslim identities and practices.

Recent research has also paid increasing attention to the ways in which transnationalism and globalization currently affect Islam and Muslims in Europe and elsewhere (Ahmed and Donnan 1994; Allievi and Nielsen 2003; Beyer 2001; Fischer and Abedi 1990; Grillo 2004; Mandaville 2004; Turner 1991; Vertovec 2003). There is a variety of anthropological and other approaches to such multifaceted processes, and to the cultural and religious practices and identities that emerge in the spaces they create.[22] Muslims in Europe have among other things been conceptualized as constituting "diasporas" (Cesari 2000; Saint-Blancat 1997; Werbner 2000; Werbner 2002a) and as living in "the new but quintessential borderland" (AlSayyad and Castells 2002),[23] and Islam in Europe as "migrant Islam" (Yalçin-Heckmann

[22] There is by now an enormous literature on the concept of "globalization" and how we should understand it, whether it exists at all, whether it is a new phenomenon, and what parts of human and social life it affects. Important critiques of the theoretical and political consequences of globalization theories have been voiced on a number of points, and it has been suggested that the concept of globalization functions as an ideological underpinning of particular power geometries in contemporary late capitalism (see e.g. Dirlik 1999; Dirlik 2003; Friedman 2002). In spite of the criticisms I find it useful to retain a notion of globalization to refer to the processes of movement and circulation by which different kinds of e.g. social, economic, cultural, and religious relationships are stretched over space (Massey 1994). Such relations establish and are established by the flows of people, ideas and goods across national boundaries, and are imbued with meaning and symbolism, as well as with power. Conceptualizing globalization in this way does not imply a historical rupture or that it should be considered as "new". Rather than making such assumptions, one should probably make sense of how the stretching out of different flows and social relations is enabled by e.g. new communication technologies and disenabled by e.g. international visa-regulations in a variety of ways in different socio-historical contexts, and the diversity of effects it produces. What I will be particularly concerned with in this thesis is the flows facilitated by international migration and new communication technologies.

[23] On the concept of borderland AlSayyad and Castells refer to Gupta and Ferguson (1992: 18) who write that "The term does not indicate a fixed topographical site between two other fixed locales (nations, societies,

1998), "travelling Islam"[24] (Pieterse 1997) and as an "emerging Third Space"[25] (AlSayyad and Castells 2002). Attention has also been paid to emerging transnational public spheres, transnational infrastructures of communication, and the emergence of global Muslim identities (Eickelman and Anderson 1999; Eickelman and Salvatore 2002; Mandaville 2004; Pieterse 1997).

The (re)production of religious identities and practices in the context of migration and globalization

The broad anti-essentialist critique of terms such as culture, identity and ethnicity, and their re-definition as more open, fluid, contested, and as socially constructed, are now increasingly advocated as a means for understanding the religious identities and practices of young Muslims in Europe (Vertovec and Rogers 1998). They certainly mark an advance in conceptualizing emergent forms and modes of expression among Muslim youth, and importantly challenge understandings of Islam in Europe as a tradition that migrants "transplant" from the "home country" to the "host country", and as something that the "second generation" either reproduce or abandon.[26] However, any attempt to study Islam in

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cultures), but an interstitial zone of displacement and deterritorialization that shapes the identity of the hybridized subject". Donnan (2001) has similarly suggested the term "borderland" to refer to inter-cultural spaces, which exist not only at the edges of the nation-state, but anywhere cultures meet. According to Donnan, borderlands are "zones of cultural overlap characterized by a mixing of cultural styles. They are liminal spaces, simultaneously dangerous and sites of creative cultural production open to cultural play and experimentation as well as domination and control" (Donnan 2001: 1290). Similarly Pieterse (1997) refers to "borderlands" as sites where the formation of Muslim culture is shaped by intercultural cohabitation in which there is a dialogue between the local context and the Islamic paradigm. A problem with such notions of borderlands is simlar to the one of "hybridity" (cf. Caglar 1997) in that it seems either to assume that there exist such fixed locales as nations, societies and cultures that are not borderlands, or that all spaces may to some extent be characterized as borderlands, since no "culture" or "society" can be wholly homogenous and self-contained .

[24] Rather than "transplanted", a term that was more frequently used previsously.

[25] Referring to Bhabha's (1994) theorizing of "third spaces" as interstitial zones of displacement and deterritorialization in which different cultural practices transform each other to shape new cultural forms and hybrid identities.

[26] In a study that has influenced much later research on Muslims in Norway Ahlberg (1990) argues, as the title *New Challenges, Old Strategies* suggests, that Pakistani Muslims in Norway deal with new challenges on the basis of particular attitudes and strategies developed in the "home country". This focus on continuity with the "homeland" has also been prominent with respect to the so-called second-generation. On the basis of a survey on the religious belief of Norwegian youth, Øia (1998: 141) concludes that the firm belief in the existence of God affirmed by a majority of youth with a Muslim background from Asia and Africa is a sign of traditionalism and fundamentalism. 85% of Muslim boys and 86% of Muslim girls answered that they "knew there was a God". To 40% religion was said to be "very important in their daily lives", to 40 % it was "somewhat important" and to 20% it was said to have little or no importance for how they lived their lives. 55% of the boys and 28% of the girls reported participating once a month or more in mosques or other places where religious meetings were held. Øia is aware of the difficulties in quantifying religious belief and practice, but does not sufficiently problematize how such figures should be analyzed. As I have argued elsewhere (Jacobsen 2002), and as will become clear from the argument in this thesis, interpreting Muslim youth's religious belief and practice as traditionalism is

Europe within the dynamics of "transnationalism" and "globalization", and the spaces created within such dynamics, must be aware of the theoretical challenges such ventures pose. These challenges have by now been extensively treated with respect to issues of migration and globalization in general, but less so with respect to Muslims and Islam in Europe specifically.

The initial "cheerfulness" in theories stressing mobility and the decentred subject within the "spatial turn" has been subjected to much criticism (see e.g. Asad 1993; Brah 1996; Friedman 2002). Already ten years ago, critics writing from a post-Marxist perspective argued that mobility needs to be theorized in terms of (penetrating) power (Asad 1993), or a "power geometry" (Massey 1994). Massey, for one, is concerned with what it is that determines degrees of mobility and the ways in which people experience contemporary space-time compression (Massey 1994). She develops a useful concept of *power geometry*, referring to the way in which people are placed in distinct ways in relations to flows and movement as their initiators, their chargés, their receivers – or as imprisonned by them (Massey 1994). The power governing mobility operates on different levels, from international visa regulations to the restriction of women's movement in public space on the basis of cultural and religious norms. Asad (1993) also criticizes what he sees as a celebration of the contemporary cultural predicament of mobility as enabling creative human agency (e.g. Clifford 1988). This celebration of human agency, Asad insists, overlooks that it is by geographical and psychological movement that modern power inserts itself into pre-existing structures. Mobility, just like history, must be seen in terms of power. There is thus a risk of overstating flux, fluidity and creativity, of overlooking social and symbolic structures of power and their reproduction, and of romanticizing ethnic minorities and other "marginalized" groups as a site of resistance and cultural innovation.

A further reservation should be noted as to the utility of theories that focus on migration in terms of culturally creative processes that give birth to hybridized spaces and identities in understanding contemporary Muslim identities and practices in Europe. This regards the extent to which change, fluidity, mixture and openness is often constructed in contrast to an

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problematic, at least when it is set up as a contrast to "modernity". Øia's use of the term "fundamentalist" in this respect is also highly problematic, not least because of its strong negative connotations. Furthermore, to the extent that the young Muslims I worked with characterized themselves as fundamentalists, it was precisely in order to distance themselves from traditionalism, expressed through a wish to find a way back to the "fundaments of Islam". This reflects a distinction that is also made in academic literature between traditionalism and fundamentalism, where these are in some respects opposite to each other and refer to different forms of religious identity and practice. Fundamentalism is also a contested concept in the academic literature, not least because its origin within Protestant theological debate, and raises important questions about issues of cultural translation (cf. Roald 2001). Another study which similarly identifies the religiosity of young Norwegian Muslims with traditionalism is Kaya's (1998) dissertation, in which "modern" is synonymous to "non-believing" and "traditional" to "believing".

assumed category of “reactionary” or “fundamentalist” movements of ethnic and religious absolutism (cf. Asad 1993; Mahmood 1996a; Mahmood 1996b). Kaplan has rightly noted that there has been a tendency, in particular among so-called post-modern scholars, to create hierarchies between migrants, diasporic groups and “hybrids”, where, “The valorization of generalized hybridity is presumed to construct a global or cosmopolitan set of identities that are superior to the nineteenth-century conventions of nation, race, and gender that immigrants negotiate in their efforts to assimilate” (Kaplan 1996: 136). One instance is Eriksen’s *Ambivalence and Fundamentalism* (1999), where he suggests that so-called second-generation immigrants are faced with three kinds of options with respect to identity formation: pure identities, hyphenated identities or Creole identities. Eriksen characterizes “pure identities” as a “puritan and traditionalist choice” one offered by “conservative religious and identity-politicians”. These, Eriksen writes, “neutralize the chaos that characterizes the surroundings and frees the individual from ambivalence and impossible dilemmas”, they “define clear-cut boundaries, defines rules for behaviour and prohibit negotiation of values and moral”, and they are “means to acquiring a positive self-image”. The result of such “pure identities”, however, “is both a lack of integration and big personal frustrations, because the pure identities must be experienced as a straitjacket when they are to be acted out in modern, culturally mixed surroundings that jubilate the individual’s infinite options of choice” (Eriksen 1999: 9).

Eriksen does not specify which kinds of movements that would fit into his definition of “pure identities”, but he decries the development among Scandinavian immigrants who were “not much occupied with belonging and cultural identity when they came here” and had “a relaxed attitude to their religion, which they practiced without making a big issue of it”, but who, driven by the realization that they were not treated as equals are “tempted by pure identities” and react with “cultural puritanism and identity politics”. In contrast, Eriksen’s creolized Muslims “can for instance be Muslims and drink beer and eat roast pork”, and “they go to the mosque one day and to a disco the next” (Eriksen 1999: 19). I agree with Eriksen that the relationship between purity/ impurity and closure /openness is a significant aspect of identity processes. However, I believe that a schematic distinction between “pure” and “mixed” identities, and a generalized understanding of the experiences such identities engender, the forms of integration they offer, and the factors they “respond to”, provide only limited help for understanding the complexities involved in e.g. such a phenomena as religious revitalization among Muslim youth in Oslo. Most importantly, it ignores the ways in which modern forms of power make people subjects (e.g. how people come to understand and

enact their lives in terms of choice, but under conditions that systematically limit the capacities of so many to shape their own destiny). More precisely, it takes for granted a particular subject form (which could be glossed as liberalist and secular) where the individual is somehow detached from its memberships, values and capacities, and is outside any particular framework of moral questions or discursive tradition (cf. Asad 2003; Gressgård and Jacobsen 2006; Larsen 1999; Veer 1997). This is underlined by the way in which Eriksen suggests that someone suffering from "identity hypochondria" may eventually seek out a "mullah, a novelist, a professor, or a sex-partner" to recover, and that religion is something one has a particular "attitude" to and not something which is constitutive of whom or what one is.

While this thesis is importantly informed by the epistemological and ontological reorientations in assumptions about mobility, community, and identity discussed above, it also acknowledges the limits of such perspectives as a way of conceiving of young Muslims' religious identities and practices. I attempt to deal with such concepts as "community" and "identity" in a way that does not assume singular and stable individual and group identities, based on a "shared culture" or belonging to a "community, or that lack of such singularity and stability causes an "identity-crisis" among youth with an immigrant background. Instead, I pay attention to how young Muslims are allocated to – and relate themselves to – a multiplicity of spaces and communities: cross-cutting, intersecting, aligning with one or another, or existing in relations of paradox or antagonism (Massey 1994: 3). In order to theorize the complex spaces that young Muslims inhabit, I suggest that we speak of multiple "horizons of action", an argument that will be developed in chapter three. The main ambition here is to describe how Muslim identities and practices are refracted in and through a multiplicity of imaginaries in terms of which people orient themselves, and in relation to which identities and practices are shaped.[27] These "horizons of action" provide sometimes

[27] This notion of "imaginaries draws both on Anderson's notion of "imagined communities and on Appadurai's (1996) elaboration of the importance of "imagination" in the construction of contemporary identities, where the nexus between media and migration provides a productive and positive instability in the creation of identities, in that it allows people to "imagine" communities that are not locally based. To say that communities are imagined is not to say that they are "just" imaginaries. Imagined communities are also materialized in, and underpinned by, social institutions and practices. I find Brah's (1996) discussion of "diasporic communities" useful. She sees "diasporic communities" as differentiated, heterogeneous and contested, but they may nevertheless – in view of their shared imaginations, institutions and interactions – be usefully referred to as "communities". "Diasporic communities" are historically contingent formations, experienced differently from different positions (of such things as class, gender and political orientation), even as they are implicated in the construction of a common (and often essentialized) "we", that may be imagined in different ways (e.g. as an organic whole, a bloodline, a racial group, formal citizenship, a community of suffering, or a moral community) (Brah 1996: 184). Such a notion of community is meant to allow for internal diversity and conflict, for crosscutting ties and for multiple

overlapping, sometimes contradictory visions of the world and scripts for how people should live and act, for what it entails to be a Muslim, and for what Islam is and should be. Each of these horizons is constituted according to different principles of inclusion and exclusion, values and objectives. They are underpinned by histories, institutions, social relationships, and patterns of social practice, and offer different visions of "community". These imaginaries are "normative" in the sense that they suggest what is good, just and desirable. They also relate to particular pasts and project particular futures, e.g. the unification of Muslims across national boundaries, or Islam as an integral part of Norwegian society. As such, they demonstrate contestation over what should be included in, and defining of, particular spaces, communities and identities. The importance of power and normativity to how young Muslims orient themselves in terms of such "horizons of action" will be a crucial feature of the analysis. Although the mobility of people, capital, ideas, media and technology (Appadurai's (1996) five "scapes") may enable people to imagine themselves beyond the limits of the local, people are not free to "move" or even relate imaginatively to spaces in any way they want. The extensions of spaces are variously defined – their limits variously imposed, transgressed and reset (Asad 1993: 8). The main challenge is thus not to determine whether young Muslims "choose" "pure" or "hybrid" identities, but to explore how their conditions of existence and their ways of orienting themselves in the world are shaped by the complex power-geometries of the contemporary world.

The nation-state and politics of identity

Modernizing nation states are one of the most important powers that organize and authorize spaces today; defining among other things peoples' mobility in the world, who are members and not of national "imagined communities", and peoples' "rights" and "duties" as citizens. Whereas some scholars seem to suggest that transnationalism and globalization both reflect and contribute to the disempowering of the nation-state (Appadurai 1996), others detail the ways in which the nation-state is currently responding to, adapting to, and collaborating with the broader processes at work in what is commonly referred to as globalization (Ong 1999). While it is not my intention to address these questions at a general level, I believe that in fields such as immigration, and when it comes to structuring the conditions of existence of young Muslims in Norway, the nation-state, although challenged by difference, continues to

identities. Communities are here seen as constructed through intersecting samenesses and differences, inclusions and exclusions, solidarities and antagonisms.

play a crucial role. Muslim identities then, are also made and unmade in the context of modern nation-states and their ways of coping with difference.

The various ways in which European nation-states create, respond to and seek to discipline difference, has been extensively treated in the literature, not least in relation to such concepts as "multiculturalism" and "identity politics". Research on migrant populations and "in-between spaces" has importantly problematized how minority groups mobilize around a diversity of "identity politics" in order to obtain recognition, legitimacy, and rights within the framework of the nation-state. This is a theme that will be addressed in this thesis, through a focus on young Muslims' engagement in activities organized around questions of recognition, rights, and political representation. I understand identity politics in line with Calhoun (1994: 21) as collective and public struggles that involves both "claiming" certain identities, on the one hand, and questioning and refusing imposed or prescribed identities, on the other hand. The mobilization of young Muslims in organizations that are concerned with creating a space for Islam in Norwegian society, opposing negative views and stereotypes of Islam and Muslims, and demanding rights to secure religious practice, involves a politicization of religious identity that may be understood as a specific form of "identity politics" involving a quest for "recognition".

While, as outlined above, researchers have become increasingly occupied with deconstructing essentialist notions of identity, community and culture, the political arenas of European nation-states seem increasingly to be constructed around struggles involving group identities of various sorts, related to e.g. race, ethnicity, gender, culture and religion. In his influential essays on *The Politics of Recognition* (1994)[28] and *The Ethics of Authenticity* (1992), Taylor seeks, among other things, to account for the modern preoccupation with identity and recognition, which is expressed in the contemporary prevalence of identity-based claims for recognition on the political scene. The foundation of Taylor's perspective is a philosophical anthropology which sees human existence as fundamentally dialogical. For Taylor, this implies that identity must always be defined through languages and in dialogue with, and sometimes in struggle against, significant others and their "recognition". In contrast to those who focus on hybridity and border-crossing, and the ability of migrants to "reinvent" themselves continually, Taylor is concerned with the continuity of selfhood in the larger conversations in which it takes part (Veer 1997). As will be discussed, Taylor's perspective

[28] Since it was first published in 1992, Taylor's article has been at the centre of important and complex debates on contemporary politics related to different minority and immigrant groups (see e.g. Barry 2001; Baumann 1999; Benhabib 2002; Fraser 1997; 1998a; 1998b; 2000; Taylor et al. 1994).

on identity and culture needs to be problematized in light of the above critiques of essentialist approaches to culture, community and society, in order not to reify and essentialize cultural and religious identities and practices as the properties of reified groups. One the other hand, Taylor's insistence on the fundamentally dialogical character of identity formation, and on people's efforts to achieve a coherent sense of self, importantly modifies the tendencies of these latter perspectives to see identities as taking shape "outside" of discursive traditions and narratives that shape a subject's life as a whole.

In his theory of the politics of recognition, Taylor argues that in the modern age, the conditions and social basis for recognition have come under particular challenge. Taylor points to two fundamental changes that together account for the contemporary proliferation of the "politics of recognition". The first is the collapse of social hierarchies that used to be the basis for honour.[29] The second is the growing importance of the modern notion of dignity, now used in a universalist and egalitarian sense to indicate a worth that everyone shares. The recognition of equal dignity has been essential to democratic culture, and has now returned in the form of demands for the equal status e.g. of cultures and of genders. But the importance of recognition has also been modified and intensified by the modern understanding of individualized identity and its ideal of "authenticity": that of being true to oneself and one's own particular way of being. According to Taylor, this new ideal of authenticity was, like the idea of dignity, also in part an offshoot of the decline of hierarchical society. In earlier societies, Taylor argues, people's identities were largely fixed by their social position, and general recognition was built into a "socially derived" identity by virtue of the very fact that it was based on social categories that everyone took for granted.[30] In modern societies, people can still define themselves partly by their social roles, but the modern ideal of authenticity calls on individuals and groups alike to discover their own original way of being. The understanding of identity that springs from the modern ideal of authenticity, Taylor argues, gives recognition a new and decisive importance; my own identity depends, in a fundamental

[29] Taylor uses "honour" in the *ancien regime* sense in which it is intrinsically linked to inequalities. In order for someone to have honour in this sense, it is essential that not everyone has it.

[30] A critique that has frequently been raised against Taylor's account is that he seems to assume that pre-modern and non-Western social institutional arrangements offered grounds for more immediate, perfect, unnegotiated and conflict-free recognition than what is plausible to assume (Calhoun 1994). I agree with this critique, but as Calhoun (1994) argues, although recognition may never have followed immediately on socially derived and/or sanctioned identities, the social basis for recognition seems to have come under particular challenge in the contemporary situation. In addition to the broader changes in modern understandings of honour, dignity, identity that Taylor describes, Calhoun relates this among other things to the emergence of "enormous nation states, international diasporas, wide realms of personal choice, unstable and heterogeneous networks of social relations, mass media for the proliferation of cultural transmission, and the sheer multiplicity of discourses attempting to name or constitute persons".

way, on my dialogical relations to others. The central thesis underlying the "politics of recognition", writes Taylor, is that:

> […] our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the *mis*recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of repression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being (Taylor 1994: 25).

Taylor's concern with tracing these historical shifts from honour to dignity and from socially derived identities to authenticity is a way of sorting out what he sees as a fundamental dilemma for modern democratic societies. In Taylor's view, a fundamental dilemma arises between the demand to recognize individuals as equal (and in this respect identical to all other individuals) and the demand to recognize (individuals and groups) as unique and singular (and in this respect different from other individuals and groups):

> With the politics of equal dignity, what is established is meant to be universally the same, an identical basket of rights and immunities; with the politics of difference, what we are asked to recognise is the unique identity of this individual or group, their distinctness from everyone else. The idea is that it is precisely this distinctness that has been ignored, glossed over, assimilated to a dominant or majority identity. And this assimilation is the cardinal sin against the ideal of authenticity (Taylor 1994: 38).

Taylor's essay on "The Politics of Recognition" has been subject to numerous debates notably within normative political philosophy and in broader debates on multiculturalism. It is not my intention to rehearse these theoretical debates here (but see Gressgård and Jacobsen 2003). Neither do I want to make a contribution to normative debates about the future of multicultural societies.[31] My reason for introducing Taylor's perspective and the debates it has given rise to (see chapter four) is simply that I want to draw on them as a point of departure for approaching my ethnographic material, and see what kind of sense it will allow me to make of the religious identities and practices in the context of the Norwegian nation-state and its ways of coping with difference. More precisely, I want to see how the dilemma Taylor describes is played out in the context of Norwegian discourses and politics related to Muslim immigrants (and their descendants), and how the identity politics of young Muslims respond to this dilemma. However, rather than seeing young Muslims as seeking recognition of a pre-defined cultural difference, as seems to be implied in Taylor's approach to recognition, I seek to explore how they are inserted into specific economic, political and cultural conditions and

[31] The question of legitimacy is central in normative political debates about the politics of recognition, but will not be dealt with here. I use recognition analytically as a way of grasping some aspects of the politics of identity and not as a point of departure for assessing social arrangements normatively in terms of justice/injustice.

the ways in which this insertion, as it intersects with the religious traditions that are mobilized, structures the politicization of Muslim identities and practices within the space of the nation-state.

Islam as discursive tradition

An important question that arises from the previous debates is how to conceptualize Islam in the context of anti-essentialist critique and of a world where "cultures", "communities", and "identities" cannot be taken for granted, but where Muslim identity is simultaneously mobilized in identity politics and quests for "recognition". A consequence of inscribing this study in the above-mentioned debates on identity seems to be an approach to Islam that mainly sees it through the prism of identity/difference. Indeed, there has been a tendency to focus on Islam mainly as a marker of group identity and difference, thus reflecting debates on multiculturalism and immigration more generally, where attention is often limited to "those distributions of meanings and meaningful forms which are emblematic, involving clear group distinctions" (Hannerz 2002: 7). The relative lack of attention paid to Muslim religious experiences and practices beyond markers of "identity" and "difference", may also reflect a secularist bias in the society at large, a bias which structures the encounter between researchers and the religious subjects of study in the field. Roald (2001) notes that some Muslims tend to speak in "worldly" terms in their discussions with non-Muslims, thus conforming to non-Muslim perceptions. This structuring in terms of a secularist bias may also impinge on the sensitivity of researchers to grasp the religious meanings of what is spoken and done, a difficulty I encountered and continually had to struggle with during my own fieldwork.

While the virtues of anti-essentialism in opposing over-simplified understandings of "cultures", "communities", and "identities", and in directing focus towards the processes of boundary making, are obvious, it is nevertheless important to develop ways of dealing with the historically sedimented discourses that continue to form the basis not only for people's collective and individual identities, but for how people are constituted, and come to see themselves, as subjects of a particular kind, with particular capacities for e.g. action, self-reflection, particular ethical valorizations – and how people attempt to realize certain ways of life. In "Confessions of a useful idiot, or Why culture should be brought back in" Eriksen (2002a) makes a similar argument with respect to "culture". Reflecting on the relationship between neo-liberalism as the hegemonic global ideology and the dominance of perspectives

that he identifies somewhat imprecisely as "constructivism" he argues that, "What is called for, in other words, is a reorientation back to the study of implicit, non-reflexive, doxic foundations for thought and action; historical depth and cultural sensitivity, that which is beyond strategy and self-consciousness". While I am sympathetic to Eriksen's argument, I am somewhat sceptical of the ways in which it (re)inscribes historical debt and continuity in the realm of the "implicit, non-reflexive and doxic". Let me elaborate on these issues below, as I give a brief outline of how I think Asad's concept of Islam as a discursive tradition, may be a way of dealing with the issue of "historical debt and continuity" without re-inscribing Islam in an essentialist logic of "culture", "community", and "identity".

Asad (1986; 1993) sees Islam not as a fixed social structure (Gellner 1981) or as a system of symbols (Geertz 1973) , but as a "discursive tradition" that includes and relates itself to a set of foundational texts (the Quran and the *Hadith*), comments thereon, and the conduct of exemplary figures (Asad 1986).[32] In drawing upon the work of MacIntyre (1985), Asad suggests the following notion of tradition:[33]

> A tradition consists essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice that, precisely because it is established, has a history. These discourses relate conceptually to *a past* (when the practice was instituted, and from which the knowledge of its point and proper performance has been transmitted) and *a future* (how the point of that practice can best be secured in the short or

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[32] In this respect, Bowen (1993), argues that for many Muslims such texts are not limited to the Quran and the Hadith, and that for that reason, we should include as part of the discursive tradition, linkages drawn to other foundations of Islamic knowledge such as oral traditions of prophetic history and systems of cosmological speculations. Furthermore, it should be noted that the foundational texts of the Islamic tradition do not make up a coherent or consistent whole from which universally accepted Islamic norms may be deduced. There is considerable contestation and disagreement within the tradition. At the level of religious ideas and practices, variation is so great from place to place that some writers have argued that we should speak of Islams in the plural, rather than Islam in the singular (Al-Azmeh 1996). This suggestion will be further discussed in chapter seven.

[33] In *After Virtue* (1985: 222) MacIntyre defined a tradition as "an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute a tradition". The concept was subsequently developed (and modified) in *Whose Justice? Whose rationality?* (1988), *Three rival versions of moral enquiry* (1990), and *Dependent Rational Animals* (1999). In "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam", Asad notes his indebtedness primarily to the first of these books: *After Virtue*, whereas in *Geneaologies of Religion,* he also refers to *Whose Justice? Whose rationality?* Asad uses MacIntyre's notion of tradition without providing any substantial discussion of MacIntyre's work, the centrality of the concept of tradition within it, and its broader theoretical implications. Furthermore, he does not explicitly problematize how MacIntyre's understanding of tradition may be combined with the Foucauldian perspective that he is otherwise indebted to. As Mahmood (2005) notes, Asad's indebtedness to Foucault (and others) constitutes some critical differences between MacIntyre's and Asad's notion of tradition. In contrast to MacIntyre, Asad emphasizes relations of power as necessary both for the propagation of tradition in relation to other discursive traditions, and to the process by which certain practices and arguments become hegemonic within a tradition. Furthermore, Asad puts more emphasis on the role of embodied capacities in addition to the role of rational argumentation that MacIntyre emphazises. I have chosen to draw on Asad's notion of Islam as a discursive tradition, without taking on the philosophical framework of MacIntyre as such, which has been subject to much well-founded criticism. I believe this to be feasible, in so far as Asad's indeptedness to MacIntyre seems to be more as a source of "inspiration" than a complete theoretical frame.

> long term, or why it should be modified or abandoned), through *a present* (how it is linked to other practices, institutions, and social conditions) (Asad 1986: 14).

Elaborating on what this means more concretely with respect to Islam as a discursive tradition, Asad specifies that, "An Islamic discursive tradition is simply a tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions of the Islamic past and future, with reference to a particular Islamic practice in the present" (Asad 1986: 15). In contrast to the view of Eriksen that paying attention to "historical debt and continuity" primarily requires attention to the implicit, non-reflexive, doxic foundations for thought and action, this conceptualization draws attention both to historically extended, socially embodied arguments and debates, and to the embodied forms of knowledge and capacities associated with a particular discursive tradition. In this respect, Asad suggests that we pay attention to the institutionally and discursively grounded production and organization of "truth" and "essentials", which shape the discourses and social practices of a given tradition.

Asad's conceptualization of Islam as a discursive tradition is commensurable with and indebted to Foucauldian understanding of power and discourse. As Mahmood (2005) suggests, tradition as defined by Asad may be conceived as a particular modality of what Foucault terms a discursive formation, in which reflection upon the past is a constitutive condition for the understanding and reformulation of the present and the future. Islamic discursive practices "link practitioners across the temporal modalities of past, present, and future through a pedagogy of practical, scholarly, and embodied forms of knowledges and virtues deemed central to the tradition" (Mahmood 2005: 115).[34] Just as Foucault, Asad (1986; 1993) treats discourses as historically situated and produced in power relations.

[34] Asad's perspective was first developed in an article called *Towards an anthropology of Islam* and later developed in a series of articles that were subsequently collected in *Geneaologies of Religion*. In these works, explicit references to Foucault are rare. In *Formations of the Secular,* however, Asad specifies that: "My resort to genealogy obviously derives from the way it has been deployed by Foucault and Nietzsche, although it does not claim to follow them religiously" (Asad 2003: 16). The fact that Asad does not develop a consistent Foucauldian framework may of course be criticized. On the other hand, one may, as I tend to do, see the underplaying of the genealogies of Asad's theoretical framework as a possibility to read across theoretical and analytical domains, instead of fixing oneself to a strict application of Foucauldian perspectives to the area of the religious. Following Asad, I will thus allow myself to be inspired by the works of Foucault, as of others, without "committing" to a totalizing Foucauldian perspective as such. I find it to be rather a paradox that Foucault's writings have often been forced into "disciplinary straightjackets" by academics with, as Spivak puts it "[…] the will to regularize him, normalize him, disciplinarize him" (Spivak et al. 1996: 158). In a critical discussion of Asad's attempt to define Islam as a discursive tradition, Saler (2000: 100) has argued that it is a paradox that Asad should be so critical to for instance Geertz' conceptualization of religion, which Asad sees as built on a particular modern and Christian conceptualization, while Asad himself draws on the theoretical work of Foucault to theorize the Islamic as well as the Christian traditions. Foucault's conception of religion can no doubt be characterized as a particular Christian one, if not as characterized by an "unashamedly Christian, and more specifically Catholic, cultural inheritance", as Carrette (2000: 21) has it. Since Asad does not "religiously follow Foucault" however, this last objection might seem like a minor one, even though the general point remains important.

Emphasizing genealogy as a way of grasping the "conditions of possibility" of particular discursive formations, Asad (1986: 17) asserts that the anthropology of Islam should "seek to understand historical conditions that enable the production and maintenance of specific discursive traditions, or their transformation". A genealogical approach will not be applied in this thesis, but Asad's understanding of Islam as a discursive tradition may nevertheless provide a good starting point for exploring how the religious identities and practices of the young Muslims I worked with are constituted within a wider tradition of Muslim discourse, and how the "historical conditions" of modernity, globalization and international migration within a modern nation state order enable particular ways of engaging the practices of this tradition. Let me briefly illustrate my point by relating Asad's perspective to some of the basic processes I deal with in the thesis, the relationship between processes of individualization, authority and the formation of Muslim selves.

Individualization, authority and the formation of Muslim selves

Focusing on young Muslims with a migrant background raises important questions about the "transmission" of Islamic identities and practices in the context of migration and globalization, and about the possibilities for reproduction and change provided by different social situations. In literature and public discourse on migrant youth, there has been a substantial tendency to treat them as socially and culturally substantially embedded in collectivities comprised for example of close-knit family or networks of co-ethnics, and their religious identities and practices as largely determined by their belonging to such culturally and socially effective entities (cf. Andersson et al. 2005). In contrast to this, there seems to be an emerging consensus among those researching Muslims in Europe that broader processes of individualization are currently reshaping Muslim identities and practices, and particularly of young Muslims (Peter 2006). The argument that individualization is a major trend in the reconfiguration of Muslim identities and practices in Europe has been elaborated in different ways (Cf. Babès 1997; Cesari and McLoughlin 2005; Khosrokhavar 1997; Peter 2006 for a review of some central contributions; Roy 1999; Roy 2000; Schiffauer 1990). These studies cannot be given due consideration here, but a common theme is the way in which religious identities and practices are transformed into matters that involve a larger degree of individual choice between several religious options. Studies focusing on individualization as a major feature of the development of Muslim religiosities in Europe raise important questions about the relationship between tradition and modernity, collectivism and individualism, external

authority and individual autonomy (cf. Peter 2006). Individualization has been described in terms of a fundamental rupture between Muslim beliefs and practices in Europe on the one hand and those in the migrants' countries of origin on the other hand (Cesari 1998; Cesari 2003). Others see it in terms of processes of modernization and rural-urban migration operative both in the countries of origin and in Europe, but intensified in the latter and particularly in the so-called second generation (Schiffauer 1990). Individualization has also been related mainly to new communication technologies and transnationalism and globalization more broadly (Mandaville 2004).

One line of research touches on the issue of individualization not from the angle of how religious identities and practices are embedded in, or disembedded from, collectivities comprised of close-knit family or networks of co-ethnics, but from the angle of religious authority. Here, individualization is related to the declining authority of traditional institutions such as mosques, imams, and Islamic scholars vis-à-vis young Muslims of the so-called second generation (Cesari 1998). While many have pointed to the decline of traditional religious authorities, and the ways in which young Muslims in Europe increasingly make their own individual assertions regarding Islam, attention has also been paid to how such authorities persist and are transformed in the migrant context (Mandaville 2004; Otterbeck 2000; Otterbeck 2003; van Bruinessen 2003). A number of studies, often founded in a top-down, actor-centred approach, have investigated the role of specific types of religious authorities, particularly imams, but increasingly also muftis, preachers and new Muslim intellectuals. Attention has also been paid to new forms of articulating authoritative statements on all matters Islamic (collective *fatwa* bodies, media *muftis*, Internet *fatwas*, etc.) (Eickelman and Anderson 1999; Mandaville 2003; Mandaville 2004; Sisler 2006).

These concerns with religious authority and transformations of authority structures partly draw upon and converge with recent writings in the anthropology of Islam. Here, it is argued that traditional structures for the (re)production, transmission, distribution and authorization of Islamic traditions are transformed as a consequences of mass education, mass mediation, and international migration (Caeiro 2004; Eickelman 1985; Eickelman 1992; Eickelman and Anderson 1999; Eickelman and Piscatori 1996). Hirschkind identifies two major lines of argument in attempts to theorize the effect of globalization and modern media technologies on religious practice and authority, focusing respectively on what he refers to as their "deliberative" and the "disciplinary" effects (Hirschkind 2001). Within the deliberative approach, it is argued that media and mass higher education enable a growing number of individuals to engage with and revise the religious tradition, thus "democratising" religious

authority. Stress is put on the way in which actors are hence enabled to choose between different interpretations and make their own "individual assertions" regarding Islam (e.g. Eickelman and Piscatori 1996; Mandaville 2002; Mandaville 2004). Within the disciplinary approach, attention is rather paid to the ways in which media technologies enable an extension of an authoritative religious discourse, where the result is less a deliberative space for argument and contestation than a normative space that promotes and secures a uniform model of moral behaviour. Globalization and media technologies in this view enable an extension of authoritative religious discourses, while suppressing and marginalizing local variations and differences (cf. Al-Azmeh 1996; Gilsenan 1982; Kepel 1986; Roy 1994; Salih 2003).

In continuity with Asad's approach to Islam as a discursive tradition, Hirschkind (2001) criticizes the opposition between deliberative and disciplinary perspectives as premised on a tendency within liberal thought to view the individual as necessarily in conflict with the community and the forms of collective discipline that undergird it. In his study of the contemporary Islamic public in Egypt, Hirschkind, like Eickelman and Piscatori, focuses on the way in which the advent of modern mass education, literacy, and the wide availability of written texts and audio-taped religious sermons have equipped recent generations of Muslims in the Middle East with new competencies in traditional and contemporary Islamic scholarship. He shows how a new kind of public debate, that cuts across divisions of age, gender and generation, has been made possible by this (Hirschkind 2001: 9). What is particularly instructive in Hirschkind's approach is the way in which he sees the kind of public arena that has been created by the *dawa* movement in Egypt as both normative and deliberative, a domain for both subjection to authority and the exercise of individual reasoning. He also suggests that, contrary to what has often been suggested, that in these public debates reference to authoritative Islamic sources does not close debate, but provides the foundation on which opposing viewpoints are articulated.

In the light of these debates, important questions arise about the conditions of possibility for religious debates and contestations among young Muslims in Oslo. What are the effects of mass higher education, new information technologies and globalization more broadly on the relationship between individualization and normativization, deliberation and discipline with respect to religious practices and debates among young Muslims in Oslo? On the basis of what kinds of knowledges and competencies do people engage in debates and contestations that engage with and revise the religious tradition, and what are the institutional and discursive regulations of such debates and contestations? In this respect, I suggest that Asad's conceptualization of Islam as a discursive tradition is elucidating, in that it encourages an

investigation into the ways in which "truths" and "essentials" are produced within the Islamic discursive tradition, and the ways in which such truths and essentials are underpinned by authorizing discourses (or truth regimes) of a more general order. Asad's understanding of Islam as a discursive tradition that "consists essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct form and purpose of a given practice" (1986: 14), raise important questions relating to how such discourses operate through the production, transmission and authorization of "knowledge".[35] What this approach enables, is to explore how, despite apparent processes of "individualization", in the case of the young Muslims I worked with, normative Islamic discourses continue to form a basis for their collective and individual identities, for the debates and contestations they engage in, and for how they come to see themselves as subjects of a particular kind, with particular ethical valorizations. In following this line of questioning, I investigate the relationship of young Muslims to different authorities and authorizing discourses that seek to instruct them regarding the correct interpretations, forms and purposes of Muslim practice. How do processes related to migration, mass media and mass education impinge on how young Muslims in Norway come to "know" Islam and in which ways do such processes affect the relationship they establish towards authorized forms of Islamic discourse, and also the institutions and religious authorities that maintain, produce and circulate such discourses? How is knowledge about Islam produced, transmitted, and authorized in the contemporary Norwegian context? And in which ways are selves required to respond to such knowledges (cf. Asad 1986)? These are central issues with respect to social, cultural and religious continuities and discontinuities over time, and inter-generational (re)production of identities and practices.

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[35] Given that Asad draws both on the notion of "discourse", as elaborated by Michel Foucault, and the notion of "tradition", as elaborated by MacIntyre, it is not clear how "practice" should be understood in relation to Islam as a discursive tradition. In *After Virtue* (MacIntyre 1985: 187) defines "practice" as "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended. Tic-tac-toe is not an example of a practice in this sense, nor is throwing a football with skill; but the game of football is, and so is chess. Bricklaying is not a practice; architecture is. Planting turnips is not a practice; farming is. So are the enquiries of physics, chemistry and biology, and so is the work of the historian, and so are painting and music". This definition is linked to the notion of tradition as a basis for a particular conception of moral rationality that MacIntyre goes on to develop in his later work. Religious practices such as *salah* or *hajj* may be seen to be practices in this sense; whereas bending down with skill or travelling to Mecca is not. As mentioned earlier, however, Asad's notion of practice differs from that of MacIntyre in that he also draws upon Mauss and his attempts to define an "anthropology of practical reason"; the historically constituted practical knowledge, which articulates an individual's learned capacities. Asad sees Mauss' concern with "body techniques" as an important way of challenging the assumption in symbolist anthropology that religious objects and practices are primarily "symbolic" references to religion as a system of meaning.

This complexity is important not least when it comes to the question of how young Muslims relate to the Islamic norms that are embodied in the Islamic discursive tradition as transmitted to them in different "pedagogical" settings (in the context of the family, the youth and student organizations, the Islamic conferences etc.). Here, I argue that we need to move beyond a dichotomization of "individual choice" versus "unreflected or forced conformity" (understood as the habitual enactment of religious traditions acquired through socialization or as enforced restrictions from e.g. parents or the ethnic community) and inquire into the kinds of subjectivities that are formed and how people come to conceive of, and act upon themselves as selves of a certain kind. An interesting approach in this connection is provided by Mahmood (2005), whose complex theoretical framework draws on the works of Foucault, Asad as well as Butler. Building on Foucault's analysis of ethical formation, Mahmood argues that the religious practices of the participants of the women's mosque movement she worked with in Egypt presupposed the existence of a divine plan for human life – embodied in the Quran, the exegetical literature, and the moral codes derived there from – that each individual is seen as responsible for following. Through invocations of divine texts and edificatory literature, participants in the mosque movement were summoned to recognize these moral obligations. Mahmood emphasizes that the mosque movement has a strong individualizing impetus that requires each person to interpret the moral codes, in accord with traditional guidelines, and to adopt a set of ascetic practices for shaping moral conduct.

I will only to a limited extent deal theoretically with the many issues that Mahmood raises about the relationship between religion and politics, and her critique of feminist theorizing of freedom, agency, authority and the human subject.[36] Nevertheless, I find her analytical framework inspiring both in the context of my use of Asad's theoretical framework and in terms of shedding light on parts of my ethnographic material. In particular, I want to explore if and how certain religious understandings of the Self that are transmitted in a diversity of pedagogical settings, come to form a basis for young Muslims' religious practices and identities. In order to do this, I investigate what I refer to as narratives of "return to Islam" in order to discover how young Muslims' subjectivities come to be formed as they seek to reconstruct their own knowledges, desires, motivations and ethical dispositions in accord with models of Islamic moral personhood and piety. In line with Mahmood (2005), I suggest that religious practices geared towards the realization of such moral personhood and piety may be understood in light of Foucault's notion of "technologies of the Self" as operations one

[36] (See e.g. Waggoner 2005 for a critical engagement with Mahmood's critique of secular modernity)

performs on oneself in order to become an ethical subject. Technologies of the self are the specific practices by which subjects constitute themselves as subjects within and through systems of power (Foucault 1997; Foucault 2000; Mahmood 2005; McNay 1992), see chapter six[37] Given that, as I have argued above, young Muslims are positioned at the intersection of different, ambivalent and sometimes contrasting discourses and traditions, it is not possible to resolve these understandings of the Self as a symbolic, bounded "whole".[38] A question will thus be how different understandings of the Self, inform the ways in which young Muslims reflect upon the relationship between the internal and the external, intention and action, autonomy and submission. In particular, I want to examine "individualization" along a somewhat different line than what has been common in the literature on Muslims in Europe, by paying attention to how the valorization of "individual choice" is bound to a discursive production of individualized selves. The importance of "individual choice" to young Muslims' identities and practices is hence not seen as expressing an unrestrained individual freedom to choose, but as pointing to particular forms of subjectivity.

Some epistemological and methodological concerns

Religion and the problem of cultural translation

One major challenge that I encountered in writing this thesis was how to deal with the concepts "religion" and "the religious" in the framework of this thesis. As Asad (1993) has argued, a major problem with universal definitions of religion is that, whether substantive or functional, they tend to generalize particular historically situated religious discourses and practices. Recalling Foucault's recurring emphasis on the "conditions of possibility" for the

[37] Foucault's use of this concept is complex and placed in the wider framework of his study of ethics. I will not deal with this framework in its' entirety here, but – in a way inspired by Asad and Mahmood – use it as a point of departure in order to investigate how religious practices may be understood as a kind of operations one performs on oneself in order to become an ethical subject, and the kinds of knowledge and authority upon which such operations rest. According to Foucault (1984a) technologies of the self can be found in all cultures in different forms.

[38] Mahmood notes that her position differs from anthropological studies of different cultural notions of self and personhood, in that she does not assume a homogenous notion of a self that is coextensive with a given culture, structure, or temporality. Rather, she emphasizes that different configurations of personhood cohabit the same cultural and historical space, and that each configuration is a product of a specific discursive formation rather than of the culture at large. However, Mahmood is concerned primarily with elaborating such concepts of self and personhood in the context of the Islamic piety movement in Egypt, as distinct from and opposed to those suggested by secular-liberalist frameworks. As will be argued in chapter six, my focus is rather on how different concepts of self and personhood shape the religious subjectivities and practices of young Muslims as different configurations of personhood inhabit not only the same cultural and historical space, but also shape individual subjectivities.

emergence of an idea, Asad traces the *Genealogies of religion* (1993) and the *Formations of the Secular* (2003) in order to discover what historical shifts have made the contemporary uses of these terms plausible. He argues that both "religion" and "secularism" have been shaped as concepts and discursive practices within the history of the modern West, and that when used in the cultural translation of "other" religious traditions they may entail a process of normalization. Religion as a category is a social and historical fact that is constantly being defined within social and historical contexts, and people have specific reasons for defining it one way or another.[39] As circumstances change, people try to group together elements that they think belong, or should belong, to the notion of religion (Asad 2002). Today, efforts at defining religion as different from politics, law and science converge with different strategies for the confinement or defence of religion, and are used to "discipline" or criticize Islam and other religious traditions that are seen as not conforming to such a line of differentiation. Asad argues that as a consequence of the way in which religion has been shaped as a concept and discursive practice within the history of the modern West, anthropologists should dismiss universal definitions of religion, and rather attempt to unpack the meanings of the concepts that he or she translates as religion (Asad 1993).

The question whether Islam is aptly captured by the term religion was also addressed by the young Muslims I worked with. In dealing with this question in the MSS-magazine *Tankevekkende* (2001), Yasir Iftikhar concludes that Islam is *more* than a religion in the usual sense of the word:

> Islam is described as a "Di`n" by God in the holy Quran. This Arabic word is best understood as "the complete way of life", because Islam includes the spiritual, intellectual, social, cultural, economic and political fields. It is therefore more comprehensive than what is understood by the concept of religion, which is only a part of the spiritual field of Islam. We can thus confirm that Islam is the only "Di`n", "the complete way of life", in this universe.

In a similar vein, Tariq Ramadan (1994), a leading Muslim intellectual in Europe, has suggested that it is not without complications to call Islam a religion. Since Islam is not only about the relationship between men and the Sacred (God), but includes "*les éléments du mode de vie, de la civilisation et de la culture*", Islam seems to surpass the domain defined by the modern term religion. Despite such problematizations, religion is the term by which most young Muslims in Norway refer to Islam when speaking in Norwegian. Unlike terms such as imam, *halal*, *minaret*, *hijab*, and *fatwa*, the term *deen* (*Di`n*) is rarely applied in Norwegian-

[39] I am not arguing about theology or the "reality" of religious phenomena, but about "religion" as an analytical category and its usefulness as a means of grasping different worldviews and ways of life.

Islamic, either by Muslims or by non-Muslims. As will become clear from the following chapters; young Muslims use "religion" both in a sense that is profoundly formed and shaped by a "modern Western" understanding of religion, and in a wider sense that is more appropriately captured by the term *deen*.

Despite Asad's warning that religion may function as a normalizing concept in studies of Islam, and the insistence of some Muslims on the particularities of Islam as a *deen* rather than "a religion", I have nevertheless chosen to retain the terms "religion" and "religious". With respect to Islam, I use them to refer to ideas, practices, identities and institutions that somehow appeal to the legitimizing and transcendent authority of the Islamic discursive tradition. Rather than being illustrations of a universal and timeless phenomena of "religion" and "the religious", they should be seen as sharing a "family-resemblance" with other ideas, practices, identities and institutions that appeal to the legitimizing and transcendent authority of particular discursive traditions, such as "Judaism" and "Christianity" (cf. Saler 2000; Wittgenstein 1958). The terms religion or religious, as analytical categories, should thus be seen as indicating un-fixed and unbounded categories for speaking about such family-resemblance. However, it is not an aim of this thesis to discuss what may constitute "religion" as an analytical category. Rather, my interest is in religion and the religious as "folk categories", that is as meaningful categories that people make use of in order to speak about different phenomena in the world, and how ideas, practices, identities and institutions are variously defined as Islamic and un-Islamic, or religious or non-religious by actors in a particular socio-historical context.

Reading across disciplinary divisions

In writing this thesis I have felt a need to "read across" (Delaney and Yanagisako 1995) established disciplinary boundaries and their various modes of approaching the topics of Muslim identities and practices and Islam. One such boundary is the one that long divided Islamologist (Orientalist) and anthropologist approaches to Islam (Lindholm 1995; 2002b; Thorbjørnsrud 2001). Whereas Islamologists (Orientalists) have concentrated on the urban, the literate and the textual, anthropologists, particularly in the 1960s and 70s, focused on the rural/tribal, the illiterate, and daily life. To anthropologists, Islam appeared to be most interesting when expressed through the local variation of the religion of ordinary people, a dimension that was frequently spoken of in terms of a "little tradition", "practical religion", "popular- or folk Islam" or "low Islam". The "great tradition", "philosophical religion", and

"normative" or "high" Islam, was associated with elites and religious experts, and tended to be conceptualized as somehow outside of localities, thus eloping the traditional focus of anthropologists and being left for the history of religion and Islamologists to care for. With respect to anthropologists' apparent lack of interest in Islamism until quite recently, Thorbjørnsrud (2001: 220) argues that such disciplinary divisions continue to structure research, and that, "perhaps [anthropologist] consider the Islamists out of reach for their own discipline because of their claim to represent "true Islam"; to be based on scriptures; and to be inspired by the historical founding period of Islam – claims which may appear to most anthropologists as no-go signals".

As will become clear throughout this thesis, the claims that Thorbjørnsrud lists as anthropological "no-go signals" are among those most vocally raised by the young Muslims I worked with, and of substantial importance to the analyses of Muslim identities and practices in many contemporary societies. In my opinion, engaging with such issues may contribute to deconstruct the anthropological tendency to see "normative Islam" (or orthodox or high Islam) as a static and unchanging system of beliefs and practices that is "modified" and intertwined with the ideas and practices of different people in different "local Islams". In this I follow Asad (1993), in seeing normativity and orthodoxy as a relationship of power, rather than as a "form" of Islam that remains unchanged by shifting historical configurations of power and authority. Such an approach has been increasingly accommodated in anthropology, notably in the works of Rosen (1984; 2000), Eickelman (1985; 1999; 1990), Fischer and Abedi (1990), Antoun (1989), and Ahmed (1992a). As Lindholm (1995) notes, these latter studies are characterized by an increased focus on textual knowledge, and how that knowledge is attained and used by a scholarly elite. Importantly, these studies have shown that the production of Islamic knowledge, authority and orthodoxy is a complex process of (re)interpretation and contestation. However, these studies have tended to focus on scholars and other elites, rather than on how knowledge and normativity is (re)interpreted and contested by "ordinary people" in their everyday lives. This thesis thus seeks to push the "reading across" one step further, by expanding the question of how textual knowledge is attained, used, contested and authorized beyond the domain of "experts" and institutions.

Studies of Muslim immigrants in Norway were initially marked by a disciplinary division somewhat akin to the one discussed above, and reflecting a double determination of the interest of the scholars involved, with on the one hand a Christian-based concern with religious dialogue, and on the other hand, a social scientific concern with patterns of social inequality and cultural difference. Most literature considering Muslims from the point of view

of their religious affinity was written by those trained in religious studies, often emanating out of a concern with inter-religious dialogue (Leirvik 1990; Leirvik 1993; Leirvik 2002a; Leirvik 2002b; Leirvik and Eidsvåg 1993; Leirvik et al. 1996; Opsal 1994; Opsal and Bakke 1994; Opsal and Skauge 1996; Rian and Eidhamar 1995). In contrast, studies in the social sciences concerned themselves primarily with the ethnic, social and economic dimensions of the Muslim immigration (e.g. Ask et al. 1986; Grønhaug 1979; Grønhaug 1985; Grønhaug 2001; Tesli 1975; Tesli 1978). In later years, however, "reading across" this division has become more common. Anthropologist and other social scientists have been more concerned than before with investigating the religious dimensions of Muslim immigrant lives, and those trained in religious studies have started to pay more attention to the socio-cultural context in which Islam is embedded (e.g. Ahlberg 1990; Bredal 1998; Jacobsen 2002; Kayed 1999; Krossøy 1999; Larsen 1995a; Leirvik 2002a; Leirvik 2002b; Naguib 2001; Predelli 2004; Vogt 1995; Vogt 2000; Østberg 2001).

One should, however, caution that the effort to approach the Islamic literate tradition, and to relate people's daily lives to different Islamic conceptualizations of self and society, may easily end up supporting an Orientalist and essentialist analysis. The anthropological approach in this thesis implies that it is people's interpretations of the texts at hand, and how the knowledge they represent is embodied, applied or resisted in social life, that are the points of departure. This means that Islamic notions are presented in the way that the young Muslims I worked with discussed them, and not in terms of dominant theological interpretations, as they might have been laid out by different scholars. Any discussion of Islamic concepts is thus open ended and explorative, representing only some among a myriad of different possible interpretations.

Gendering the approach

In studies of Muslims in Europe gender has frequently been discussed in relation to concerns with the position of Muslim women in Islam and Muslim minority communities, and have centred on a set of contested practices perceived as problematic from the perspective of gender equality; such as the headscarf, arranged marriages, and female circumcision. Whereas "gender" has thus come to be virtually synonymous with "women", men have to a significant

extent been treated as the genderless category of "Man".[40] There are several epistemological roots for this construction of gender as referring to a particular range of issues related to Muslim women. One is that in the political field Muslim women have been constructed as "border markers"; marking both cultural and religious "otherness" and the sustenance of cultural and religious identities and traditions (Yuval-Davis 1997). Another is that the position of women in society has been a central arena of transformation and contestation in modern societies in the West as well as elsewhere.

Another epistemological root is found in the way in which gender was initially conceived of in the field of women's studies; where one way of redressing gender-blindness in the social sciences was seen to consist in "adding women" as a category that had largely been muted and overlooked. In my earlier studies on Muslims in Norway and France, I followed the well established path in women's studies of focusing on women and the way they negotiate gender (Jacobsen 2002). This was partly a result of my conviction that women had to be "added" if we were to understand the complexities of different ways of being Muslim, since most studies described the Muslim identities and practices of migrant men within typically male arenas (the mosques and religious of organizations of male labour migrants). As has increasingly been realized in women's and gender studies, however, gender needs to be problematized not only by adding women, but also by paying attention to the relational ways in which the categories men and women are constituted. Considering the weight put on gender complementarity within the Islamic tradition itself, the tendency to overlook Muslim men in gender studies is thus striking.[41]

At a methodological level, practices of gender segregation within Muslim communities are probably one additional reason why studies on Muslims in Europe continue to concern themselves with either women (usually conceived of as a gendered category) or men (usually conceived of simply as Muslims). Anthropologists who collect data on the basis of participant observation may have difficulties accessing the arenas of the "opposite sex". In this respect, the NMU and the MSS, who are both mixed-gender organizations, provided a particularly privileged context for including both women and men in my ethnographic study. My own

[40] In popular culture and public debates, however, Muslim men and masculinity are recurrent themes. They are often portrayed in relation to criminality (gangs, terrorists etc.) or in relation to women-as-victims; e.g. as abusers, violent husbands, or conservative community leaders.

[41] In gender studies more broadly the task was initially conceived as one of "adding" knowledge about women to already existing empirical research that had shown to be written almost exclusively by men and about men. As gender studies developed, however, focus shifted towards "the construction of gender" – including both female and male, femininity and masculinity. Studies of Islam and Muslims still largely seem to ignore this later development, and continue to focus on Muslim women rather than gender dynamics more broadly.

experiences in the field as a woman proved to be a valuable intake to understanding the often implicit rules and limits that governed the mixed gender interaction in the organizations. It prompted me to pay attention to how cultural and religious ideas about femininity and masculinity were reproduced and contested in these settings, and to question my own taken-for-granted assumptions regarding embodied gender practices as well as my cultural and political ideas and ideals of gender justice.

Although gender is an important analytical dimension in my work, and my ethnographic material deals with both women and men, I have chosen not to structure the analysis as a comparison between the religious identities and practices of "Muslim men" versus "Muslim women". This has both advantages and drawbacks when it comes to enabling analysis. An advantage is obviously that it avoids the assumption that gender is always the most significant dimension in structuring social relationships. In order to conceptualize how people are positioned within a complex set of social and cultural structurations, I find feminist theoretizations of "intersectionality" useful. From the perspective of "intersectionality", categories such as ethnicity, gender, generation, class and race, are seen as multiple, crosscutting and relationally constituted (Brah 1996; McClintock 1995; Moore 1988; Moore 1994). The processes and dynamics within and between such categories create both commonalities and differences in experience, identities and practices. This allows us to see how e.g. gender, generation and social class structures migranthood and the experience of being a Muslim, or, conversely, how migranthood and being a Muslim structures experiences of gender, generation and social class. The ways in which such categories structure, and are structured in, particular instances of social life must be investigated (Afshar and Maynard 1994; Brah 1996; Fuss 1990; Moore 1988; Moore 1994; Stolcke 1993). Keeping intersectionality in view is not easy in a text like this one. However, it is nevertheless a central premise in this thesis that whenever I speak of "women", "young", "Muslims", "Norwegian-Pakistanis" etc. these categories are always already marked by internal difference, in the sense that they intersect in different individuals.

On 'naming' and the problem of essentialism

The above discussions have already brought attention to a major challenge of this study that relates to how to "name" the phenomena that I am dealing with. Academic language does not only describe social reality, it importantly contributes to constituting it. Over time, the concepts we use can thus come to play a decisive role in what is perceived as real, moral,

dangerous, and worth struggling for in a given society. Within migration studies, a particular challenge is how to find ways of speaking about groups or categories of people that do not exclude and stigmatize.

The term "young Muslims" by which I refer to my discussion partners in the field, inevitably simplifies and homogenizes a much more complex social reality of overlapping social identifications and differentiations. Apart from being "young" and "Muslim" they could be described by a number of similarities and difference that are ascribed to them and that they themselves identify with as immigrants or children of immigrants, as refugees, asylum seekers or as children of these, as citizens, as foreigners, as Norwegians, as women and men, as having particular colours of their skin; in terms of their sexuality or their many social roles as daughters, sons, fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, nephews and nieces; or in terms of individual characteristics as being timid, shy, outspoken, funny, serious, industrious or lazy.

Important to keep in mind is the critique of how academic language tends to essentialize the phenomena of which it speaks. Naming a group or category reduces the complex and multiple identities and qualities of individual members, and must inevitably privilege some characteristics to the exclusion of others (although not necessarily attributing essence to such differences). Naming and categorizing may overlook differences within and overstate differences between. The categories we use are thus potentially both under-inclusive and over-inclusive, depending largely on the purpose to which they are used (cf. Gressgård 2005a). This understanding of the problem of naming suggests that we need a pragmatic solution in social science research, as the one pointed to by Martin:

> Acknowledging that whatever categories we use will mask some differences, we can decide to use ones that uncover the differences we consider most important and that best fit our practical and theoretical purpose (Martin 1994: 637).

Instead of applying a consistent terminology, I have chosen to let some of the empirical diversity and ambivalence of naming be reflected in my writing. Since my focus is on Islam, I frequently refer to my discussion partners in the field as "young Muslims". When my focus is on migration, and the relation between the young Muslims and their parents, I often refer to them as immigrant-youth or the "second-generation". This latter concept has been subject to well-founded criticism, in so far as it continues to mark people out as "immigrants" over generations. In Norwegian public debate on the issue, a suggestion has been to refer to this category instead as "first-generation Norwegians". This might be a more inclusive concept, but on the other hand, the term "second-generation" is often used by the young themselves to

capture an experienced difference between themselves and the parental generation and between themselves and youth with a non-migrant background. The term also has the advantage of being widely used in international literature on migration, thus providing a vehicle of comparison between different contexts.

I also use the terms “back home” and “at home” when referring generically to “countries of emigration” and “countries of immigration” (instead of e.g. home country and host country or Norway and Pakistan). Instead of fixing the meaning of “home” to a particular geographical place, (usually the place oneself or one’s parents were born, as expressed by the common racist slogan: go home), I draw upon a more flexible notion of “home” that may include meanings such as “my house”, “where I was born”, or even a temporary residence (according to a young woman named Aadila for instance “home is wherever I am”). The terms “at home” and “back home” are relative to each other, rather than fixed. Whenever Norway constitutes the “at home”, Pakistan may constitute the “back home” and vice versa. This conceptualization of home allows for multiple forms of belonging, of ways of being at home in the world. The terminology of home also has the advantage of not necessarily referring to the nation-state level. Nations may be constructed as homes, but more often people relate to particular places, persons and relationships as the foci of being at home.

Another problem is how to conceptualize the category “those Norwegians who do not have an immigrant background”. The young Muslims I worked with would refer to this category variously as “the Norwegians” and “the ethnic Norwegians”. The term “the Norwegians” is problematic in so far as it constructs immigrants and their descendants as somehow outside of the national community of “Norwegians”. The term “ethnic Norwegian” might be seen as an attempt to resolve this; by allowing that immigrants and their descendants may be Norwegian, although different in terms of “ethnicity” from “ethnic Norwegians”. These categories are highly contextual, relating to the differences and similarities that are stressed in various social situations. When I use the terms “Norwegian” and “ethnic Norwegian” – these should thus be seen as concepts that are emic to the Norwegian debate and the language use of young Muslims themselves.

Chapter two:

Muslim Youth and Students in Oslo: envisioning unity, coping with difference

The Muslim Student Society (MSS) and the Muslim Youth of Norway (NMU), established in 1995 and 1996, marked the "coming of age" of a new generation of Muslims (born and) raised in Norway. The two organizations started as small associations of students and youths, with little visibility, and in subsequent years grew to become increasingly central actors in the Norwegian Muslim landscape. From the initial efforts to obtain a place for prayer at the university campus and to provide an Islamic environment for Muslim youth, the MSS and the NMU gradually widened their scope of activities. They also became increasingly visible as actors in public debates on the place of Muslims in Norwegian society. In this chapter I start the ethnographically based description of the organizations and their members, and hence provide an ethnographic "baseline" for the following chapters. How were the MSS and the NMU created? On the basis of what principles were they organized? Who were the members, and what were the goals they set for themselves?

In the first part of the chapter I introduce (NMU) and the (MSS), focusing on the goals and activities of the organizations, as well as their development since they were established. In the subsequent parts I discuss the emergence of these two organizations in terms of the continuities and changes they represent with respect to the ways in which Islam in Norway has previously been organized. Such organizing has largely been based on differences related to denomination, ethnicity, language, gender, and – to a lesser extent – urban/rural background and level of education and social status. The emergence of the NMU and the MSS points towards the importance of a new such principle of differentiation within Muslim communities, related to age and generation. It also points to the surfacing of a group of educated young Muslims who aspire to be upwardly mobile in Norwegian society, and to take an exemplary role within the communities as well as in the society at large.

Simultaneously, the organizations also attempt to transcend previous structurings related to denomination, ethnicity, language and gender, and promote Muslim unity based on their common identification with Islam. Such a common identification is formed in relation to the particular challenges that being young and Muslim in Norway pose, to the constitution of a "Muslim minority" in Norway, and to the influence from "revivalist" Islam. However,

internal differences continue to assert themselves as young Muslims strive to organize religious activities together, hence energizing diverse efforts to cope with the relationship between unity and diversity in Islam. As a result, internal differences and principles of organization are variously reproduced, contested and transgressed. The chapter points to the ways in which debates about what it means to be a Muslim in the migration setting, what constitutes correct or appropriate belief and practice, and how multiple forms of belonging can be accommodated are consequently energized. It thus commences to trace some dilemmas, debates and "contested matters" that will be discussed further on in the thesis.

Presenting the organizations

The NMU and the MSS represent both continuity and change with respect to the organization of Islam in Norway. Although members retain their affiliation to other Islamic communities based on "family belonging" and ethnicity,[42] their own organizations are "voluntary associations". They are based on an "individualized" understanding of religious identity, and as such challenges models based on belonging by descent. They are consciously multi(trans)-ethnic, and of mixed gender – and organized on the basis not of where members come from or what kind of Islamic tradition they belong to, but on their common identification as Muslims, "youth" and "second generation". In many respects, young Muslims see themselves as situated at a time of transition. The temporalities of migration, and young Muslims' location at the intersection of different religious and cultural traditions, make it necessary to envisage new forms of belonging and sociability. This location also makes it possible for young Muslims to envisage for themselves a role as "mediators" between different Islamic traditions, and between "Norwegian and Islamic culture".[43] These experiences of transition and mediation are given a religious expression in Islamic revivalist discourse, which constructs

[42] It should be noted that engagement in the NMU and the MSS does not prevent members of the NMU and the MSS from affiliation to and membership in other mosques and Islamic organizations. Most continue to have some kind of affiliation to the mosque or organization their parents belong to, but they tend also to participate on an ad hoc basis in activities proposed by different mosques and organizations. Although the young move more easily between mosques, attending prayers and other activities in several of them, language barriers tend to limit such movements. The young often prefer to listen to speakers who are familiar with Norwegian society and who speak in Norwegian, but the occasions where the *khutba* or *darses* are held in Norwegian are rare, and the young must therefore attend a mosque in which the imam speaks a language they understand. Language is thus still an important factor in structuring the Islamic landscape in Norway, also with regard to the younger generations.

[43] This is an expression used in an NMU-brochure. From an anthropological point of view such a way of using culture is of course immensely problematic. But a point in this thesis will be precisely to show how people both make use of such generalized categories of difference in making sense of who they are, and how these categories are simultaneously contested and transgressed, and re-constructed in social life.

the present as a meeting point between an idealized past and an anticipated future, and Muslim identity as "beyond culture".

The NMU and the MSS are spaces for social, educational as well as ritual activities. In many ways they are "typical" Norwegian youth and student associations.[44] As many other small organizations, the MSS and the NMU are to a large extent run by a small core of active people (5-10 persons). Since their continuity depends on these few activists and their capabilities of mobilizing other people and resources, they are inherently fragile. Their activities and goals are drawn up by shifting constellations of members, and the organizations are thus in an important sense continually "emergent". Both organizations are nevertheless formalized to a certain extent, with written statutes and a formal democratic structure with elections by the members to leadership positions. While "learning about Islam" is an explicit goal for the organizations, the ways in which these educational activities are structured also teach members typical procedures of organizational life more broadly: such as setting up meeting agendas, appointing chairs and referents, revising finances, electing members for the committees, and using standardized debate codes.

There are many ways in which the NMU and the MSS interact and overlap. While I will first present the two organizations separately, in what remains of the chapter and further on in the thesis I will often speak about "the NMU and the MSS" jointly. At other times, I will stress the differences between the two organizations. Members often move on from the NMU to the MSS if and when they start university studies, and some people attend meetings in both organizations. Parts of the (informal) leadership are the same, and in 2003 the new head of the NMU was recruited from the MSS network.[45] The two organizations furthermore arrange some of their activities together. In terms of people invited as speakers, and themes addressed there is also an overlap between the two organizations. In the years after my last fieldwork in the organizations in 2002, they have been increasingly merging.

[44] To the extent they receive public (governmental and non-governmental) funding, it is not as religious congregations, but related to e.g. youth, multicultural and anti-racist work. For instance, in 1998 the NMU received NOK 10 000 in funding from the Idébanken, a fund for anti-racist, multicultural- and integration work administered by The National Association of Norwegian Children's- and Youth Organizations and financed by the Ministry of Children's and Family-affairs. They also received some funding from Youth for Europe, financed by the European Union in order to promote cooperation and contact between young people within Europe and between young people in Europe and other countries. Such public funding usually require a certain organizational structure, e.g. membership registration.

[45] In 2004, the MSS-magazine also had a "face-lift", when a former editor of NMU's *Ung Muslim* took on responsibilities for the layout of the magazine.

The Muslim Youth of Norway (NMU)

The Muslim Youth of Norway was founded in 1996 by young Muslims who "felt a strong need to learn more about Islam and to have a meeting place independent of nationality" (Explore 1999: 1). It is a place where "you can meet Muslim brothers and sisters, learn about Islam, bring forward your questions and concerns, discuss and share your thoughts and meanings with others" (NMU brochure). One of the founders, Aydin, recounts how it all started:

> It all started a few years ago. We had been to some Islamic conferences abroad and then in 1995 the Swedish government invited Muslim youth from all over Europe to discuss the integration of Muslims in Europe. We went there two others and me, and found out that there were a lot of Muslim youth organizations in Europe. Upon returning we had the idea of doing something similar. We talked about it, but nothing really happened. Later on, I met with Mohammed and then Noor, and we all went to a Young Muslim UK[46] summer camp. After that trip we tried more concretely to get something started. We got in contact with other youth in Oslo and arranged a great meeting. I remember the first time, a room full of people. That is when we decided to form an association. And then we started having *darses*, and things moved on.

Inspired by Islamic youth organizations abroad, the newly formed NMU wanted to create a meeting place for young Muslims in Oslo. As Aydin explains:

> We wanted to reach those who do not have any offer from the Muslim minority here. In the mosques we saw young kids coming to learn Arabic and the Quran, but as they grew older they disappeared. When you see them again four or five years later, they do not have any relation to Islam. We wanted to provide a context in which the next generation could forge an identity; to be able to come forth and say that they are Muslims without being afraid.

Based on these initial reflections, and inspirations from other Muslim organizations, the members of the NMU came to formulate a range of aims for their activities:[47] to create an Islamic milieu among Muslim youth in Norway, to unite youth, to build bridges between different cultures, especially between "Norwegian and Islamic culture". The purpose was to further mutual respect and understanding while at the same time preserving, protecting and reinforcing the identity and self-esteem of young Muslims, to fight discrimination and

[46] YMUK is a national British Muslim Youth Organization affiliated to the Islamic Foundation in Leicestershire. The Islamic Foundation in Leicestershire is a part of reforming Islamist intellectual activism in Britain. It was founded in 1973 by the Pakistani Kurshid Ahmad, and is engaged in international *dawa* work.

[47] I have put these together from various slightly different formulations in leaflets and on Internet pages.

violence, to work for dialogue, tolerance and understanding, as well as to encourage positive participation in the society at large.[48]

The Islamic Foundation in Norway, commonly called Rabita (*al-rabita al-islamiyya fi nurwij*), supported the new-founded youth group with premises[49] and a small economic contribution. The initiative was also supported by a local community centre in Grønland. In the beginning, NMU meetings where arranged every other Sunday, but this was later reduced to once a month due to low levels of attendance. At the meetings I attended in 1999, the number of participants varied from less than ten to about thirty. In 2002, the crowd showing up at the monthly meetings had increased significantly. Meetings centred on *darses* (religious lectures), and were followed by more informal social gatherings. The *darses* in the NMU differ from most *darses* in mosques and Quran study-circles in that they are not focused on reading the Quran and explaining it through exegesis. Rather, the religious lectures were topic-oriented and addressed a variety of subjects concerning ritual practice (e.g. *Salah*), social relationships from an Islamic perspective (e.g. "Home and the education of children", "Human rights in Islam"), and central Muslim beliefs and ethics (e.g. "Predestination", "Life after death", "What Allah likes and dislikes"). Most often *dars* would be given by one of the founders. He had no formal religious training, but was known and respected for his substantial knowledge of Islam. While the *darses* take the form of religious lectures, dialogue and debate are an integral part in these pedagogical settings. The attendants would contribute with their own experiences and examples, sometimes confirming the views of the lecturer, at other times questioning and debating them. Should debate arise, everyone was welcome to comment, assert their views, and offer any knowledge they may possess on the subject. If a consensus was not reached, the lecturer would sometimes offer to look into it for the coming meeting and get back to it then.

In addition to these educational activities, the NMU subsequently developed a range of religious and social activities which came to include such things as picnics, sport activities, and *iftar*[50] and *id*-parties in Ramadan. In cooperation with the MSS (see below), the NMU

[48] The form such positive participation should take is subject to discussion, particularly when it concerns the issues of adaptation and integration. (See Jacobsen 2002 and chapter four for a further discussion of these issues).

[49] Lacking permanent premises since then, the NMU has moved several times, much in function of the networks that the different committees and heads have been able to draw upon: from Rabita to Deichmanske Library, to the Turkish Mosque at Grønland to Rabita again and to the Islamic Cultural Centre. In 2004, they were again looking for a place to set up a more permanent office for their work. The lack of funding makes setting up permanent premises difficult, which also makes the NMU less independent of the mosques than they would want to be.

[50] *Iftar* is the first meal eaten at the end of a day's fasting in Ramadan.

arranged larger seminars with speakers invited from Norwegian mosques and organizations and from abroad. A highlight for many was the yearly trip to attend the Islamic Youth Conference in Stockholm, held by the Muslim Youth of Sweden (SUM),[51] and part of the Swedish Islamic Foundation's annual international conference. Some members would also attend Islamic conferences and summer camps in other European countries.[52] Through such activities, the NMU developed a significant transnational network that largely followed transnational links that were already established by Norwegian mosques and organizations.[53] They also engaged actively in The Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations (FEMYSO)[54] that was established in the aftermath of the conference where the young founders of the NMU were first inspired by Muslim organizations in other European countries.

In 1999 the NMU published the first issue of *Explore,* the first Muslim youth magazine in Norway. (The magazine later changed name to *Ung Muslim* (*Young Muslim*). Here, one could read articles written by young Muslims themselves, as well as translations of (mainly) English texts. Some articles offered presentations and discussions of different Islamic beliefs, rituals, and practices (e.g. "*Hajj*", "*Id*" "Knowledge in Islam"). Other articles discussed social topics of importance to young Muslims' daily life, challenges related to being a Muslim in the "West" and issues that had been subject to public controversy. They dealt, for example, with

[51] The NMU and the Swedish counterpart SUM (previously SMUF) were established more or less at the same time, but the SUM has grown to be a much larger organization than the NMU. It is now an umbrella organization for about 40 Swedish Muslim youth organizations and has about 10 000 members throughout the country. The SMF (Sveriges Muslimska Förbund) was central in the initiative to establish the SUM, but it seems that the youth branch has been working to gain more independence from the mother-organization lately.

[52] E.g. the one arranged by the Islamic Information Association in Gothenburg.

[53] The NMU, for instance, developed in close interaction with Rabita, and also developed a relationship to its partners abroad. Rabita has cooperated with the sister organization in Sweden since its founding in 1987, and members from Norway have attended the Stockholm conference that the Swedish Rabita arranges every year. The Swedish youth conference that NMU members attend is held parallel to these venues, and older NMU members often attend both. Similarly, the contact with the YMUK was facilitated by already established links to UK Islamic Mission and The Islamic Foundation in Leicester (cf. Vogt 2000: 22).

[54] FEMYSO aims at being a platform for Muslim youth organizations to congregate, exchange information, gain experience and benefit from each other across Europe. The JMF (Jeunes Musulmans de France), The YMUK (Young Muslims UK) and the SUM (Sveriges Unga Muslimer) started working towards European co-operation during the first Europe-wide meeting of Muslim youth organizations in Sweden in 1995, when the Foreign Ministry of Sweden in co-operation with the Swedish Muslim youth organization SUM, organized the international conference on Islam in Europe that I have previously mentioned as the "starting point" for the NMU. Later on, the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe and The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, also became involved, and a meeting was held in Birmingham. In 1996, 35 participants from eleven countries, representing 19 youth/student organizations met in Leicester, and FEMYSO was launched. Today FEMYSO has developed into a wide network of 37 member organizations, bringing together young Muslims from over 25 countries. Since the founding it has been active in conferences and workshops concerning young people, education, antidiscrimination, anti-racism and human rights. FEMYSO has been accorded the status of INGYO (International Non-Governmental Youth Organization) and in 2000 it became a member of European Youth Forums, the Youth Forum of the European Union and the European Council (www.femyso.com, Silvestri 2003).

generation conflicts between the young and their parents, "Forced marriage versus arranged marriage", "How to be a Muslim in Norway?", "Veil in the West", "The Muslim Woman in the West" and "Terror". The magazine also included essays recounting the experiences of individual members (of conversion, of going on *hajj*, of going to their "back home" country etc.), columns where people could air their frustrations and voice their opinions on a diversity of matters, and songs and poems conveying messages, for example, of faith, and sister- and brotherhood were also included. In 2002, two issues of *Ung Muslim* were published in cooperation with "sister organizations" in Sweden (SUM) and Denmark (FASM[55]), thus creating the first Scandinavian Muslim Youth Magazine.

In addition to the magazine, the NMU has its own homepage on the Internet. The site has been under continuous construction since it first appeared, at times containing little but a short presentation of the NMU, at times containing extensive information on the history, goals and activities of the organization as well as a guest book and links to other sites on the Internet. The NMU also uses the Internet to post information on their activities in relevant sites, and there are links to their pages from other major Norwegian Islamic Internet sites. E-mail is also used to distribute information on NMU meetings and a range of other things, e.g. on meetings in other organizations such as the Muslim Student Society or the Islamic Council in Norway, on debate meetings or other events concerning issues of importance to Muslims and immigrants in general, on upcoming anti-racist or other demonstrations e.g. against the US invasion of Iraq or the French ban on hijab in state schools.

When I first attended NMU meetings in 1999, the organizational structure consisted of a committee with a head, a secretary and a treasurer, who were, in accordance with the written statutes, chosen for a period of two years by the general assembly. There was also an editorial committee responsible for publishing *Explore*. As some of the founders were no longer on the committee, a system of mentorship was established. A small group of persons who had earlier been active in the NMU functioned as an advisory body that could back up and give advice to the younger members of the succeeding committees.[56] In 2003 the organization was rearranged. The new committee consisted of a head, a deputy-head, a secretary, a coordinator, a treasurer, and potentially some additional members. Activities were rearranged into four

[55] Foreningen for Studerende Muslimer, a Muslim student Union in Denmark. The FASM was established in 1988 and offers lectures on Islam in high schools and seminaries etc. I 2002 they changed their name to Islamisk Info & Foredrag.
[56] In Norwegian the term "fadderråd" is used. The term "fadder" means godparent, sponsor and helpmate.

different sub-committees: The magazine committee, the activity committee, the Internet committee and the stand committee.

As the NMU grew and activities were extended, it assumed an increasingly active role in "presenting" Islam to a Norwegian, non-Muslim public and in answering requests from students, teachers and others interested in learning more about Islam and Muslims in Norway. In particular when the media "ran" a particular debate on e.g. hijab or arranged marriages, journalists would frequently turn to the NMU which had troubles meeting the media demand for "young Muslim voices". Members of the NMU have also participated actively in public debates by writing commentaries in leading newspapers on issues such as the hijab, the role of women in Islam, and integration policies. The NMU network is actively used for recruiting people to different projects, including my own research, dialogue and inter-faith projects, and youth and cultural work. In 2004, for instance, an inter-religious and inter-cultural European Muslim/Christian dialogue seminar arranged by the World Student Christian Federation and the Forum for European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations was held in Røyken outside Oslo.

The Muslim Student Society (MSS)

On the 20th of March 1995, a small group of young Muslim women and men at the University of Oslo founded the Muslim Student Society. According to the founders they felt a need for a place to meet with other Muslim students, for social as well as religious activities.[57] As initial efforts to get a prayer-room at the university campus developed, the MSS was created.[58] The main aims of the MSS, according to their self-presentation, are to create contact among Muslim students, and to further understanding for and knowledge of Islam among both Muslims and non-Muslims. To achieve these goals, the MSS organizes different activities each semester, including seminars, study-circles, *Dawa*-courses, dialogue-work and the publication of a magazine called *Tankevekkende.*[59] As stated on the MSS' homepage (http://foreninger.uio.no/mss/), a goal for these activities is that they should "enable Muslim

[57] Half a year earlier the Pakistani Student Society had been founded, but this association only catered to Pakistani Students and was mainly concerned with issues of Pakistani culture and identity and promoting Pakistanis within Norwegian society (see Andersson 2005).

[58] A small prayer room was soon allocated to the Muslim Students. As the MSS is now expanding, the *Mosalla* has become too small. In 2003 they were trying to get a bigger room that could function not only as a prayer-room, but also as an office. There is also too little prayer space for the women. This is particularly so during Ramadan when more people gather for prayer and *iftar*.

[59] Literally: thought-provoking

students to meet challenges in the future, so that they can contribute to developing the society".

The MSS is open to all Muslim students in Norway regardless of "race, gender, nationality and colour". Like the NMU, the organization includes students with a variety of different ethnic and national backgrounds, both male and female. The number of participants varies from semester to semester, and from meeting to meeting. A small active core engaged in the working committee, the study circles, and the literature group, is complemented by a larger number of students who attend study circles and seminars more irregularly. The study circles I attended in 1999 attracted somewhere between 30 and 40 students. In 2003 up to 80 students, and at some larger seminars 150 – 200 persons attended. The MSS declares itself to be politically neutral and independent of other organizations,[60] but this does not hinder a close cooperation on a case-to-case basis with other organizations and mosques in Oslo and abroad.

A working committee of seven who cover the day-to-day functions of the organization (including a coordinator and a secretary) is elected by the general assembly for one year at a time. The working committee is responsible for administrative tasks and arranging seminars, study-circles and other activities. The statutes stress the fact that the coordinator is *likestilt* (equal) to the other members of the working committee, but has the additional responsibility of delegating tasks between the members. In addition to this bureaucratic structure, however, there is also an important informal (but not necessarily charismatic in Weber's' sense) leadership. This informal leadership consists of people who have a certain authority not because of the office they hold, but because of their acknowledged assets in one or several fields, e.g. their knowledge of Islam, their contacts and network within the Muslim community, and the amount of work they have put into the organization.[61] It is drawn from a small group who were central to initiating the MSS as well as the NMU. Aydin, who is the one most frequently giving *darses* in the NMU is sometimes referred jokingly to as MSS's "Spiritual leader".[62]

In addition to the coordinator and the working committee there is a literature group, which aims at making information about Islam accessible in Norwegian and at creating a forum

[60] In the aftermath of 9/11, this neutrality has become even more important, as suspicion is quickly extended to those who have "been in contact with" organizations suspected of supporting terrorism. As the head of the MSS pointed out to me, it would be impossible for them to track down all the connections that international partners had, and therefore it is better to be on the safe side.

[61] By authority I do not primarily refer to a power to control or coerce behaviour, but to the ability to exert influence by getting one's point of view accepted by others as authoritative.

[62] In contrast to many others in these organizations, Aydin came to Norway as a young adult. He started practicing Islam in his youth, during the Islamic revival in the Tunisian Universities in the 1980s, and his religious position has been influenced by the ideas of the *Ennahda* movement and the Muslim Brotherhood.

where Muslim students may express themselves. This group is responsible for publishing the magazine *Tankevekkende.* Reflecting on the needs for such a Muslim magazine, the editors write that, "Since the media often present a distorted picture of Islam, we wish to bring out facts through *Tankevekkende*". The magazine contains a mixture of informative articles on Islam, being Muslim in Norway, comments on current social and political issues, interviews and sometimes also poems and short essays. Among the themes are "*Ramadan* and the Islamic calendar", "*Jihad*", "Hadith science", "Islamic Education", and "*Halal* and *Haram*". Some of the material is translated from English texts that have been published in Muslim magazines or booklets abroad, or on the Internet, but the members of the MSS themselves write the main bulk of *Tankevekkende*. The magazine is mostly read by MSS members, but is also picked up by other Muslim students and the occasional non-Muslim student interested in learning more about Islam. In 2004, the magazine was re-named *Salam* to stress a message of peace in times where Islam is increasingly spoken of in terms of war and hostility, and became available at the University bookstore on campus. The MSS has also published several introductory booklets on Islam in Norwegian, some of them translated and others written by members. On the Internet the MSS has a homepage where activities are posted, *Tankevekkende* is published, and with links to a lot of other pages ranging from Norwegian newspapers to other Islamic net sites. There is also an e-mail discussion group where subjects both of a theological and an everyday life character are debated and where activities are posted.

Each semester there are study-circles treating different subjects ranging from contemporary political issues such as "Islamic state, democracy and Marxism", "The Iraq-conflict and its consequences", to concerns with Islam in the "modern" world and the West such as "Islam and Science", "Women in Islam", "Islam and integration", and "The contribution of Muslims to the modern West". A range of more classical issues related to Islamic history, beliefs and practices are also addressed such as "The Prophet Mohammed", "Duties towards the Quran", "The importance of *Salah*", "Death", "Isa" (Jesus), and "*Tawheed*" (The Oneness of God). Usually, resources from local mosques and organizations or members of the MSS appear as lecturers. In addition to the study-circles, open seminars are held on a variety of issues; such as "The duties of children", "Human rights", and "The importance of *Dawa*". Once every semester a larger seminar is arranged with invited speakers, sometimes from abroad. In connection with these latter events, there are sometimes stands representing different mosques and presenting Islamic literature.

In the month of Ramadan the regular activities are extended. The MSS has arranged *iftar* at the university campus several times, in 2002 in co-operation with the NMU and the Pakistani Student Society. During these gatherings the evening/sunset prayer is performed communally, and food is served. Usually, there is a short *dars* after the meal. The Ramadan-activities gather more people for *salah* than what is common throughout the year. In 2002 a *hafiz*[63] led *taraweeh*[64] at the university campus every afternoon throughout Ramadan. Such activities are both an invitation to Muslim students to communal religious practice, and a practical solution to the demands of a busy everyday life. As it says in the invitation to the *taraweeh*, "November is a reading month for a lot of students (because of the upcoming exams), and it is easier for many to read *taraweeh* at the University, since they are there anyway". In this way, the goals of secular and religious education are combined through practical arrangements that allow for the realization of both.

Whereas the MSS initially centred on educational and ritual activities for Muslim students, they increasingly came to engage in broader social issues, as well as activities related to spreading knowledge more broadly in society. Like the NMU, MSS members are active; participating in, informing about and arranging demonstrations related for instance to such issues as the right of women to wear hijab, anti-racism, and the war in Iraq. They have also engaged in relief work, and in some community work directed towards the elderly and Muslim refugees. The MSS is also an active part of student life on the university campus. For instance, *halal* meat was made available in the cafeterias, not least due to efforts on the part of some MSS members who fronted this issue as representatives in the student parliament. Another aspect of this increasing orientation towards society at large is the so-called *dawa*-courses[65] that MSS has arranged in later years in cooperation with The Islamic Information Association in Sweden. Significantly, these courses dealt with the issue of "How to Present Islam and Make *Da'wah* to Non-Muslims".[66] They were led by Swedish based Mostafa Malaekah[67] together with Ahmed Mufti,[68] and an estimate of 30-40 people received a diploma for their participation the first two years. MSS members have also been active in interfaith

[63] Used as a title of respect for someone who has memorized the Quran.
[64] *Taraweeh (tarāwīh)* refers to the extra prayers undertaken on a voluntary basis during the nights of Ramadan.
[65] Call or invitation to Islam. See chapter four for a discussion of the organization's *dawa*-activities.
[66] The following topics are covered: 1.Basic *Fiqh* essentials 2.The Muslim's beliefs 3.General review of Islamic juristic rulings 4. Detailed answers to the most commonly asked 30 questions on Islam.
[67] Mostafa Malaekah is a popular lecturer among Scandinavian Muslims. Originally from Mecca, he has studied in Cairo, London and Saudi Arabia. He has published several books and booklets, e.g. on *dawa*, The Bible, and women in Islam. He has been active in Islamic *dawa* since 1991 and has conducted many *dawa*-courses.
[68] Ahmed Mufti is one of the founders of the Swedish Islamic Information Association. He is a popular lecturer and several of his lectures (including on *dawa*) are available as audio files on the Internet.

dialogue together with different religious and life-stance communities.[69] The shock of 9/11 produced a new interest in inter-faith dialogue, and several associations sought out MSS as partners in such "dialogue projects". Young Muslims usually see themselves, and are seen by others, as particularly skilled in such dialogue-work, because of their familiarity with "Norwegian society" and Christianity as well as with Islam.

In addition to dialogue-work, teachers, students and others who are interested in information about Islam regularly consult the MSS. Questions concern a wide array of issues: Muslim everyday life, how Muslims live in Norway, the life of Muslim children, the view of politics in Islam, differences and similarities between Islam and other religions, rituals and religious feasts, rules concerning images of God or living beings, marriage forms, partnership, and practical information about mosques and organizations (listed in *Tankevekkende* 1998). Inquiries from the national media are also frequent, and in 2004 the MSS arranged a course for its members on how to meet the media. As Samir, who was the head of the MSS when I interviewed him, pointed out, the MSS is much aware of its future role in Norwegian public debates, "The MSS will be an active contributor to the Muslim debate, at least externally in relation to the Norwegian surroundings. In this respect I think we have a very important role to play". The demand on behalf of the media and politicians for Muslims who can comment on a variety of issues involving Muslims, and who can represent the Muslim community, has thus made it important for young Muslims to acquire the skills and knowledges needed to meet this demand.

[69] Notably in The National Christian-Muslim Contact Group between the Churches and the Islamic Council in Norway, and in the Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities in Norway, which gathers representatives from the Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jewish and Humanist communities. From 1999-2001 the Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities together with the "Human values commission", organized a broad national dialogue on religion and beliefs, in which the MSS participated. The MSS has also engaged in interfaith dialogue with different religious student groups (e.g. Norway's Christian Student Society, the Christian Student Community and the Baha'i Student group). In 2003 they initiated a project of Muslim-Christian dialogue with Norway's Christian Student Society, planning a joint pilgrimage to Israel/Palestine. Norway's Christian Student Society has a 15-year-old tradition of pilgrimage to Israel. In 2003 for the first time this trip was arranged jointly with Muslim students. Members from the MSS also participated in the series of dialogue seminars arranged by the Fund for Danish-Norwegian cooperation in 2000 - 2004. The first seminar took place at Lysebu in 2000 under the title; "Dialogue or confrontation; Religious and cultural meeting between Christians and Muslims in Denmark and Norway". The second one took place at Schæffergården in 2002 under the title "Christian and Muslim faith in a changing society", and the third one at Lysebu in 2004, entitled "Identity, belonging and rebellion". Recently, members have also been invited by the government to participate in discussions on integration.

New forms of Muslim cooperation

Up until the 1990s the main trend in the organization and institutionalization of Islam in Oslo was the establishment of new mosques and Islamic organizations along ethnic, linguistic and denominational lines. Pakistanis, Turks, Moroccans, Arabs, Somalis, Gambians, Bosnians etc. organized religious activities together (see Larsen 1995b; Leirvik 2004 for a survey).[70] This pattern tended to be reinforced by the arrival of new groups of Muslim refugees and asylum seekers, who established their own mosques and organizations. A new trend in the 1990s was the establishment of organizations that recruited members across previous boundaries. The first umbrella organization, "The Muslim Defence Committee",[71] was established in 1989 as a response to the crisis that the Rushdie affair caused among European Muslims. The Islamic Information Association[72] was established in 1989, and in 1991 the Islamic Women's Group of Norway as well as the Urtehagen Foundation, which runs several Muslim Kindergartens, a Muslim primary school, and a publishing firm. In 1993 the Islamic Council of Norway, an umbrella organization which in 2006 regroups about 25 Muslim organizations throughout the country, was founded. Common to these new organizations was their concern with questions relating to the place, and not least the image and understanding of, Muslims within Norwegian society.

The impetus to organize across established boundaries of ethnicity, language and denomination was significantly related to the need to develop more unified attitudes towards the non-Muslim majority society, allowing groups to fuse at one level of interaction while retaining their particularities at other levels. As Østberg (2001) argues, the increased formal networking and formalized co-operation within the Muslim community and towards Norwegian mainstream society entailed, at an institutional level at least, the presentation of a

[70] The establishment of mosques was not simply a reflection of existing "communities", however. The very formation of mosques generated ongoing debates and struggles, and schisms and fissions occurred both in relation to denominational disagreements and to conflicts of a more personal character concerning e.g. leadership. Although the main trend was that people from the same country initially organized religious activities together, and that language was an important reason for this, there were some notable exceptions. The Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC), established by Pakistani sympathizers of the *Jamaat-i-Islami* in the early 1970s, remained a meeting place for all Muslims, regardless of nationality and denomination in the first years after its establishment (Vogt 2000). However, ideological differences subsequently led to fission between the Barelwi and the Deobandis as member figures grew and complicated internal cooperation. Some Muslims of other nationalities and of other ideological sympathies nevertheless remained in ICC well into the eighties.

[71] According to Vogt (2000) it primarily united the Pakistani mosques.

[72] In 1989 a branch of the Swedish Islamic Information Association (DIIF) was established in Oslo. In 1993 it became independent. Until 1998 it was run by ethnic Norwegian converts, but young Muslims of the so-called second generation gradually became more involved. DIIF in Oslo was initiated by *Rabita* who had close relations to the Swedish *Rabita* branch through the annual conferences in Stockholm. DIIF publishes material on Islam in Norwegian, and is primarily concerned with spreading information about Islam and countering misconceptions.

more unified position towards non-Muslims, despite increased internal differentiation and sectarianism.[73] As will be argued in chapter four, new modes of cooperation are also related to the ways in which "Islam" and "Muslim" have increasingly come to be constructed as identity-categories in contrast to "Norwegian and "Western", and to promotions of Muslim unity on the part of transnational Islamic revitalization movements.

The NMU and the MSS co-operate importantly with the new multi-ethnic organizations of the 1990s, and individual members of the NMU and the MSS are actively engaged in these organizations. The MSS is a member of the Islamic Council of Norway, with whom they cooperate on several issues. Several MSS members have been active in the work of the Council and central in initiating projects aimed at bringing together the different Muslim communities in Norway, notably through the *hilal*-committee, which sought to establish a common start and end to Ramadan for all Muslims in Norway (see chapter three). The MSS also contributes to organizing an annual International Islamic conference arranged by Masjid Bilal[74], a conference that attracts a larger number of Muslim activists and internationally renowned Islamic scholars from around the world (see chapter three).

The NMU and the MSS may themselves be understood as representing this new trend of cooperation. However, their way of organizing to a larger extent reflects the emergence of new patterns of identification and sociability among young Muslims in the spaces created by migration and globalization. In contrast to the umbrella-organizations, the members in the NMU and the MSS do not come together as "representatives" of different Muslim groups or communities. From the very start, the NMU and the MSS consisted of young people with a variety of different national and ethnic family backgrounds, including most major Muslim migrant groups[75]from Pakistan, Morocco, Turkey, Tunisia, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Bosnia, as well as some Norwegian converts. In the NMU at least, this multi-ethnic[76]

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[73] A similar pattern of co-operation is also found in non-religious immigrant organizations where the new generations tend to move towards mobilizing on a trans-ethnic and transnational basis (e.g. African Youth in Norway) (cf. Melve et al. 2003).

[74] *Masjid Bilal* is a break-away from the Norwegian branch of the Islamic Foundation *al-rabita al-islamiyya fi nurwij*.

[75] Including both labour migrants and refugees (see Assal 2003 for a critique of these categories). I have only made counts on this issue with regard to those with whom I conducted interviews. Here about ¼ had a refugee background, whereas the rest had a labour migration background. A little less than half of those I interviewed were born in Norway, whereas the rest had come as children. These figures are not necessarily representative of the organizations as such, however, since a criterion for choosing interviewees was that they had experience of growing up in Norway. I did not conduct interviews with non-migrant converts and foreign students, although I came to know several of them and met them within and outside of the organizations.

[76] The concepts of "ethnicity" and "nationality" have been difficult to handle in the context of this thesis. For the sake of clarity I have chosen the term "ethnic" to refer to communities that are constituted by immigrants with the same national background. Even though members of such communities might otherwise belong to a variety

composition was initially mainly a function of the social networks of those involved. As they realized how it distinguished their organizations from most mosques and Islamic organizations, they came to perceive their own multi-ethnicity as a privileged point of departure for creating Muslim unity. They saw themselves as coming together in terms of a shared Muslim identity that transcended the previous separation of "the Muslim community" along lines of ethnicity, language and denomination. In this respect, organizations like the NMU and the MSS push the issue of cooperation one step ahead, as efforts are made to transcend ethnic, linguistic and theological boundaries as such, in order to create one united Muslim community in Norway.

Promoting Muslim unity

This vision of uniting Muslims not only across ethnic and linguistic boundaries, but also across theological boundaries, was an explicit goal of both the NMU and the MSS. It was also reflected in the ways in which many members spoke about themselves as Muslims. When I asked them whether they belonged to a particular Islamic branch, the youngest would typically give answers that stressed the unity of Islam. Some of the youngest simply did not know whether their families belonged to a particular branch of Islam, and did not identify personally with any particular position – so they identified themselves simply as Muslim. Others more explicitly denounced what they referred to as "sectarianism". As Yaminah put it, "A Muslim is a Muslim. We all have the same Faith and the same Creator. I'm neither *Shia*, nor *Sunni*. I'm just a Muslim, that's all. I follow the Quran. That's what matters". Another young woman similarly stated that, "Shia Muslims and Sunni Muslims – I am neither. I am a Muslim. I defend myself as a Muslim. That's all I know. You follow the Quran. That's what's important".[77] Other members, usually those who were more acquainted with Islamic theological debates, tended to position themselves and their families more clearly with regard to different branches in Islam. Common to most, however, was that they hoped that the heterogeneous context of diaspora would provide the occasion for focusing on the Islamic

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of what anthropologists conventionally refer to as "ethnic groups" in their "back home" countries, one might argue that people sharing a national identity are constituted as "ethnic communities" within the context of migration to a new nation-state (cf. chapter three and four). This does not mean that cleavages and differences between ethnic groups "back home" do not continue to structure social relations and interactions among immigrants and their descendants in Norway. As for the term "national", it has been reserved for speaking of social relationships within and across nation states.

[77] According to Cesari (2004) differences between Sunni and Shiite Islam tend to be minimized both with respect to mosque attendance and interpersonal relationships as a consequence of the minority situation, particularly in the United States.

"core" that they assumed to be common to all Muslims, as prescribed by the Quran and the Sunna. In *darses*, discussions and other social exchanges, such perceptions of the unity of Islam and of Muslims were underpinned by a tendency to refer to "Islam" and to what "Islam says" rather than to the variety of Islamic traditions represented by the diversified family-backgrounds and affiliations of individual members.[78] However, on other occasions, subjects would be presented from the point of view of how e.g. the major Shia and Sunni law schools reasoned on a particular matter.

This way of identifying in terms of a unitary Islam and Muslim identity makes it possible to maintain a certain pluralism and flexibility with respect to what "following the Quran" and "being a Muslim" entails. Young Muslims are nevertheless confronted with the necessity to mediate and interpret what "following the Quran" and "being a Muslim" implies with respect to concrete beliefs and practices. This necessity arises whenever they engage in collective rituals, when they try to acquire more knowledge of Islam and correct "distorted pictures of Islam", and when developing organizational structures and ways of interacting with each other within these structures. In the context of the MSS and the NMU, differences between various Islamic traditions were thus brought to the fore as young Muslims strove to organize activities together, on the basis of their common identification as Muslims and their shared embracement of Islam. In order to deal with these differences in a way that did not threaten to disrupt unity, attempts were generally made to distinguish between "the universal" and "the particular" in Islam. The "particular" was assigned the status of being a matter of "personal belief" pertaining to which Islamic tradition, law school or scholar each and everyone had chosen to follow. As Samir, at the time the leader of the MSS put it:

> It is an unwritten rule that we try to address subjects we agree upon during lectures, and that we try to avoid subjects we disagree upon. In so far as it is a matter of belief, it is very personal. Managing to work together is much more important than discussing which imam people follow.

Note that this does not imply a secularist separation between religious (as private) and worldly (as public) affairs. Rather it relates to the distinction made between the universal and unchangeable dimension of Islam, and those dimensions in which men may make their own

[78] As Anne Sofie Roald relates in her autobiographical introduction to *Women in Islam* (2001), this is so also at the Islamic conferences in Europe, where scholars differ in points of view, but nevertheless all present their particular ideas as "what Islam says".

situational and changeable laws (cf. chapter four). It is the latter area that is regarded as a matter of "personal belief".[79]

The MSS is "open to all students who believe that there is no god but Allah and Mohammed (PBUH)[80] is the Messenger of God". A majority of the members are from Sunni families, but there are some Shias too, also in the working committee. Although membership is not restricted to Shias or Sunnis, the members of MSS are more conscious of the theological differences between them than their younger peers in the NMU. Though not representative of the organization's view as such, it is suggestive when one of the member's states, exaggerating to illustrate his point, that, "I personally think that it should be impossible for Shias and Sunnis to work together. Because 99 % of the hadiths differ, and the way of understanding the hadiths differs a 110 %". The main strategy for handling this difference, and the conflicts that might potentially follow, has been one of avoidance. The leaders have consciously avoided focusing on Shia/Sunni differences, and the merits of one over the other. But, although Shia Muslims have been invited as lecturers, this has tended to be on "social" rather than strictly theological issues. Furthermore, such distinctions are "under-communicated" in discussions on theological issues, which tend to be based on direct references to what "Islam says" and to the Quran and Hadith, rather than to different religious positions such as Shia/Sunni and the different law schools.

Despite the effort to treat diverse theological positions as "private matters", a conflict erupted in the NMU in 2002 that was addressed as a matter of differences between Shia and Sunni Islam. The conflict eventually led to the resignation of some members, a re-composition of the committee and an alteration in the statutes.[81] In 2003 an e-mail was sent out specifying that full membership in NMU was subsequently to be reserved for Sunni-Muslims, "All Sunni-Muslims up to the age of 26 may become members, whereas others (including non-Muslims) may become associate members. The main difference between members and associate members is that members have the right to vote in General Assemblies, whereas associate members do not". It is interesting to note that whereas whether people were Shia or Sunni was previously a non-issue and matter of personal belief, the Shia

[79] Similarly, Young Muslims UK, from which the NMU and the MSS derived inspiration in their founding, have decided that one's choice of *madhab* or school of thought should be a personal choice (Mandaville 2004).

[80] "Peace be upon him" is a blessing used after pronouncing or writing the name of the Prophet Mohammed translating the Arabic "salla Allahu alayhi wa sallam" ("God's blessings and peace be upon him"). In writing it is usually abbreviated to PBUH.

[81] Since I was not present "in the field" during this conflict, I base my discussion of it on conversations and interviews with several of those involved, undertaken shortly after the events. Respect for the privacy of the people involved does not allow me to give a detailed presentation of the development of the conflict. Instead, I will focus on some of the general issues that were raised.

– Sunni division here came to be instated as an organizational principle and formal criterion for membership that in practice accorded Shias the same membership status as non-Muslims. In addition, the new statutes specified that no more than two of the members of the committee may be above the age of 25.

The fact that the conflict was articulated around the co-presence of Shia and Sunni Muslims in the organization, and the theological differences between them, came somewhat as a surprise to me, since talk about the difference between Shia and Sunni had been virtually absent during my previous fieldwork period. Although the Shia/Sunni distinction had not been explicitly thematized, the Sunni tradition dominated the organization, both in terms of its membership, in terms of perspectives presented on theological questions, and in terms of the performance of religious rituals such as prayer and the celebration of religious feasts that generally followed the Sunni tradition.[82] When the conflict erupted, it appeared that the presence of Shias had been controversial among some of the Sunnis, and that Sunni dominance had been challenged by some of the Shias, who wanted a more "open" and "inclusive" organization where Shia and Sunni positions were given equal status. The main protagonists in the conflict had thus for a time been debating the theological differences and virtues of Shia/Sunni but without making it an issue during NMU meetings.

The conflict in the NMU illustrates well the dilemmas and contradictions that are energized as young Muslims attempt to organize on the basis of a common Muslim identity and identification with Islam. These are not just energized by the coming together of people who are different with respect to the historically sedimented identities and forms of practices they identify with and are identified with by others. In addition, and as the further discussion of the NMU conflict will show, they are energized by differences related to age, generation and gender and by conflicting visions for the future and goals of the organization. An immediate precursor to the conflict was a young girl's conversion to Islam, where the issue of whether she should become a Shia or a Sunni arose. With respect to this issue some parents had apparently become involved, thus illustrating the fragility of the NMU's claimed independence from the parental generation (see below) and the way in which the religious spaces young Muslims create for themselves continue to be embedded in wider contexts that structure their possibilities for forging new identities and practices. One might also speculate that political conflicts between Shias and Sunnis in the Middle East, which at the time seemed

[82] Despite this Sunni-dominance, most *Shias* I spoke to told me that they had always felt included in the NMU until the conflict erupted. The Sunni-dominance in the NMU and the MSS reflects the general pattern among Muslims in Norway, of whom about 80% are Sunni.

to be escalating, influenced the cooperation between Shias and Sunnis on the local level. The conflict also reflected a contest over power in the organizational leadership. Particularly, the role of the advisory body ("fadderråd") was questioned. The organizational structure, some argued, gave too much control to the founders of the NMU, and too little room for succeeding committees to develop the organization in the direction they found most promising. This concern was reflected in limiting the number of committee members above the age of 25 in the new statutes. The authority of the "informal" leadership of the NMU was also contested, and calls were made to replace the importance of the "fadderråd" in decision-making with general discussions and voting. The claims for a more "democratic" structure that was once raised against the religious arenas of the parental generation, was thus repeated within the context of the young Muslims' own organization, as time went by and "generations" were created within. In addition the conflict reflected tensions between different conceptions of what Muslim activism should entail, and notably whether internal *dawa* or engagement in the public arena (e.g. through challenging dominant representations in the media) should be privileged. In this respect, members also differed on the issue of what kind of image the organization should present outwards, as primarily a "serious" arena for Islamic learning, or as a "cool" gathering place for Muslim youth. The conflict also reflected the contestation of gender, and the issue of female leadership. Some of the younger girls that were active in the NMU enacted a femininity that made them controversial as representatives of a Muslim organization. For instance, their combination of the hijab with the then fashionable knee-long skirts and knee-high boots was perceived by some as objectionable on the basis of Islamic values of modesty.[83] Although the conflict was discussed in terms of differences between Shia and Sunni Muslims, it hence actualized a variety of intersecting differences of age, gender and generation and various positions on the future and profile of the association, on internal structures of power and authority, and on the aims of the organization as internal *dawa* or external representation.

[83] In the aftermath of an interview with one of these girls in a major newspaper, the way in which she was depicted and the ingress where she stated that "we [women] got the power" became a matter of debate. Similarly, the appearances of Amber Khan who was at the time the spokesperson in World Islamic Mission, was discussed in relation to a picture, illustrating an interview with her at www.paki.no. Here the question was raised whether Khan wore make-up for the picture, and whether this was appropriate for a woman representing a Muslim organization.

The revivalist influence

The efforts of young Muslims to create Muslim unity, is importantly informed by contemporary Muslim debates in Europe. Several authors have argued that these debates are dominated by what is variously identified as Islamism[84] (Roald 2001), the Islamic Movement (Otterbeck 2000), or neofundamentalism (Roy 2004). Although such concepts cover a variety of Islamic positions I will refer to them jointly by the term "revivalist Islam". Despite the great heterogeneity within the NMU and the MSS, the dominance of revivalist Islam was reflected within the organizations. Some members said that they had much in common with the *Salafiyya* and *Ikhwan*, and referred to the founders of the MSS as "*Salafi*-inspired". The *Salafiyya*[85] was originally a branch within a larger reform movement (*Islâh*) that was initiated in the colonial encounters between Muslim countries and the West in the 19th century (Cesari 2004: 95-96). It is part of a longer history of "reform" or "revival" of the Islamic tradition that has been variously entangled with colonialism, decolonisation, nation-state building, and class and gender relations (Salvatore 2004). The historical *Salafi*-movement was the forerunner for a number of contemporary revivalist movements, including notably those commonly referred to as "Islamist" and "fundamentalist". The *Ikhwan*, The Muslim Brothers, appeared as an organizational and political translation of the *Salafiyya* in Egypt in 1928. It has continued to attract followers in the Muslim world, and has lately had a significant influence on Muslims living in Europe.

Today the term *Salafi* covers a wide range of meanings, from the conservativism of Wahhabism, to what Ramadan (1999) terms "*Salafi*-reformism".[86] Ramadan includes names such as Al-Afghani, Abduh, an-Nursi, Al-Banna, al-Mawdudi, Qutb, and Shariati under this heading. The writers who Ramadan regroups under the term "Salafi-reformism" represent different theological and ideological positions. In his view however, a common denominator is "a very dynamic relationship with the scriptural sources and a consistent will to use reason in handling the Texts so as to take account of the new challenges of their epoch and of the social, economic and political development of societies" (Ramadan 1999: 242). Roy (2004)

[84] Roald (2001: xii) defines Islamists as Muslims who regard Islam as a body of ideas, values, beliefs, and practices encompassing all spheres of life, including personal and social relationships, economics and politics.
[85] *Salaf* refers to the devout elders who served as companions to the Prophet. In contemporary *Salafism*, the *salaf* are the first three generations of Muslims, comprising the companions of the Prophet (*Sahaaba*), their immediate successors (*Tabiun*), and the generation after these. The term is also used to refer to those sages who guarded the spirit and letter of original Islam; including notably the founders of the four *madhabs* and certain theologians such as Ibn Taymiyya (Cesari 2004).
[86] *Salafi*-reformism shares important historical roots and approaches with Saudi-based Wahhabism, but the Saudis in the 1970s transformed the reformist *Salafiyya* into a conservative and largely anti-intellectual theology (Cesari 2004).

on the other hand argues that *Salafi* no longer refers to a project of reform, but is now associated with a conservative program of purifying Islam from cultural influences. In order to distinguish the contemporary *Salafi* trend from its historical predecessors, Roy prefers the term neofundamentalism. In continuity with the multiple meanings currently given to the term *Salafi*, the suggestion that some of the founders of the MSS were "Salafi-inspired" should be seen less as referring to a particular theological position or movement, than to a contested field of discourses about "reform" and about the proper relationship to the scriptural sources and its consequence for social and political issues.

On one occasion a member of the MSS, Nabil, suggested to me that the organization could be characterized by the term "post- *Ikhwan*", as used by Roald in *Women in Islam*, a book he had just finished reading. Roald refers to the "post- *Ikhwan*" trend as a composite of various individuals from different backgrounds, who are "born out of the *ikhwān* tradition with its *salaf* direction", but who are active in a variety of European Islamic organizations rather than in the Muslim Brotherhood or organizations linked to it (Roald 2001: 56). It is interesting that Nabil used this academic categorization of different Islamic trends as a point of departure for reflecting on what kind of approach to Islam the MSS may be seen to embody. In this manner, he found a conceptual means for describing the fact that the MSS is composed of individuals from different backgrounds, but that there is nevertheless a convergence in their religious discourse. The dominant Islamic discourse in the MSS and the NMU shares some important notions with the "post- *Ikhwan*" trend in that they, to quote Roald (2001: 56), "uphold the *ikhwān* and the *salaf* notion of 'returning to the Koran and the Sunna', the *ikhwān* idea of Islam as a 'rational' religion and the understanding of Islam as a complete way of life". The affinities with *Salafi* and *Ikhwan* are also indirectly present in the close relations between the MSS, the NMU, and mosques that represent different versions of "revivalist" Islam in Norway (notably *Rabita, Bilal* and the Islamic Cultural Centre).[87] Also of note here is the influence of revivalist movements from the Indian subcontinent, representing the broad Deobandi reform tradition and Islamist political parties such as the *Jamaat-i-Islami.* A general impression was that many members of the NMU and the MSS tended to feel "closer" to mosques and organizations representing the "revivalist trend" and in particular the Arab-dominated, multi-ethnic and broadly internationally oriented ones. This was so not least because Islam in the Arab countries was often seen to have been less influenced by cultural

[87] *Rabita* and *Masjid Bilal* (both internationally oriented, predominantly Arab and attracting Norwegian converts) and to a lesser extent the Islamic Cultural Centre, are popular both in terms of their multi-ethnic composition and their general theological orientation.

traditions than in the case of e.g. Pakistan or Turkey. The significant presence of Norwegian converts in these mosques was also seen to ensure a more "authentic" and "pure" version of Islam, since their Islamic socialization was assumed to have been by way of an engagement with the texts and founding sources of Islam, rather than a Muslim upbringing in a family in which Islam was wedded to the cultural customs of a particular local community.[88]

Although such multiple organizational links and individual orientations serve to locate both the NMU and the MSS within a broader context of contemporary Islamic revivalism, it should be noted that only a few of the young Muslims in the MSS and the NMU position themselves as *Salafi* or (post-) *Ikhwan.*[89] Even when such references are made it is generally a sign of identification with the "common denominators" that Ramadan and Roald mention, rather than an attendance to the writings of *Salafi* and *Ikhwan* theologians, which they might not be familiar with at all. It is thus important to stress that this way of locating the NMU and the MSS does not imply that the organizations as such, or their individual members, represent a coherent Islamic position. Many of those who attend meetings in the NMU and the MSS are only cursorily familiar with theological differences distinguishing different Islamic tendencies, and many are not at all familiar with terms such as *Salafi* and *Ikhwan.*[90] Among these latter, and this in particular concerns the younger members, revivalist discourse is articulated at a much more experience-near level as an effort to "think for themselves", "apply reason" and search for "real Islam". My attempt to position the organizations with regard to such tendencies is thus primarily of importance in stressing some aspects of the Islamic discourse that young Muslims meet when attending activities in the NMU and the MSS, and not as a means of characterizing the diverse religious sensibilities and understandings of their members. Although the organizations influence and shape the views of members over time, individual views vary greatly and do not necessarily concur with the dominant Islamic discourses and tendencies within the organizations.

[88] Different aspects of the notion of authenticity will be expanded and discussed in later chapters.
[89] I only know of one MSS-member who is a member of *Ikhwan*, but there might be more.
[90] Cf. Østberg (2001) who similarly notes that both Pakistani children and the "average" adherents of Pakistani mosques in Oslo have little awareness of the theological distinctions between the mosques they frequent and other Islamic mosques and organizations. In the NMU and the MSS this is partly also a question of age; younger members are often less aware of the larger theological debates taking place within the Islamic community.

Gender

In addition to being multi-ethnic, the MSS and the NMU differ importantly from the religious organizations of the immigrant generation in the way in which gender organizes, and is organized, through religious activities. Although gender has been important in structuring the institutionalization of Islam in Norway and elsewhere in Europe, it has nevertheless often been overlooked in the literature. This is so no least because studies have tended to focus on mosques and Islamic organizations, which have until recently primarily been arenas for men. As is often the case more generally, such "male" arenas have tended to be represented as Muslim *tout court,* without gender being problematized beyond noting the absence of women. In later years, however, women have increasingly been included into the activities of Islamic mosques and organizations e.g. through the arrangement of better prayer facilities for women, the establishment of social and educational activities for women in the mosques, and the establishment of separate women's groups.[91] Female Norwegian converts have been important energizers of this process, and have come to occupy central positions within the Muslim community in Norway. Although women have increasingly been included in the activities of Islamic mosques and organizations, these activities have mainly continued to be structured on the basis of a separation between women and men. In being gender-mixed, the NMU and the MSS challenged gender separation as a principle for the organization of religious activities. In these organizations, the young aimed at establishing Muslim spaces where boys and girls, men and women, participated on an equal footing. Being an active participant in the organizations was regarded as equally important for women and men, and an overall ideal seemed to be that women and men should be "equally active" and "equally represented" in the activities and leading position of the organizations. However, gender remained important in structuring space and social interaction within the organizations. As gender-mixed organizations they had to negotiate the limits of gender separation and mix in relation to ideals of "respectability" and to Islamic norms for gender interaction. The

[91] One example is the Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC), which in 1990 had no activities for girls above the age of eleven, but in 1999 offered Arabic and Quran classes both for girls and women. The education was lead by a highly educated female Arabic and Quran teacher from Pakistan, who also gave *darses* for women every Saturday. In 1999, I had the pleasure of participating when women of the ICC for the first time joined in communal *id*-prayers in Ekeberghallen, a sports-arena rented for the occasion. Another example is *Rabita* that actively recruited women in the 1990s, and soon had a very active women's group. See Vogt (2000) for an account of the development within different mosques and organizations. In 1991, the *Islamic Women's Group of Norway* (IKN), like *Rabita* importantly energized by ethnic Norwegian converts, was established as a national special interest organization for Muslim women and children.

constitution of gender-mixed organizations also raised questions related to the gender of Muslim leadership.

Gender mix and separation

Mosques and Islamic organizations are no longer the exclusive arena of men, but youth clubs in the mosques nonetheless continue to attract more young men than women, and some are reserved for boys and men only (e.g. the youth group in the *Bilal* mosque, where several young men from the MSS and the NMU participate, is exclusively male). In contrast, the NMU and the MSS attract women and men in equal numbers.[92] These latter are also characterized by being mixed-gender groups, rather than separate "boys" and "girls" groups that is the model in most mosques and Islamic organizations. As Abid notes, this makes them somewhat "untraditional": [93]

> Another thing that is very untraditional about the NMU and the MSS is that it is not a group of boys together or a group of girls together. Both parts have equally taken initiative. They are mixed organizations – and this is very untraditional – that young people take the initiative in an organization that is put together in a way that does not separate women and men.

This untraditional way of mixing genders was a major issue when the NMU was established, Aydin affirms:

> Certain people, families and fathers in particular, had their own ideas of how things should be in Islam. At the time it became a big problem that girls and boys met together, but fortunately we managed to make our decision clear: This is how we do it! Those who are interested may join us; those who are not are free to find something else.[94]

Abid, who was a member of the working committee, confirmed that the gender-mix of the NMU was still an issue a few years later:

> I know we acquired a rumour for being a group of cool young people, but that is because we chose a somewhat untraditional way. People are not used to it. We work hard on

[92] Although gender mixing characterizes most of their work, young women from the MSS, the NMU and some other Islamic organizations organized an *imraa*-committee in the process of mobilizing around the international pro-hijab demonstrations in the aftermath of the French ban on religious symbols in schools (see chapter four). Whether this committee will be temporary or whether it will continue to function as a women's group remains to be seen.

[93] The gender mixing of the NMU and the MSS is not only exceptional in the Norwegian Muslim landscape, but also unusual when compared to similar youth groups in other European countries. Both the *Jeunes Musulmans de France* and the *Muslimische Jungen Deutchland*, for instance, have separate "sister" and "brother" groups. In Scandinavia, mixed-gender youth groups seem to be more common. (See e.g. Johansen 2002 on Muslim youth groups in Denmark).

[94] As a consequence not least of this scepticism towards gender-mixing, some (especially girls) are not always granted permission from their parents to join in the activities of the NMU, particularly late-evening events and trips abroad. Whereas Aydin refers to scepticism from parents and fathers in particular, some also mentioned that gender-mix had been a contested issue in relation to *Rabita*.

> attracting young people to our meetings, and have to use methods that are a bit unconventional. The concept of having boys and girls in the same room is very controversial in itself. Many are not open for that. That is why many people stigmatize the place. It has also been the platform for quite a bit of flirting and that kind of things. But I feel that our intention is pure. We in the working committee always have pure intentions. The fact that some members strike out of the limits between themselves is not something we can control – but I know that we are rumoured to be somewhat of a place for flirting and meeting potential partners.

While Abid focus on the continued scepticism, it seemed that the NMU had in many ways succeeded in establishing organizations that made parents who were otherwise concerned that interaction between boys and girls should be "decent" accept also the engagement of their daughters in such arenas. In fact, in many families, activities related to Muslim organizations seemed to give girls in particular, but also boys, a larger space for manoeuvring, as it gave them an opportunity to participate in a variety of late-evening activities, and to travel abroad without their parents, not least because their parents trusted things to proceed in a manner that conformed to Islamic norms for gender interaction. The MSS seemed to a larger extent to have avoided such scepticism altogether, not least by applying a stricter code of gender separation (particularly at larger seminars).[95]

In view of handling "gender-mixing" in a way that is "Islamically correct" and acceptable to the "parental generation" and the Muslim community at large, both the NMU and the MSS observe certain limits. In MSS-seminars men and women will usually sit on separate sides of the auditorium and discussions often take place in gender homogeneous groups. In the more informal sub-committees such as the Literature group, men and women work together. In the NMU, the separation of a women's side from a men's side during meetings is less formal, but girls and boys tend to cluster together either in front/back or on different sides. In between lectures and at social arrangements, however, boys and girls mingle quite freely. Social activities like picnics and sports events are sometimes separate and sometimes mixed, and occasionally reserved for girls or boys.

The limits and rules of mixed gender interaction are not fixed, but the general code of interaction is one of "respectable" behaviour towards persons of the opposite sex.

[95] In this respect, they sometimes contrast themselves to the Pakistani Student Society (PSS) that was established a year before the MSS, and that was supposedly the first Pakistani organization to have female board members. The PSS experienced the same sort of scepticism as the NMU, and also acquired a certain reputation for being a "couple-matching" arena, partly because several couples that had met in the PSS got married. Marriages have also occurred between members who met in the NMU and the MSS, and both local activities and international Islamic conferences function as arenas for meeting potential life-partners. Some of the girls and women in the NMU and the MSS also take on active roles as marriage-brokers in using their social network in the youth and student organizations to find suitable partners for friends and family.

Respectability is not guaranteed by physical segregation, but by appearing as a "brother" and "sister" to each other. The "fictive kinship" established by addressing each other as brothers and sisters works to de-sexualise social relations, and expresses respect for a person's Muslim identity and respectability.[96] Within this general framework of respectability and fictive kinship, teasing and "flirting" take place quite commonly. Several members of the MSS and NMU refer to the difficulties of negotiating the rules and limits of mixed gender interaction within the organizations. These rules and limits are rarely openly discussed or contested. On the other hand, neither are they enforced through any clear sanctions. Though looks and comments may occasionally function as sanctions, the members are most importantly expected to govern their own behaviour according to (more or less implicit) norms of respectability. The very act of working together as men and women, boys and girls, involves negotiating rules and limits of interaction and respectability. Although there is a clear expectancy and an ideal of Islamic correctness with respect to gender relations, the notion of what is "Islamically correct" is not fixed, but needs to be negotiated in social interaction. There is thus a process of individualization in this respect, where the limits of respectability needs to be continually (re)established through practice, as they are negotiated and sustained by the young, who are expected to "govern themselves" in accordance with Islamic ideals of respectability.

The gender of leadership

Institutionalized leadership positions within mosques and Muslim organizations in Norway are virtually all male.[97] In contrast to the mainly male leadership in mosques and Islamic organizations, both the MSS and the NMU have an equal gender representation in their working committees. In 1999, both the MSS and the NMU had male leaders, but in 2000 a woman was elected the leader of the NMU, and a committee with a female majority put together. In the MSS there has not yet been a female leader, but according to members this is mainly due to practical circumstances, although the issue of whether a female could be the

[96] The terms "sister" and "brother" seem to be used more often in speaking to or about a person considered to be "practising" (for women usually those who wear a hijab). It will also be used as a sign of respect when talking about someone in public (for instance when introducing a speaker at a seminar).

[97] According to Vogt (2000) only two mosques had women represented in the councils at the time: Rabita (2 of 15) and the Bosnian mosque (3 of 13). In many mosques women do not have the right to vote at elections for councils. As a notable exception, the national coalition of Muslim organizations, The Islamic Council of Norway, was at the time of my fieldwork headed by the female convert Lena Larsen, who also played a vital part in the activities of *Rabita* and the *Islamic Women's Group of Norway* and was jokingly referred to as "the iron woman of the Muslims" in *Ung Muslim*.

head of the organization has been up for debate.[98] Apart from formal leadership positions and membership, women and men are also equally involved in the production and distribution of religious knowledge. The NMU and the MSS give men and women access to the same kind of knowledge in that *darses* and seminars are open to both sexes. More importantly, women in these organizations, although more rarely than men, also give *darses* and appear as speakers in mixed congregations, and not only to other women as in most other mosques and organizations.[99] However, some of the young women said that they were too "shy" to give *dars* in such mixed settings, and Norwegian converts tended to be more assertive in this respect. Women are also active as producers of knowledge and opinions in the publications *Tankevekkende* and *Ung Muslim*. They are central to planning and organizing meetings, seminars, conferences and social events. It has been an issue, however, at least in the MSS, that women are not as active in all arenas of the organizational life as one could wish. This is notably so with regard to the internal debates on the MSS mailing list, and the "representation" of the Muslim community in public debates in the media. Though there are a few notable exceptions (such as Lena Larsen, Amber Khan and - at least internally – a few of the young women in NMU and MSS who speak at public events such as demonstrations and participate in media debates), Muslims, including the new generations, are usually represented by men in public debate. This situation is generally deplored, however, as it is seen to reinforce stereotypes in the non-Muslim majority community about Islam being inimical to women and gender equality. There is also a male predominance in the "informal leadership" of the organizations, in terms of who are regarded as most knowledgeable in religious matters.

The NMU and the MSS break with established traditions and norms concerning gender, giving girls and women new possibilities for establishing themselves as active participants within the Muslim community. This development is particularly pronounced in organizations

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[98] The issue of female leadership is contested in the Islamic tradition, but a common view is that since the Quran (4: 34) makes men the "guardians" over women they should not serve in significant positions of leadership over men. In this respect it should be noted that although the NMU and the MSS commonly refer to the head of the working committee as the "leader", this leader is formally given equal status to other members in the committee. It is the General Assembly, and not the "leader" that constitutes the leadership of the organizations formally speaking.

[99] The dominant consensus and practice in mosques is that women are not allowed to deliver the Friday sermon and lead men in prayer, although this consensus has been challenged recently, notably by American Muslim feminists. In consistence with this consensus, the revivalist movements, which encourage individuals to engage in *dawa* work (see chapter four), commonly restrict women's roles to preaching and giving religious lectures to other women. While remaining within this consensus with respect to leading prayer (cf. chapter six) the NMU and the MSS allow women to give *darses* in mixed congregations. As noted above the concept of "religious lecture" is used in a broader sense than what is indicated by *dars-ul-Quran*, which mainly refers to the translation and explanation of the sources. Here, *dars* refers to lectures on a diversity of topics, from "an Islamic point of view".

like the NMU and the MSS, but also part of a wider trend in which women increasingly engage in previously male religious arena, although mostly in gender-separated groups. The internal gendering of the NMU and the MSS is transgressive in the way it mixes women and men, but at the same time it upholds certain principles of gender separation within different areas of communal religious life. The increased participation by young women in organizations like the MSS and the NMU thus points towards both continuities and changes in the gendered structure of the Islamic community in Norway. Changes are more pronounced in the field of social organization and with regard to knowledge production, transmission and consumption, than with regard to ritual, in which gender seems to be less open to contestation (cf. chapter six).

Age and generation

The NMU and the MSS are Muslim organizations constituted primarily on the basis of age and life-stage. Constituting themselves as "youth" and "student" organizations is a way of marking a commonality of experiences and concerns, and also of marking a difference from the parental migrant-generation; both as stereotypically represented in the majority discourse and in terms of the cultural and religious identities and practices that this generation is seen to represent. With respect to age, the terms "Muslim youth" and "Muslim students" cover quite a large span. The NMU limits full membership to Muslims between 12-25 years of age (those who are older as well as non-Muslims may be members, but do not have the right to vote at general assemblies). As a student association, the MSS attracts mainly young people between 18 and 30. Membership in the NMU and the MSS is thus not a life-long involvement; it is limited to particular stages in life. Entering new life cycles and gaining new social obligations through work life, marriage or becoming a parent, many retire from engagement in the NMU and the MSS.

Muslim 'youth' and 'students'

According to the founders of the NMU, one of the main reasons for establishing the organization was the concern with providing an alternative for Muslim youth who do not feel "at home" within the established mosques and Islamic organizations. This concern is shared by many mosques and organizations that have increasingly come to acknowledge the particular challenges of young people when it comes to finding a place within the "Muslim

community". When asked about what his mosque had to offer young people an imam that Naguib (2001: 92) spoke to confirmed that it was, "Not much because they leave when they are thirteen, especially the boys. They hang around big shopping centres and get into trouble. We don't know what to do. We hope they'll come back before it's too late". Whereas the mosques did not "offer much" to young people ten years ago, when the NMU was founded, this has been changing in later years. The wish to make youth feel "at home" within the community, and to provide them with an educational as well as social space, is reflected in an increased scope of activities in some mosques and Islamic organizations that arrange e.g. sports, cultural evenings and computer courses, along with seminars and debates on themes of social and political actuality. In some mosques and organizations younger members (of the "second generation") have been increasingly included in daily activities and organizational structures.[100] It should be noted, however, that the role of the second generation in the established Muslim community so far centres largely on youth work and external relations to the Norwegian society at large. It is thus difficult to assess to which extent they influence internal processes.

Although the NMU and the MSS share the concern with transmitting Islam to coming generations with the mosques and Islamic organizations, they simultaneously see their own organizations as arenas where young people and students may gain a certain independence from their parents, and develop a religious approach that may more properly reflect their own concerns rather than those of their parents. Participants often characterized the mosques as places where there are nothing but "old men" and "aunties" who are busy gossiping about each other's children and bragging of their own. As Noor explains:

> What is a bit unusual about the NMU is that young people started it on their own initiative, you know, it is not something our parents started by saying here are our kids, please get together. We ourselves have felt the need to join together, and that is also something that made us feel more strength and to feel Islam on a different level than we otherwise would have.

[100] In 2002 some young members claimed a more "democratic" structure in the *Jamaat-e-Ahl-e-Sunnat*, the largest Pakistani mosque in Norway, representing the so-called *barelwi* tradition. In another Pakistani mosque, *Idara Minhaj ul Quran,* the mosque-board was recomposed with many young representatives, causing some internal unrest, and young Muslims are present in the elected *majlis-al-shura* in *Rabita* that now has several members in their early twenties (Vogt 2000). In *World Islamic Mission*, (a Pakistani mosque that was established after a conflict in *Jamaat Ahl-e Sunnat)* the young spokesman Abid Raja had a high profile and participated actively in public debates. The young Norwegian-Pakistani Amber Khan succeeded him in 2002. At the time of my fieldwork, the "second generation" imam in the Turkish Süleymanci mosque in Oslo was also popular among some of the NMU and MSS members of Turkish origin. The Turkish Süleymanci movement in Norway sends boys who excel at Quran School and who finish secondary education to further religious training in Istanbul. In 2000 four of these were serving as imams in different Scandinavian cities (Vogt 2000).

Abid elaborates on this point by contrasting the NMU with youth organizations in the mosques:

> All the mosques have youth organizations, or at least a small group of young people who are present. But these groups are mostly started on the initiative of the parents. 'Cause their fathers or mothers go to a certain mosque and the children just come along. Very often – at least for those I know of – they go to meetings just because their father will know if they don't. Like: "where were you?" But the NMU is not like that. We don't have that kind of contact with the parents, so people come here of their own free will.

Members often focus on how their involvement in the NMU and the MSS was a result of a felt need to change both the ways of thinking of the parental generation and of the non-Muslim majority society. As Aesha, who had recently withdrawn from active work in the MSS, explains:

> When you are young you believe that you can change the world. When you are many (people together), you are kind of stronger. That's when you think that: We can do it. But after a while, you realize that people do not want to change. They do not want to let go of old traditions and think differently. After a while I thought: OK, I've done my share. Now I want a break. 'Cause it took a lot of time, and also affected my studies.

From the point of view of the parents, the engagement of their children in organizations like NMU and MSS is ambiguous. On the one hand, the fact that they are Islamic organizations tends to be viewed positively. Some parents are satisfied that their children show an increased interest in Islam, and that they tend to become more observant, also having a positive impact on their siblings. On the other hand, some parents are sceptical for a variety of reasons. For one, activism in the Muslim youth and student organizations may be seen to conflict with aspirations to social mobility, in that it "steals" time from education and career. Some parents would thus prefer their children to concentrate on their studies instead. The "untraditional" ways of doing things, e.g. when it comes to organizing gender has also, as already mentioned, caused much scepticism. Some also feel that their parents do not sufficiently recognize the importance of the work they are doing in the organizations. Abid, for instance, feels that the parents of youngsters who engage in Islamic organizations should be grateful that their children have turned out as "good Muslims", against all odds, as it were:

> Abid: It might be a little self-centred to think the way I do, but what the heck, they [our parents] were spared a lot, really. It's kind of foolish of me to say so, but for instance when I arrange a seminar or we arrange a trip to Sweden with 45 youths; my mum and dad ought to be bloody proud when they think about the fact that here is the boy; he grew up in Norway, he's been through some difficulties, he has a so-to-say abnormal family, and despite all that - he is twenty years old and could have been like any other youth who doesn't give a shit about religion – but no indeed, he arranges seminars for 45 other Muslim youths. I don't feel that I get anything back really.

Christine: You don't?

Abid: To dad it's all the same. I don't think he understands what the NMU is really about. He doesn't see the constructive work we are doing. Mum understands it to a certain extent. She shows it in a different way. When there is going to be an NMU-meeting she says: Ok, I have to cook then. That's how she shows her commitment, spending three hours cooking for fifty people. That's her way of showing that; I'm super content with you.

NMU's concern with providing an alternative for Muslim young people who do not feel "at home" within the established mosques and Islamic organizations is reflected both in the choice of activities (ice-skating and *id*-parties), in the topics addressed during *darses* and seminars, and in the Muslim youth magazine they publish (an important part of which concerns parent/children relations, finding a life partner, marriage, peer pressure etc.). *Darses* often deal with Islamic topics in a way that relates explicitly to the everyday life of young Muslims in Norway: to schooling, mixed-gender swimming, class parties, the so-called "russetid" marking graduation from upper secondary school, and Norwegian politics. Islam is thus brought in touch with the everyday life of young Muslims in ways that makes it relevant to, and practicable within, that life. Saquib underlines the importance of shared experiences between youngsters in the NMU and the MSS:

> That is why I go to places like the NMU and the MSS, because it gives me a sense of belonging and new ideas, like in the *dars* that Aydin just held. We communicate on the same level. Instead of the imam in a mosque – he doesn't communicate on the same level – he speaks only about his experiences from the home country.

The theme of "having something in common" often appeared when young Muslims spoke about why they had chosen to join the NMU or the MSS. Sadiqa, who like many others was introduced to the NMU through a friend, underlines the commonality she feels with other young Muslims:

> I joined the NMU four years ago, when I was 14. A friend of mine checked it out first. Some other friends had told us about it. We went to a meeting, and found it very interesting. Because we are all young Muslims living in Oslo, and we all have different backgrounds. It's not all Moroccans or all Pakistanis, so we are very different. But at the same time we have something in common. When we speak together – the themes that come up – I understand that there is something binding us together. We are all Muslims, and we are in the same stage of life where we go through similar things. From then on I and my friend went to meetings whenever we had time.

Although the NMU in particular wishes to provide an arena where young Muslims can learn about and discuss Islam on their own terms, it has been difficult to attract young people to meetings. Several explained this by referring to how young people often found religion to be "boring" and something that old people care about. One of the active members of the NMU

described how important it was to challenges such views in order to attract youngsters to the organization:

> I try to show that you can be cool and practise Islam at the same time. During the SMUF-conference in Sweden I was play fighting with the younger boys in the mosque. I wore a hood sweatshirt over my Muslim-by-Nature t-shirt. Oh, how cool that looks – trying to motivate them in that way. To show them that Islam is not boring.

Other NMU members are more critical of this way of "making publicity" and feel that the NMU has become more of a youth club where people meet to have fun than a "serious" Islamic organization. As Umar puts it, "The social side is important, but at the same time we should know what we are doing, and take it a bit more seriously. We could do much more to further Muslim thoughts than we are currently doing".

The MSS presents itself less as a youth organization and more as an arena of learning and debate. One member of the MSS contrasted the "cool" image of Islam presented by the NMU, to the more "serious" profile of the MSS.

> I think they are more like; Islam is cool. If you look at their magazine, you see that it is very cool, and the T-shirts they sell, "Muslim by nature". Those kinds of things are highly esteemed in the NMU, whereas the MSS is less concerned with making publicity. Someone holds a lecture, someone asks some questions, and then there are different opinions and discussions in detail on what Islam says on this and that. The MSS does not have the same ambitions as the NMU does. Most people are very busy with their studies.

As a student organization, the MSS tends to attract a particular segment of young Muslims that is not representative for this category as a whole. As Saleem explained to me:

> For one thing, it is very difficult to hang out and drink and everything and at the same time become a good enough student to get into university. It is the somewhat reserved people who spend a lot of time on their homework, that go. And that's the people that the MSS gets. The MSS helps them stick to it throughout student days. So I suppose the MSS is not representative of Muslim youth, even though I wish they were.

The apprehension of a need for a "meeting place" for Muslim youth and students may also be seen in relation to social relationships beyond the relationship between young and old, and different generations. The members of the NMU and the MSS are all engaged in activities in various social arenas, and thus a part of variegated social networks from e.g. the neighbourhood, school, sports, and the workplace. As such they are part of broader landscapes of youth-culture and social relationships that include Muslims as well as non-Muslims, ethnic majority Norwegians and young people with immigrant backgrounds. All the young people in my study had friends with a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds. Such friendships were mostly experienced as unproblematic in childhood, but became more complicated in the (late) teens as the need to navigate the "muddy waters" of "Norwegian youth culture" arose.

In secondary school, the pressure of peer conformity was harder for many to cope with, since being "in" usually involved going to parties, experimenting with alcohol[101] and cigarettes, and engaging intimately with the opposite sex. Because of this, some felt more comfortable hanging out with those who as they say, "had the same interests", or who like themselves either were not interested in or not allowed by their parents to undertake social activities that involve mixed gender settings, staying out late at night etc. Parents may also be more permissive, especially in the case of girls, when it comes to letting their children attend religious activities. In this respect, the NMU in particular work towards establishing the NMU as a "safe place to be". Socializing with non-Muslim peers poses a particular challenge during the last year at secondary high because of the so-called "russetid" – an extended period of partying before and after graduation.[102] Young Muslims relate differently to this *rite de passage*; some join the celebrations and wear the "russedress" (uniformed clothing) that pupils usually wear during this particular time of graduation. Others stay completely outside of what they see as a "childish" celebration of something as important as a successful education.[103] At university, close friendships with non-Muslim "ethnic Norwegians" are again easier to sustain, as peer group pressure tends to lessen and the horizon of sub-group identities tend to widen. For many, however, the most important network remains within the ethnic or religious communities (Prieur 2004; Østberg 2001). This pattern has also been noted more generally with respect to youth with an immigrant background in other European countries (Hewitt 1986; Johansen 2002).

[101] According to surveys from 1996 and 2002 young people with immigrant backgrounds report much less consumption of alcohol and drugs compared with their non-immigrant peers (Bakken 1998; see e.g. Johansen 2002 on Muslim youth groups in Denmark; Storvoll and Krange 2003). Surveys conducted by the National Institute for Research on Intoxicants (Statens institutt for rusmiddelforskning) show that in the 10th grade 86% of the boys and 89% of the girls without a Muslim background had tasted alcohol, whereas for Muslim boys and girls the numbers were respectively 31% and 18% (Aftenposten 07.03.2003). A recent study interestingly shows that neighbourhoods where inhabitants with a Muslim background dominate there is a dual influence; the researcher noted more frequent drinking in 2nd generation than in 1st generation, but also noted that drinking patterns correlated with the number of young Muslims living in the area. In neighbourhoods with a higher proportion of youth with a Muslim background, drinking was also less frequent in non-Muslim youth groups (Amundsen et al. 2005).

[102] In public discourse, the so-called "russetid" is infamous for frequent partying, sexual experimentation and, most importantly, an excess of alcohol. Each spring, the newspapers are filled with feature articles and concerned or outraged commentaries about "the russ", represented as "even worse" and more excessive than in previous years. The "russetid" may be read as a *rite de passage* in which the norms of society at large are temporarily suspended and exceeded by youth in transition from the status of childhood to adulthood.

[103] Girls who wear the hijab face a particular challenge with regard to the uniformed clothing of the graduation period. In Noor's case, her peers suggested that she wear a red hijab for the graduation photo, to match the red graduation hats worn by the other students. She ended up taking the picture with the hat on top of her hijab. Another young woman was told that everyone needed to wear the "russelue" for the photo and would therefore have to omit her hijab, and consequently decided that she would rather not be in the picture.

For young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS, the importance of Muslim friends is also more particularly valued in relation to the "religious environment" they provide. Those who come to take a greater interest in learning more about and practising Islam may experience a lack of "common interests" with their non-Muslim friends and appreciate the "taken-for-granted-ness" and mutual recognition that social interaction within the group they identify with allow. As Salima explains:

> It is difficult to have non-Muslims as close friends. As a Muslim I have a need for speaking about Islam with my friends. And this is not entirely possible with non-Muslim friends. If we talk it is more like I have to tell them…it is not the same as talking with a Muslim. So having a Muslim community is important; then you learn and are motivated all the time.

As subsequent chapters show, this concern with "having a Muslim community" where one "learns and is motivated" is of particular importance in young Muslims' quest for Islamic knowledge (chapter five) and in their "return to Islam" (chapter six).

A new generation

The young Muslims of the NMU and the MSS significantly see themselves as representing a "second" or "new" generation, distinguishing itself from the generation of "the parents"; "the immigrants". They sometimes refer to themselves collectively as the "second generation", a term that, although much criticized, is commonly used to designate them in public discourse. The identity as "second-generation" is an important way of locating oneself in relation (and opposition) to "the parental generation", although the people included in this category when used in reference to the NMU and the MSS refer more to an imagery of shared experiences (both in family relations and in relation to the Norwegian majority) than to a strictly speaking generation of children born in Norway by Muslim migrant parents. Second generation (or first generation Norwegians) is thus a generational identity that is imagined both in terms of parent/children relations and in terms of a particular temporality of migration that generates common experiences. It is assumed to provide a specific location in relation to society, culture and religion.

Common experiences relating to their position as a second generation were spoken of notably in relation to the sometimes problematic relationships between the young and their parents that were seen to result from the migration-process and the cultural differences it created within families. It should be noted, however, that although generational difference and a difference in approach between the "first" and the "second" generation was continually

invoked as a *raison d'être* for the youth and student organizations, they usually avoided a direct confrontational approach with the parental generation. Rather, they construed the differences between themselves and the generation before them as a matter of both continuity and a gradual process of change. In a discussion about children/parents relations in the NMU it was suggested that migrant parents often choose a "strict line" for their children when it comes to "ways of being, women and hijab and stuff". Abid relates this to the difference in culture between the first generation/the migrants/our parents and the second generation/the children of the migrants/us:

> They would not be like that if they themselves hadn't had such a difficult childhood. We live in a totally different culture. They have other ways of doing things than in the West. I mean, they grew up elsewhere, and then they get here as grown ups with their children, and the children learn both this culture and the one they have from home, and then there are contradictions. The parents, they have their own culture. But this is going to pass in the future generations. The second or third generation are going to take on both the positive aspects of their culture and the positive aspects of Norwegian culture. So it's going to end up in a nice mixture. The first generation, our parents that is, have difficulties accepting the Norwegian system, Norwegian culture, or Western culture in general. It's hard for them to understand. But since the second and third generation will take on positive things from both cultures, this is probably a temporary problem.

Like Abid, many of the young adopted a conscious discourse of cultural "hybridity" and saw their own culture, and that of future generations, as headed towards a mixture of Norwegian culture and the cultures of their parents.[104] They often spoke of themselves as "multicultural" and "multilingual" in order to distinguish themselves from supposedly "monocultural others" (their parents and the Norwegian majority). The experience of growing up with two or several cultures was seen as constituting a particular form of competence that enabled "multicultural youth" to draw upon different cultural perspectives, and because of this, to be more critical, open and tolerant. Allowing that this position may give rise to "contradictions", the above quote nevertheless conceives the process of cultural hybridization in optimistic terms; where "the second and third generations" will bring about a "nice mixture" of the "positive aspects" of the different cultures they grow up with. This way of conceiving of the second-generation as transgressing cultural divides between "Norwegian culture" and "the culture of the parents", gives young Muslims a particular point of departure for realizing their goal to "build bridges between different cultures".

[104] "Culture" as used here is an "emic concept". Whereas culture as an emic concept may appear, as in this case, to refer to separate and bound entities that may be "mixed", "culture" in other contexts is used in more fluid and unbound ways.

The young Muslims of the NMU and the MSS may also be thought of as a generational "cohort", understood as a group of people bound together by their experience of particular historical events (Mannheim and Kecskemeti 1952). Like Muslim youth in other European countries, they grow up in a religiously and politically charged context where Muslim immigrants have organized themselves, engaged state institutions and challenged specific policies in order to make a place within local and national public spheres (Peach and Vertovec 1997; Vertovec and Rogers 1998). This development has taken place alongside other kinds of mobilization among minorities, for purposes of anti-racism, anti-discrimination, women's and human rights – which have informed their political consciousness as well. Another significant presence in the social context in which they grow up, is the increased presence of transnational Islamic organizations, working to promote *dawa* among Muslims in Europe. At the intersection of local, national and global developments, consecutive cohorts importantly relate to particular "events"; such as the Rushdie affair, the Gulf War, and later on 9/11. Nabil explicitly reflects on this in relation to his own and his group of friends' engagement in Islam:

> You know, I think my entire generation, those who were born in the mid 70s, were marked by the Rushdie affair and the Gulf War. Those are the two events that first made us become perceived as Muslims in school, or that made us **feel** that we were perceived as Muslims in school. When the Gulf war erupted, my teacher took me out of the class and explained to me that what was going to happen now was that Muslims were coming to be seen as the new enemies and that sort of thing. That was really okay. He told me that if we were bullied by the others we could come to the teachers and talk about it. He showed me that he was on our side. I've been discussing this with my friends, that I believe that much of the reason why we are Muslims – perceive ourselves as Muslims – at least when it comes to my generation, is that these things happened when we were at a certain age – I mean when you're sort of grown up but you're not quite there yet. So we were very much influenced by the Rushdie affair. And that was the sort of questions we started to pose ourselves. I remember reading a paragraph from Satanic Verses at home with my father – I mean, we were kind of getting our arguments from home; this is how it is. In addition there was the Gulf War, which I think made us very conscious that we were Muslims and different. It was because of the society around us that we started discussing Islam.

The importance of such events to young Muslims' religious identities will be further discussed in chapter four. Here, suffice it to conclude that the NMU and the MSS reflect both the positions and concerns of a certain age-group and of a "generation" and "cohort". Whether the affinities and solidarities created in such groups are related mainly to a particular stage in the life-cycle, or whether generational and cohort effects will prove to have enduring impact on the Muslim identities and practices of those who are now young, second-generation Muslims, remains to be assessed as more of the NMU and the MSS members enter new stages in their life-cycles.

Education, work and social status

In her study of Pakistani Muslims in Norway, Ahlberg (1990) argued that the most obvious dividing line among South Asian immigrant Muslims was that of urban versus rural settlement prior to migration. She argued that many other factors, such as (relative) social status and level of education could be related to differences in religious style and leadership, and that these were represented by different Pakistani mosques and organizations in Oslo, reflecting a main division between "normative Muslims" and "popular Muslims". Similar distinctions between "normative" and "popular" Muslims, as related to rural/urban background and level of education have tended to be generalized to also characterize other Muslim groups in Norway. Although this scheme has for good reasons been criticized by others as too starkly dichotomizing (Vogt 2000) (cf. my critique of this dichotomy in chapter one), it is worth posing the question as to what extent the NMU and the MSS reflect internal divisions related to urban/rural background and to level of education and social status.

The rural/urban distinction

As my study concerns young Muslims who were born and/or raised in Oslo, the question of rural versus urban is of course quite distinct from the case of the migrant generation in Ahlberg's study. They are all urban, in the sense that they have lived most of their lives in Oslo, and the urban context marks their identities and lifestyles. Whereas being "urban" was not often an explicitly articulated part of the young Muslims' identities, it emerged in particular contexts. Saleem, who grew up in Oslo and later moved to a small township where there were no other immigrant families at the time, told me that moving out of Oslo made him feel that he was "different" in a new way:

> All of a sudden I found myself in a place where no one else looked like me. In my class at school they were all "ethnic farmers" [laughs]. In town, there were people of many ethnicities. People were used to it. In the township, people knew no foreigners, and had all their information from the tabloids. So they had all kinds of weird ideas about Pakistanis and Muslims, and kept posing me strange questions. But in some ways they were also more similar to people as I think of them in my home country. For instance, children lived with their parents and took care of them when they grew old.

Saleem's reference to the "home country" invokes the area his parents came from in Pakistan, that he characterizes as "rural" despite the fact that the number of inhabitants in his father's home town equals that of Oslo. Whereas Ahlberg refers to the rural/urban as a clear-cut

dichotomy, I found that for various reasons it was difficult to assess the background of the young Muslims' families in such terms. The young often named the nearest town they expected their interlocutor to know when asked where their parents were from, whereas their parents may in fact come from some village in the vicinity. Some of those with a refugee background were from Teheran, Baghdad, Mostar and Kabul, and some of those with a Pakistani background came from cities such as Lahore, Karachi or Sargodha. Among those with labour migrant backgrounds small and larger villages were more common, some of them newly "urbanized", and others in the vicinities of some expanding urban agglomeration.[105] Some of the parents were also first generation migrants who left the countryside for the towns to get an education, and later moved to Norway in search of work. Like in Saleem's case, some also had one parent from a larger city and the other from a rural area or smaller township. In short, the answer to the question "Where do your parents come from?" is not always a univocal indication of *one* particular place that may be determined as rural or urban.

Despite this complexity, the young Muslims themselves often attributed major importance to the rural/urban distinction, and in particular in relation to education and to what they often talked about as degree of "progress" and "backwardness". The rural areas of the "back home" countries were generally seen to be more "backwards", and associated with low education and illiteracy, whereas urban areas were spoken of as more "developed" and associated with education and what is "modern". Such a distinction was articulated in particular when it came to characterizations of different ways of dealing with gender difference, where the country-side tended to be perceived as conservative and as particularly restrictive for women. This set of associations may be an additional reason why the young tended to name the nearest town when speaking about where their families come from. As may be seen in later chapters, this distinction between the rural and the urban, the illiterate and the educated is important to how young Muslims establish distinctions between different ways of being Muslim and approaches to Islam.

[105] In the Nador-area in Morocco for instance, urbanization is a quite recent phenomenon. The last few years have seen a rural exodus towards the fast-growing towns of Nador and Al-Hoceima, and several smaller new urban centres attract people from surrounding villages. Some of those who originally emigrated from country-side Morocco have their relatives in what are now urban areas. Those who plan to go back after retirement may consider establishing themselves in one of the urban agglomerations where life is generally more comfortable than in villages, which still often lack electricity and tap water.

The importance of having an education

Education was generally highly valued by the young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS, in terms of individual life-opportunities, family expectations, as well as of improving the position of minority groups within Norwegian society, and as a means for social "progress". Let me briefly present some reflections on education made by one MSS-member in her mid-twenties:

> Both of Alesha's parents have a B.A. from Pakistan. When he came to Norway, her father got a job as a cleaner. A few years later he advanced to the management of the cleaning company. Alesha's mother worked as a teacher "back home" before they came to Norway. She went to university to learn Norwegian before Alesha was born. When Alesha was born, she continued her studies for a while, but when she was pregnant with her second child, she "went into the family process" as Alesha puts it. Alesha has tried to encourage her mother to get back to her studies, but with no luck, "I feel that she has not had an opportunity to learn Norwegian properly and to develop her potential outside of the family. She doesn't have enough self-confidence, you know. My father worked 12-13 hours a day and he wanted her to be at home to take care of the house. So she has been doing the typical home and children stuff. She has been happy about it herself. I'm kind of opposite to mum. I mean, I will probably work only part time when I get children, but I need to have something going on". When I asked her about her plans and dreams for the future, Alesha told me about her personal ambitions and social engagement which centred around the importance of education, "I want to work in the computer industry and make loads of money. And after some years I want to go back to Pakistan and build schools for women. I want the mothers to be educated in an Islamic way, so that they can give their children a good education. They need to learn Islamic values. And they must learn to have an opinion on things". Alesha is now in the process of finishing her diploma in computer sciences, and has been offered a job in a national company. Her parents have always been eager for her to get a good education, and at times they have worried about all her engagements in other organizations and activities. To Alesha the value of education is importantly related to learning to reflect and think independently. She assumes her parents share this view, and that this is a reason why they want her to pursue an education, but adds that they are also concerned about social status and with getting good marriage partners for their daughters.

Like Alesha, the members of the MSS are students at university or college level, whereas most NMU members are still in the process of finishing secondary and upper secondary school.[106] In the NMU a few of the girls had opted for vocational education in typical women's areas such as health and childcare. Some of the older NMU members had moved on

[106] 86.6% of 16-18 year-olds born in Norway of two foreign-born parents undertook upper secondary education in 2002. The equivalent figure for all 16-18 year-olds was 89.3% (Lie 2002). Whereas the proportion decreased slightly for the population as a whole, it increased among those with an immigrant background.

to university or college studies, and many of the younger were planning to do so.[107] Professional studies such as medicine, odontology, law, biochemistry, information technology, engineering, economics and journalism were most common. A small but increasing minority, however, was registering within human and social sciences in areas such as philosophy, religious studies, Middle Eastern and Islamic studies, Arabic, and sociology. Others – especially of the girls – chose college studies within health, teaching and public administration.

Many, but not all, of the youngsters experienced considerable expectations from their families as to educational and career achievements, and careers plans were often intended to fulfil such expectations as well as "personal" ambitions. Often, not only the parents, but also the extended transnational families, would be monitoring the educational and career achievements of the young. The issue of socio-economic mobility is important to many immigrant families, since labour migration to Norway was often initially motivated by a wish to earn money so as to secure a better future for the family. While parents often stress the importance of social mobility through education for both sons and daughters, some nevertheless have different expectations to how such mobility should be realized. A son's education is often seen as a means of guaranteeing his future job prospects, and his ability to provide for a family. In contrast, the education of daughters is sometimes seen more as a pre-requisite for upwards social mobility through marriage. The young also considered education important for their future marriage prospects. As the young would say; if you want to marry an educated person, you have to be educated yourself. To them, marrying an educated person was important not only in terms of social position, but also because of the perceived association between lack of education and "backwardness" and cultural conservativism.

[107] Educationally, there is a gap between children with an immigrant background (incl. the "second generation") and majority students (All the following figures are from Lie 2002). 4% of all persons aged 19-24 were registered as undertaking tertiary education (university/college). Among people born in Norway of two foreign-born parents in this age group the proportion was 20.9%. For those aged 25-29, on the contrary, the numbers for all persons and those born in Norway of two foreign-born parents were 13.9 and 13.8% respectively. The proportion of those born in Norway with two foreign-born parents undertaking tertiary education varies considerably with country background, and the gap is more pronounced with regard to those with a non-European background. For those aged 19-24 as much as 17.3% of those of Pakistani background (17% boys and 17.6% girls) undertook tertiary education, whereas for those of Moroccan background (10.3%) and those of Turkish background (11.3%) the proportion undertaking such education was considerably lower. Gender differences were also considerably more marked in the last two categories: for those of Moroccan background 4.4% of the boys compared to 17.7% of the girls undertook tertiary education. For those of Turkish background the figures were respectively 6.2% and 14.8%. There are several possible explanations for these gender differences, including differences in available career opportunities, in investment in different social fields and activities, as well as in gendered strategies such as the wish of some girls to postpone marriage or to escape the control of the family.

However, some of the girls also saw it as a problem that if they got a too high education, there would be fewer men to "match them", and thus fewer eligible marriage partners.

Education is also seen as an important means to improving the position of Muslim minority groups within Norwegian society. Many mentioned the importance of showing young Muslims that economic success and status could be achieved through higher education, rather than through "joining some gang or engaging in criminal activities", as they put it. As role models, and in the importance they attribute to education, the NMU and the MSS probably have an effect in recruiting young people within their social networks to higher studies. Many of the members were concerned about increasing the number of students of their own background or of Muslims in higher education, and some participated in collective efforts to recruit students from minority groups. Education is also attributed importance as a recommendation within an Islamic framework. References are often made to Islamic texts and commentaries that treat the importance of knowledge and education in Islam (cf. chapter five) This importance underpins arguments e.g. for the equal access of women to higher education, and for the legitimacy of moving away from ones' family to study in some other town or abroad as a part of a broader travel in search of knowledge.

Students who undertake tertiary education in Norway usually have at least one parent with a certain educational level (Lie 2002). The young Muslims confirm this pattern of social reproduction in that their parents are on average higher educated than the immigrant population as a whole.[108] Despite this, their own education, especially in the case of girls, often by far exceeds that of their parents. Among their mothers, roughly half had no education beyond primary level and a couple of them were functional illiterates. Only a couple held a university or college education and the rest had completed either secondary or upper secondary education. In general the fathers were more educated than the mothers. Only a few had only primary or secondary education. About two thirds had completed some kind of upper secondary education, and about a third held higher education degrees from universities or colleges.

Most of the young Muslims in my study characterized their families as somewhere in "the middle" with regard to social standing in their "back home" country. Some fathers were

[108] Unfortunately I do not have any systematic information about the educational and work background of the grandparents' generation. Most of the young people I talked to didn't have much knowledge of the education and occupation of their grandparents, and I did not explore this question systematically. My general impression was one of variation. Some mentioned that one or several of their grandparents had a certain educational level and were well respected people in the local community (a couple of local religious leaders, a military background, a local governor, a senator). Others mentioned grandparents with little or no education, usually from modest peasant circumstances.

landowners, while others belonged to families of a certain status in terms e.g. of caste, profession, or as in the case of those who descend from so-called Sayyid families.[109] The complexities indicated by the concept of different forms of "capital" and distinctions (Bourdieu 1984) are evident when related to actors situated within multiple and often transnational social fields, between which different forms of capital may be more or less easily convertible. The social position of an immigrant family may thus vary considerably between the "back home" and the "at home" countries. The capital associated with "being in the middle" is only to a limited extent convertible to the migrant context, however, and the intersection between ethnic and class dynamics tend to importantly constrain the life opportunities of many immigrants and refugees in Norway (Grønhaug 1979; Longva 2003).[110] As a consequence, many experienced a relative degradation with regard to social position in establishing themselves in the new country.[111] With regard to employment and property for instance, some fathers were manual workers in Norway whereas they had more esteemed professions in their "back home" countries, some families lived in small apartments in Oslo, but were landowners back home.

Due not least to processes of ethnic discrimination in the labour market (Rogstad 2002a; Rogstad and Raaum 1997), gaps between formal education and actual work situations were common in the parental generation. One jurist worked as a taxi-driver, and a literature-critic had started a restaurant. Most fathers work in the small and medium enterprise private sector as taxi owners and drivers, restaurant owners and waiters, salesmen or manual workers. Quite a few were retired or on disablement benefit. Only one father had a career in Norway matching his academic degree from the *back home* country. Roughly half of the mothers had been home workers for all or most of their lives. The other half were, or had been, employed

[109] Families who trace their descent from the family of the Prophet Muhammad. The young rarely talked about themselves and their families in terms of e.g. *zaat* (cast), *biraderi* (patrilineal kinship group)-status etc., so I do not have much information about their social background in this respect.

[110] This is so both in a structural sense (difficulties in getting one's qualifications recognized, for instance, force many educated immigrants to engage in unskilled work) and in a cultural sense (ethnic minority members tend to be classified as "lower" in the social hierarchy because of their immigrant background). Unemployment rates are three to five times as high among non-European immigrants and participation rates in working life are lower, although increasing over time for each cohort (Østby 2004). Unemployment rates are lower for the so-called "descendants" (the "second-generation"/ those born of two immigrant parents) than for the immigrant generation, but for certain groups still double that of the non-immigrant population. Factors like national background, gender and age importantly impact on these unemployment figures (Østby 2004).

[111] Several studies have pointed out that a majority of the largest Muslim immigrant group, the Pakistanis, came from relatively good conditions, from a rural and urban middle stratum, and that those who migrated to Norway had a relatively high educational level compared to the general level in the "back home" countries. Many experienced a status-fall as they acquired work in the heaviest and lowest-paid parts of industrial and service sectors (Korbøl 1974; Wist 2000). This picture of the labour migrants as representing a middle stratum in the "back home" country is confirmed by a larger study including Moroccans, Pakistanis, Indians and Turks (Bø 1982) and a historical account of Turkish immigrants from the 1960s to 2000 (Aaserud 1999).

in (what Norwegians would regard as) traditional women's professions in schools, kindergartens and homes for elderly people. Some also contributed to running a family business or worked as private childminders or cleaners.

As most members of the NMU and the MSS are still undertaking education, it is difficult to generalize as to whether this education will translate into them coming to occupy another stratum of the labour market than that of their parents. Some told about experience with discrimination within the labour market, but many of those who had moved on to professional life had achieved positions that matched their educational level; in public administration, as employees of larger and smaller firms within e.g. information technology, as economists, teachers, journalists etc. It is my impression that the young Muslims were mainly oriented towards mobility within structures in Norwegian society, and less within structures related to e.g. caste, clan etc. (which they would often criticize) that might be of continued importance to the parental generation and in the "back home" countries. When the complex intersection between structurings in different social fields is taken into account, the general picture is that the young in my study were upwardly mobile compared to the position of their parents in Norway, but not always when compared to family social position previous to migration. In any case, the NMU and the MSS draw members from both rural and urban, highly and not so well educated families. In being urban, educated and upwardly mobile themselves, and in relying upon such distinctions in formulating their Muslim identities and engagement with Islam, one might argue that they nevertheless reproduce divisions in the Muslim community along lines of education and social status.

Creating new Muslim spaces

Through the NMU and the MSS, young Muslims have created "their own" spaces for Islamic formation, ritual practice and sociability. Whereas activities were initially largely focused on ritual practice and self-formation, both organizations came to orient their activities increasingly towards broader social questions related to being a "Muslim minority" in Norway. The organizations formed by young Muslims in Oslo attest to the ways in which migration, globalization and transnationalism currently affect the organization of Islam and the (re) construction of Muslim identities. The establishment of the MSS and the NMU reflects the coming of age of a new generation of Muslims who share certain experiences of being young and having a migrant-background. They have grown up at a historical moment characterized by transnational Islamic revivalism and new forms of cooperation marking the

constitution of a “Muslim minority” in Norway. As a “cohort”, their experiences are marked by a series of events that have contributed to politicizing Muslim identity. Based on their common identification with Islam young Muslims organize themselves in ways that reflect both continuity and change with the religious organizations established by their parental generation. By focusing on what “unites them” as Muslims, and by defining differences between different Islamic groups and traditions as a matter of “personal belief”, young Muslims have created spaces for Islamic formation that are in many ways particularly “open” to a variety of viewpoints and in which debates and arguments regularly occur. In contrast to some Muslim youth and student organizations in other European countries, they have managed to establish themselves more independently of larger Islamic organizations locally and internationally, although importantly cooperating with these organizations. However, even as young Muslims try to establish their common activities on the basis of a common adherence to Islam and shared Muslim identity, differences related to age, generation, gender, ethnicity and denomination are actualized in a number of ways. This chapter thus points towards the ways in which the relationships between unity and diversity in Islam are problematized as young Muslims try to cope with how to live as a Muslim in social spaces characterized by ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. In doing so, it has already pointed towards some important areas of discussion and debate that will be examined in this thesis.

Notably, this chapter has shown how the emergent activism of young Muslims raise questions about social and cultural continuities and discontinuities over time, and inter-generational (re)production of meaning. While the NMU and the MSS share the concern with securing the continuity of Muslim identity and Islamic practice with the parental generation, there are many ways in which their ways of engaging with Islam differ from, challenge, and oppose the ways of the immigrant generation. One such area that has been pointed to in this chapter is the way in which gender organizes and is organized through religious activities. The establishment of gender-mixed youth and student organizations gives rise to debates and contestations about gender e.g. as the limits of respectability are negotiated and as women become active participants in public arenas that have previously mainly been associated with men. They thus add to the multiplicities of meanings and experiences that such debates draw on. The chapter has also pointed towards the “transnational” as an important context for understanding the religious activism of young Muslims in Oslo. The importance of transnational orientations, and the ways in which young Muslims’ debates about religious identities and practices are embedded in transnational public spheres of reference and debate will be developed throughout the thesis.

By looking into the way in which young Muslims reflect on why they wanted to form their own organizations and the goals and visions they set for themselves, several important themes that will be followed up in later chapters have emerged. One is the way in which the organizations are seen as vital to passing on Islamic tradition, in providing an environment where young Muslims may learn about Islam. The organizations are important sites for formation and education, and point towards both efforts to continue and reform religious practices. Another is the concern with "identity", and the anticipated futures related to "maintaining a Muslim identity" and forging a "Muslim Norwegian identity". Issues related to cultural and religious diversity in contemporary Norway, have also been raised, notably through young Muslims' efforts to correct distorted representations of Islam through their publications and open-seminar activities, and to obtain "rights" for Muslims to practice their religion. These themes will be further explored in later chapters.

While this chapter has traced the kinds of spaces that young Muslims have established for Islamic formation, ritual practice and sociability locally, the next chapter focus on how these patterns of organizing are imbricate in broader frameworks of reference and debate, that position young Muslims with respect to a multiplicity of spatial imaginaries and communities. The next chapter suggests a way of grasping this multiplicity within which young Muslims' concerns and organizational activities are framed, and in relation to which they need to be understood.

Chapter three

Who are 'we'? Multiple 'horizons of action'

In the introduction I touched upon the ways in which researchers have tried to reconceptualize the spaces and identities that are created in the context of migration and globalization. This poses particular challenges for anthropology because of its tendency to equate a particular locality with a particular community, culture, or form of Islam, somehow assuming a given correspondence between them. One attempt at such reconceptualization is suggest by Werbner (2002a) by the term "imagined diasporas". Reflecting critically on the growing scholarly literature which responds to the current expansion of the concept and discourse of diaspora, Werbner suggests that diasporas should be understood as transnational communities of co-responsibility and embodied performance (Werbner 2002a: 3). Building on her study of Punjabi-Pakistani migrant settlers in Manchester, Werbner considers the entanglement of three quite different diasporic orientations that animate the transnational subjectivities of this particular community. One of these orientations forms a "conventional diaspora" in that the imaginative unity and embodied performances of Manchester-Pakistanis are oriented towards a national homeland. At the same time, Werbner argues, Manchester Muslims have redefined themselves as a "Muslim diaspora", asserting themselves as members in a transnational moral religious community, the *umma*. Being a Muslim diasporan, she argues, remains in tension with a third diasporic orientation towards a South-Asian aesthetic diaspora. The South-Asian diaspora refers to an "aesthetic world" embodied by the flow of mass popular cultural products from the subcontinent and the aesthetic inscription of the South-Asian in rituals and ceremonies. Manchester-Pakistanis thus belong in a taken-for-granted way not to a single diaspora, but to several *different* diasporas, each with its own aesthetics and ethics. Werbner shows that within these spaces, alternative identities and lifestyles are forged, as Manchester-Pakistanis debate and argue over moral, political and existential issues affecting their group.

This discussion of young Muslims' identities and practices in this chapter is in many ways similar to and inspired by Werbner's analysis. However, unlike Werbner, I have chosen not to conceptualize these spaces of imaginaries and practices as "diasporas", but as "horizons of action". By "horizons of action" I want to indicate a kind of imaginaries in terms of which people orient themselves and in relation to which identities and practices are shaped. The kind of spaces constituted in and through processes of transnational migration and globalization are characterized by the existence of a multiplicity of horizons of action that provide, sometimes

overlapping, sometimes contradictory, visions of the world and scripts as to how people should live and act. Each of these horizons is constituted according to different principles of inclusion and exclusion, values and objectives. They are underpinned by histories, institutions, social relationships, and patterns of social practice, and offer different visions of "community". "Imagined communities" such as "the global *umma*" and "Norwegian Muslims" are underpinned by e.g. the objectification and politicization of the Islamic *umma,* and by the contemporary nation-state order. These imaginaries are "normative" in the sense that they suggest what is good, just and desirable. They also relate to particular pasts and project particular futures, e.g. the unification of Muslims across national boundaries, or Islam as an integral part of Norwegian society. As such, they demonstrate contestation over what should be included in, and defining of, particular spaces, communities and identities.

The reasons for introducing the term "horizon of action" as an alternative to "diaspora" are several. One reason is based on the ethnographic focus of my analysis. Unlike Werbner's Manchester-Pakistanis, the groups of young Muslims in Oslo that I have been working with do not constitute a "community" based on national origin. As Anthias (1998) has argued, the concept of diaspora, whilst focusing on transnational processes and commonalities, tends to do so by deploying a notion of ethnicity which privileges the point of "origin" in constructing identity and solidarity. While Werbner clearly moves beyond such an understanding by arguing that the Manchester-Pakistanis belong to several different diasporas, her point of departure is nonetheless a "community" constituted in relation to a "point of origin". By referring to horizons of action rather than diasporas, I want to avoid making the point of origin into a primary site of identification and solidarity. I also want to open for a focus not only on transnational imaginaries, solidarities and performances, but also on the trans-ethnic communities that are imagined within, rather than across, the boundaries of the nation state (cf. Anthias 1998). Such a conceptualization of horizons of action further allows for the exploration into how young Muslims are differently positioned within, and orient themselves differently in relation to, different horizons. Horizons of action, and the communities, identities and patterns of social practice that are forged within them, are fractured by differences related to e.g. gender, generation, ethnicity, class, education and political orientation.

In this chapter I identify three partly overlapping, partly contrasting horizons of action: "the global Muslim community", "Euro-Norwegian Muslims", and "family and the ethnic diaspora". The chapter explores how young Muslims in Oslo relate these three horizons, how they seek to realize some of the values and objectives associated with the different horizons,

and how their social networks and relationships reproduce and cut across the different visions of community that these horizons offer. Sometimes uneasily, they seek to combine the horizons as points of orientation for social and religious practices. Each part of the chapter focuses on different horizons as they emerge from the practices and reflections of young Muslims in Oslo. Although my focus is on how young Muslims actively relate to the different horizons, I do not mean to suggest that they are free to do so in any way they like. The horizons and the relationships between them are structured by complex power geometries, principles of inclusion and exclusion, and relate to and are energized by larger socio-political events and developments. In the last part of the chapter, I discuss the ways in which different horizons are actualized as young Muslims go about living their lives and the simultaneous processes of hybridization and boundary-making that are thus energized. The analysis of different horizons of action questions "naturalized" conceptions of space, locality and identity. It moves beyond the currently much criticized conceptualization of young Muslims' identifications and solidarities as between predefined "homelands" and "host lands". Instead, it allows us to consider the multiple forms of belonging that migration and globalization enable, and the importance of power and normativity to how young Muslims orient themselves in relation to multiple "horizons of action".

A global community of Muslims

The global imagined umma

The first horizon of action that I want to focus on is the one I refer to as the "global imagined *umma*". In many different ways, the young Muslims I worked with asserted themselves as members of a global religious community. As will be seen, this orientation towards a global Muslim community was manifest in the ways in which they spoke about their religious engagement. Furthermore they engaged in transnational patterns of solidarity, communication, organization, and consumption that were framed within the imaginary of a global Muslim unity. Let me start, however, with some theoretical reflections on how this horizon of action could be framed through the concept of a "global Islamic *umma*". Through a focus on the translocal spaces that are created by the movement of people and communication and information technologies, research has increasingly drawn attention to processes of collective representation and individual identification wherein Muslims come to imagine themselves as belonging to a global community. Taking their cue from the work of Anderson

(1991) on the importance of "print capitalism" to the construction of "nations" as imagined communities, several researchers (e.g. Eickelman and Piscatori 1996; Mandaville 2004; Turner 1994a) have argued that globalizing processes have profoundly contributed to form contemporary imaginaries of a "global Islamic community". Mandaville (2004: 145) for instance, argues that, we may talk about a "global infrastructure for the maintenance, reproduction and dissemination of Islam" that gives rise to a translocal "public sphere" within which Muslim identities and practices are currently renegotiated.[112] In this global infrastructure we may include migration, travel, mass media, the distribution of Islamic literature, CDs, sound and video tapes, the *dawa* activities of international Islamic revitalization movements, and the Internet. These infrastructures are embedded in transnational economic flows and structures, such as remittances used by migrants to build mosques in their "home-countries", the investment of rich Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia in *dawa* abroad, and the Islamic "consumer goods" that increasingly enter popular culture. The increasing global dimension of political conflicts, exemplified by the Rushdie affair, the hijab affairs, and the so-called War on Terror, attests to the emergence of such a transnational public sphere, where Muslim identities and the idea of a global *umma* are re-negotiated. According to Mandaville (and others), the emergence of a global infrastructure for the maintenance, reproduction and dissemination of Islam and a transnational Muslim public space allows Muslims to create a new form of imagined community, or to reimagine the *umma*.

Anderson describes the imagined character of the modern nation as due to the fact that "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 1991: 6). Anderson suggests that the concept of "imagined communities" is applicable beyond that of the nation, since "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even those) are imagined" (Anderson 1991: 6). Communities are therefore not to be distinguished by whether they are imagined or not, but by the style in which they are imagined. The concept of the *umma*, which is usually translated as community, is a complex one within the Islamic discursive tradition. According to Asad, in the classical theological view, it was not a community on a par with a nation, waiting to be politically unified, but "a theologically defined space enabling Muslims to practice the

[112] The notion of a "global infrastructure for the maintenance, reproduction and dissemination of Islam" is complicated, however, since complex power-geometries (cf. Massey 1994) affect different persons, groups and localities differently with respect to how they are situated within such infrastructures.

discipline of *din* in the world" (Asad 2003: 199). The crucial point about the *umma* is thus not that it is imagined, he argues, but that the way in which it is imagined predicates, and is predicated on, particular solidarities, modes of being and acting (Asad 2003). According to Asad, the classical theological vision of the *umma* presupposes individuals who are self-governing but not autonomous, and who have the capacity to discover the rules of *sharia* (a system of practical reason morally binding on each faithful individual) and to conform to them. Whereas Asad insists on the way in which this classical notion of the *umma* as grammatically differs from the modern nation, he also acknowledges the fact that the concept of the *umma* is given different meanings as people interpret and make use of the term in light of the contemporary world. However, Asad's insistence on the classical theological view of the *umma*, is an important reminder that such interpretations may build on a notion of "community" that is differently imagined, and predicated on different forms of solidarity, than those which dominate contemporary imaginaries of "community" e.g. in the shape of modern nations.

In the Islamic tradition religious practices and imaginaries have a long history of uniting people across boundaries. Anderson (1991) stresses the importance of travel to the "reality" of the imagined religious community in the pre-print age. Historically, local, regional, and transnational pilgrimages, as well as the great learning centres in the Muslim world, were points at which people from different places and different social and economic circumstances met, through which ideas and beliefs flowed, and where the idea of the Islamic *umma* as a "community" was given form and substance (Gilsenan 1982). More recently, developments in communication technologies provide Muslims with new modes of communication and interaction across distance, as well as new "public spheres" in which the *umma* is constituted and debated (cf. Mandaville 2004). The way in which the *umma* has been imagined in time and space also relates to broader developments in the political economy of the world order. The concept of the *umma* took on a particular resonance in the discourse of nineteenth and early twentieth century anti-colonial reformers, because the vast majority of the Muslim world was subject to the same western hegemony. This resonance has continued to be reinforced by what is seen as a continuous dominance of the "West" over "the rest" in socio-economic and cultural terms, as well as a military aggressiveness from the "West" (U.S.) towards the Muslim World.

In contemporary Islamic discourse, the *umma* often appears as a central normative concept, with an appeal for unity across the global Muslim community (cf. Mandaville 2004). One might thus argue that both the advent of new communication technologies and developments

in the political-economy of the world order have made the "global imagined *umma*" a compelling imaginary for Muslims throughout the world (see Lubeck in AlSayyad and Castells 2002; Eickelman and Piscatori 1990; Vertovec 2000). Importantly, as increasingly more people have access to both traditional meeting places (e.g. pilgrimages), and to new meeting places (e.g. the Internet), the global Islamic *umma* has turned into a collective imaginary of joint purpose in the world that ordinary people may make use of in their everyday practice and self-identification. In "The Transnational umma – myth or reality?", Schmidt (2005) argues for the need to distinguish between the transnational *umma* as "vision" and "practice". The *umma* as vision refers to, "The conviction to take part in a border-crossing community that includes believers worldwide and raises ambitions for what the believers ought to be — unified, innately connected, characterized by profound mutual loyalty and the practice of high moral standards" (Schmidt 2005: 577). The level of practice, on the other hand, refers to how people go about transforming and vitalizing imagination into transnational community practice. Schmidt's caution is important in order not to conflate the "imagined" community with actual patterns and networks of transnational practices, and in order to discover the "power-geometries" that structure the direction of flows of ideas, people and patterns of cooperation in broader transnational networks.[113] However, in this context I will not primarily be concerned with distinguishing "vision" from "practice", but rather with exploring some ways in which a global community of Muslims may be seen to provide a "horizon of action" for young Muslims in Oslo. In this respect, it should be noted that the concept of the *umma* is not very frequently used by the young themselves in their everyday conversations, both because some are unfamiliar with it and because to those who are familiar with it, it tends to be too closely associated with Islamist radicalism in public discourse. Notwithstanding, through a variety of vehicles, they identify with and orient themselves in terms of a global Islamic community, and thereby inscribe themselves into a transnational ethical, aesthetical and sometimes political community of believers. It should be noted that the cartography of this transnational Islamic community goes beyond the meaning of "transnationalism" as it is often used in anthropology, i.e. as a process of linking members of

[113] Schmidt (2005) shows that whereas transnational religious and community practices, driven by the vision of a global *umma*, were significant among young Swedish Muslims, they were less so for young American Muslims. On the other hand, trails of Muslim-American Islam appeared to have a notable influence on the Muslim communities she studies in Scandinavia. This latter point is confirmed in my own study, which shows an important presence of American Islamic scholars as points of reference for authoritative views on Islam (such as Hamza Yosef and Jamal Badawi) as well as material produced by American Muslims that are reprinted in *Ung Muslim* and *Tankevekkende*. As Schmidt also notes, the impact of Muslim-American Islamic discourses is strengthened by the internationally dominant role the U.S. plays as a superpower, and the growing use of English as the lingua franca of the world today, and also increasingly among Muslims.

an ethnic or national community across several localities. It represents what may be referred to as "radical transnationalism", that is, a transnationalism which does not have a spatial grounding in "a homeland".[114]

Sisters and brothers in Islam

In the NMU-magazine *Explore* (January 1999), Yama Wolasmal, who is a long time member of the NMU, wrote an essay entitled "My journey to Afghanistan" that is illustrative of how young Muslims orient themselves in relation to different horizons of action and "imagined communities":

> After 15 years in exile, I finally got the opportunity to visit my home country. […] I did not know whether I should look forward to or fear the trip. On the one hand I was frightened by the rumours about the situation in Afghanistan, but on the other hand I was looking forward to going to a so-called "Muslim" country where I would hear adhan[115] in the open at prayer times. I saw this as a great thing, and felt that I was lucky to get the opportunity to experience it, since I have spent most of my life in the West. I did dua's[116] to ensure that my family and I would be OK, since the conditions in Afghanistan were quite precarious. To be honest, I saw the journey as a challenge, because I held certain prejudices and wanted to find out if they were right or wrong.
>
> The journey first went to my dad's hometown, Jalalabad, where I spent most of the time at home and did nothing apart from complaining about the heat. But when I came to the capital Kabul, everything was pretty much better, thanks to Allah. Before the war started, Kabul was a blooming city with modern residences and industrial areas. The streets were filled with small bazaars where hand knitted carpets, copper and old handicraft could be bought, but there were also new, big stores with a large assortment. The city had a university where women and men had the right to study.
>
> The city bore clear marks of having been the centre of the war. Buildings lay in ruins and people barely managed to provide for themselves because of the high food prices. They had to content themselves with the bare essentials. Anything you'd wish could be bought for money, but people didn't have any. To a "foreigner" like me costs were very low as NOK100 was worth about Afghani300.000. It was shocking to hear that a family of nine had to live on NOK100 a month. This money didn't only have to cover food, but also electricity, rent and other expenses.
>
> The most fascinating about the journey was seeing that there was still life in the people even after two decades of war and misery. War, poverty, economic difficulties and continuous missile strikes had become a part of everyday life for the Afghan people. But

[114] This term was suggested in the IMER network in Bergen by Mette Andersson and has later been developed by Lithman (2006). Let me stress that the concept of radical transnationalism does not presuppose that identities are free floating, or that the localities in which people live their lives are not important to their social practices and sense of belonging.
[115] The call to prayer.
[116] Supplications.

> this didn't stop them from retaining faith in Allah and hoping for a good and peaceful life in the future. Another thing I noticed was the lies about Taliban that we hear in Western media. The Taliban were not at all sadistic and oppressive of women, as it is usually portrayed. When a country is at war, the most important to the population is to maintain peace and quiet, and last but not least, their honour intact, which was very difficult before Taliban came to power. The previous authorities abused their power by abducting, raping and, worst of all, killing women, while men were imprisoned, tortured and killed without reason.
>
> It must remain up to each and everyone to decide whether they would prefer to live in permanent fear of being abused and killed or wear burqa and grow a beard. There are of course disadvantages with the Taliban, since many of them do not have any knowledge about the fundamental Islamic laws, and therefore they make mistakes. Take for instance the execution of Najbullah, which got a lot of attention in Western media. He was dragged after a car, and later hung in a lamp post and made fun of. All agreed on executing him after the atrocities he had committed against the people, but this should have been done in a human manner, since according to Islamic law, no damage should be inflicted on the body.
>
> In view of this, it may seem as if I support the Taliban. I do not. But I witnessed one thing that I would like to report to my sisters and brothers who, regrettably, have gotten a distorted picture of the regime in Afghanistan. My message to you all is the following: If the Afghan people do not complain, who gives the media the right to speak about the situation of the Afghans and at the same time give a distorted picture of the situation in the country.
>
> The journey to Afghanistan was very instructive and made an unforgettable impression on me. I hope this has given you some insight into the lives of our forgotten sisters and brothers. This makes me pray for all people who suffer. All those who are ravaged by war, hunger, and misery, whether it is in Palestine, Bosnia or Kashmir; may Allah reward your endurance with Paradise, amin (Wolasmal in *Explore*, January 1999).

Because of the way in which he moves between different subject positions, Wolasmal's essay is a particularly interesting point of departure for exploring the spaces for identification and solidarity and the different values and objectives that different horizons of action offer. Wolasmal's essay is plotted around a wish to confront his own and others' "prejudices" about Afghanistan, and to asses whether they are "right or wrong". Through sharing with the reader his own impressions of life in Afghanistan, he wishes to challenge what he sees as a distorted picture of the regime in Afghanistan presented in the media. In the first part of the essay Wolasmal identifies Afghanistan as his "homeland", resonant of the dominant nationalist discourse on migration that attaches migrants to a "national home". At the same time he identifies the place he grew up as "the West", thus inscribing his experiences in a cartography that opposes the West to the Muslim world. As we move along, Wolasmal's "gaze" assumes the position of an "outsider" to Afghan society. His description of the economic and cultural vitality of Kabul in the past, imitates the tourist guide genre, and establishes the author as an

external observer to the hardships of war and poverty suffered by the "Afghan people". It is also interesting to note how the identification of Afghanistan as a "Muslim" country is negotiated. The nostalgia of a communal expression of Islam, symbolized by "*adhan* in the open", is coupled to a description of Afghanistan as a "so-called 'Muslim' country" and a critique of the "Muslim" rule of the Taliban. The Taliban are not accurately represented in Western media, Wolasmal holds, but whereas they provide a certain security for the inhabitants, many have insufficient knowledge of Islamic law and therefore break it. What is even more interesting, however, is how a trip that is initially conceived of as going to a "home country" ends up by invoking another imaginary in which his (Muslim) "sisters" and "brothers" in Norway are constructed as a "we" and invited not only to identify, feel solidarity with, and pray for "the Afghan people", but also for "our forgotten sisters and brothers" "who are ravaged by war, hunger and misery, whether it is in Palestine, Bosnia or Kashmir". The "I" form of narration and the use of the personal pronouns "you" and "our" in the textual address, collapse the distance between the narrator and the (implied) audience, and draws the latter into a space of internal empathy with "our sisters and brothers" of the Muslim *umma*. Wolasmal thus invokes an imaginary that goes beyond that of migration from a home country to a new home, uniting Muslims transnationally in a global Muslim community of co-responsibility.

The kinship terminology used by Wolasmal in his invocation of a "we" of sisters and brothers who should feel solidarity with "our brother's and sister's" elsewhere, serves to establish an ethical community of Muslims. The young Muslims frequently address and refer to each other and other Muslims as "brothers" and "sisters". In thus observing a social convention supported by various revivalist movements, they recognize each other as persons who, as themselves, belong to a global Islamic community (cf. Cesari 2002). The terms sister and brother specifically evoke the global community of believers. In contrast to other kinship terminologies[117] that are broadly used among youth with an immigrant background, the relationship between sisters and brothers in Islam is established independently of nationality, ethnicity, age and social status. Addressing other "visible Muslims" with the Muslim greeting *asalem aleikum* no matter whom, when or where, and showing them hospitality (for instance in hosting them when they are visiting), similarly underpins the "emotional fraternity" of the

[117] For instance, those of Pakistani origin generally refer to e.g. women and men in the generation above them as uncles and aunties and to older women and men in their own generation as *bhaji* (older sister) and *bhaijaan* (older brother).

global Islamic community. Wolasmal thus invokes a global community in which Muslims have particular ethical obligations towards their Muslim brothers and sisters in Islam.

Like Wolasmal, many of the young Muslims in my study saw ethical and political engagement against injustice, as central to their Muslim identity and practice. In a conversation I had with Ibrahim about his religious practice he quickly shifted the focus from my inquiries about rituals towards the ethical commitment that being a Muslim entailed for him:

> The most important to being a Muslim…a Muslim who wakes up in the morning without thinking about what's happening around himself with other people, is not a Muslim.[118] I am glad that I do that. Today when I woke up my first thought was; what can I do for Palestine?

The importance of this ethical commitment to the global Muslim community is related to the way in which a variety of social and political issues have come to be constituted as the (problems and) causes of Muslims globally. The Israeli-Palestinian war, the wars in Iraq and the ban on hijab in French schools are examples of such "causes" around which "Muslim solidarity" is currently mobilized in different localities around the world. The identification with a global ethical Muslim community also allows conflicts at the local level (e.g. a woman being evicted from her workplace in Oslo because of her hijab) to be inscribed in broader narrative frameworks of injustice and solidarity. As Werbner (2002a: 153) puts it "diasporas fabulate their local experiences in a global idiom". Contemporary Islamic (and particularly Islamist) discourses thus stress commonalities in the predicament of Muslims, whether it is as a threatened minority in Israel or in some European country. Identifying with the imagined *umma*, as an embattled community, the young Muslims in my study see their struggle to promote Islam in Norway and to safeguard a Muslim identity for future generations as an analogue to the struggles of Muslim minorities throughout the world, thus asserting their belonging to a global Muslim community. Muslims are oppressed and suffer injustices committed against them in Norway and elsewhere, and such injustices need to be redressed globally. Calls for action and mobilization for things as separate as the exclusion of a worker from her job in the US because of her hijab and the situation of Muslims in Kashmir are regularly posted on the e-mail lists of MSS. Debates are held on the situation of Muslims in Palestine, Chechnya and Kashmir. Bonds of commitment are also established across national borders in the shape of material flows of goods and money raised in e.g. humanitarian

[118] Ibrahim paraphrases a Hadith were the Prophet Mohammed is quoted as saying that "He who is not concerned with the Muslims' affairs is not one of us" (Bukhari).

projects, and support committees.[119] Oppressed groups and geographically distant conflicts are thereby "given voice" in new localities, as ethical responsibility is extended beyond the boundaries of the nation-state.

Global imaginaries in religious practice

Through many vehicles young Muslims gain a sense of commonality, shared purpose, and interest with Muslims "everywhere". Electronic media are important in this respect, but not only as a means for communication and interaction, or for giving a new virtual reality to the idea of an Islamic *umma*. They also provide new metaphors through which such a community may be imagined. In an article called "Jihad 2000"[120] in *Tankevekkende* (Spring 1998), Tayyab Riaz uses The Internet as a metaphor for the Islamic *umma*:

> Muslims are in the lucky position to have a well-established spiritual Internet, financed by the feelings, meanings and goals of individuals. Such an Internet cannot be run by economic resources, but it is run by the spiritual, emotional and faith-committing resource inherent in each and every Muslim. Every Muslim has an integrated node that must be kept in good order and connected to like-minded nodes around the world (1998: 13-14). […] We must master ourselves before we can manage to connect to this worldwide web. If we haven't done such *jihad* [*jihad-bil-nafs*], negative energy will be released when we come into contact with other nodes (humans). Inside of us, there is a virus that does not allow us to connect this web. To defeat this virus, we must engage in *jihad-bil-nafs*. My greatest enemy is not you, it is myself. (Socrates: "Know thyself!") I have to defeat the evil in me to connect to this 1400 years old Internet. Let's hope that you and me, together, may enter the new century with a soul free of malignant virus (Riaz 1998: 16).

Riaz's metaphorical conceptualization of the Islamic *umma* as a spiritual Internet is based on a notion of inter-connected individuals, rather than groups. That every Muslim has an "integrated node" could be understood as referring to the theological idea of the inherent ability of human beings to discover the truth of Islam and obey to the law of God (cf. chapter

[119] Both the NMU and the MSS have been facilitating humanitarian aid to the Muslim world (e.g. through Islamic Relief organizations) and in relation to natural disasters, such as the big earthquakes in Pakistan in 2005. As mentioned earlier, interests from the NMU's bank account are "washed" (made Islamically legal) through donations to charitable causes. The MSS statutes specify that in case the organization ceases to exist, any remaining funds should be donated to the Swedish Branch of Islamic Relief. Cf. Werbner (2002b) who shows how members of the British Pakistani Muslim diaspora mobilize politically to defend or protest against injustices and human rights abuses suffered by co-diasporics elsewhere, and how, beyond the imaginary, diasporas exist through *material* flows of goods and money.

[120] From Arabic: to strive, struggle. In Western media *jihad* is most often used to refer to "Holy War". This is not the use intended here. The young Muslims I worked with used the term *jihad* in two main senses *jihad al akhbar* (the great *jihad*,) and *jihad al asghar* (the little *jihad*.) The great *jihad* (where *jihad-al-nafs* is a central concept) is an inner struggle against sin and evil thoughts, whereas the little *jihad* is a struggle to make the society around one just (that might possibly involve the use of weapon or war).

six). Just like the Internet, Riaz argues, the spiritual Internet must be "maintained", "developed" and "restructured" as it consists of individuals who are themselves dynamic. Such maintenance needs to be done by the individual, through performing *salah* and studying the Quran, and "development" lies in putting this knowledge into practice. As for "restructuring", Riaz refers to the need for Muslims in the West to adapt to the new context. This requires, he argues, that Muslims must decide that they will contribute to a better world for all people, and not only Muslims. The ethical engagement that follows from this vision of the *umma*, thus promotes solidarity not only with Muslims globally, but a wider engagement in "creating a better world". And this can only be done through *jihad-bil-nafs* - "combating the evil in one's soul", lest this evil spread like a virus into the Islamic *umma*. In this way, Islamic practice is made central not only to the individual, but to the Islamic community as a whole, and to "all people".

Whereas Riaz's conceptualization of the *umma* as a spiritual Internet is primarily a vision of "spiritual" interconnectedness, attributions of similarity and solidarity in social interaction are also important components in young Muslims' identification with a global Islamic community, whether it is conceptualized as between "like-minded nodes around the world" or in less futuristic terms as "sisters" and "brothers". One could argue that whereas transnational pilgrimages, as well as the great learning centres in the Muslim world, were once privileged points at which people from different places and different social and economic circumstances met and where the idea of the Islamic *umma* was given form and substance, the interaction between different Muslim groups and Islamic traditions in the translocal spaces of urban and cosmopolitan areas and the emergence of trans-ethnic and transnational organizations today perform a similar role. In a certain sense, the self-conscious "transethnic" composition of groups such as the NMU and the MSS may be seen as local embodiments of the global imagined Muslim community.

Participation in communal rituals is important in terms of underpinning the feeling of belonging to such a global community. Worshipping together can embody certain ideas of religious communication and social relations. To perform *salah* as a communal ritual in multi-ethnic contexts, such as international Islamic conferences or in the context of the NMU and the MSS, is particularly forceful in creating a sense of belonging to a global Islamic community. Although *salah* brings out a range of differences between different Islamic traditions and the ways in which praying has been institutionalized within them, such differences are simultaneously overcome in the act of praying together. Young Muslims refer to such communal prayers by stressing the feeling of sisterhood and brotherhood that it

engenders, and the ways in which it makes them feel as parts of a larger whole that gathers all Muslims in spite of their differences.

The way in which Islam increasingly enters popular culture, as a "consumer goods" within a globalizing cultural economy, is important to how young Muslims imagine themselves as belonging to a global community of Muslims and to how they assume Islam as a "life-style". In the introduction of the thesis, I quoted from a song that was played during an NMU meeting, in which the *shahada* was pronounced in a number of different languages, stressing the universality of Islam, and where Islam was held forth as a force with the potential to unite all people. Wharnsby-Ali's "Sing children of the world" is an example of Islamically-oriented music that is promoted internationally, together with other cultural products and "consumer goods", towards the *umma*. On the Internet, Islamic outlets proliferate, some of which also present their goods at Islamic conferences and distribute books and audiovisual material through local mosques. The artefacts they propose include such things as books, audio-visual material (video, CD, cassettes), Islamic software, home decoration (prayer rugs, decorated pillows, glass and ceramics, electronic prayer time clocks and calendars, calligraphic paintings), gifts and accessories (prayer beads, aromatic oils, bookmarks, stickers, Quran holders), Islamic clothing (hijabs, T-shirts with calligraphy from the Quran, hats and caps, footwear and prayer clothing), children's books, toys and games. Typically, such artefacts are presented as "Sunna", and thus as promoting a proper Islamic lifestyle, and different "styles" allow people to identify with different Islamic traditions through consumption.[121] It should be noted here that speaking about these "goods" in terms of consumption should not be seen to indicate that they are merely "symbols" or "styles" through which people present themselves. Rather, as will be discussed in chapter six, many of the items mentioned above are also pedagogical means for shaping pious selves, or, to use Riaz's vocabulary, to maintain the "nodes" in the Islamic spiritual Internet.

Unlike other major European cities, Oslo does not have the kind of Islamic (book) stores that sell Islamic music, literature and other consumer goods. The NMU and the MSS have however distributed books, music and T-shirts.[122] These, and some of the artefacts distributed at the Islamic conferences and by way of the Internet may be found in the homes of some young Norwegian Muslims, and newly established couples often combine a modern

[121] Such as the "Sunna Shirts" "designed and tailored in the style which Naqshbandi masters wear" sold online by the Islamic shopping network, the jogging *Dawaa Wear*, a brand founded by three Afro-Americans and diffused widely in the world, or the *ummawear* proposed by the Muslimsche Jugend Deutchland.
[122] Notably the CD *The Little Ones* by Yosef Islam, and t-shirts with the slogan "Muslim by nature", produced in the UK.

Norwegian style of interior decoration with discreet Islamic decoration. Islamic quiz games are popular at social outings, as are music CDs by Yosef Islam (known as Cat Stevens before his conversion to Islam) and Dawud Wharnsby-Ali. Although the influence is so far limited, the impact of actors who market products designed at giving Muslims and Islam a new visibility and dignity should not be underestimated. This is so notably with respect to products such as Mecca-Cola, Arab-Cola and Muslim-Up, launched as alternatives to the "American-imperialist" *Coca Cola* to protest against US Middle Eastern Policy. By way of these new brands that have also been promoted on the MSS mailing-list, Islamic lifestyle becomes associated with an ethical and political pattern of consumption – a tendency that is reinforced by more general encouragements that Muslims should boycott Israeli and American goods in order to help bring about a more just world. We thus see a phenomenon in which consumption is politicized and promoted as a means of identification with a global Islamic community. It also helps to realize the visions of "engagement" and "solidarity" that young Muslims see as central to what it means to be a Muslim.

One should note that the vision of a global Muslim community is not only promoted in this genre of Islamic consumer goods. Popular cultural forms, particularly in the counter-culture related to hip-hop and rap-music, have increasingly mobilized around an imagined Muslim community in support of a Muslim politics of recognition, often combined with a strong anti-racist vocation.[123] Although to my knowledge, there are no Norwegian artists whose lyrics explicitly convey an Islamic message or identification with an Islamic community, several of the international artists are popular among youth in Norway. These artists who pick up Muslim themes and often combine them somewhat uneasily with the traditional themes of rap music (i.e. sex, drugs and violence) nevertheless differ from the different musical genres, with a more consciously pious Islamic profile, that have lately become more popular among

[123] Well known artists are Cash Crew, Fun-Da-Mental (Great Britain), IAM, NTM (France), Public Enemy, the American convert Everlast, Ice Cube, Big Daddy Kane, Mos Def and Q-Tip (USA), and Outlandish (Denmark). See Banjoko (2004) for an account of the Islamic influence in American hip-hop and rap-music. Banjoko argues that no other religion has affected hip-hop like Islam, and he shows that Muslim references are found in the lyrics of many well-known hip-hop artists. Many different Islamic tendencies are represented in this musical genre. Some hip-hop and rap artists embrace "mainstream" forms of Islam, whereas others are known to support movements such as the Nation of Islam that seems to have been particularly important as an Islamic influence in American rap-music with their focus around the issues of race and racism. Public Enemy, for instance are known to rap about their respect for the Nation of Islam. The Nation of Islam has been particularly important as an Islamic influence in American rap-music with their focus around the issues of race and racism, expressed in a notoriously conflictory way. Some other rappers (e.g., Rakim, Nas and members of the Wu Tang Clan) are known to be followers of the Five Percent Nation of Islam, a sectarian offshoot of the Nation of Islam (Swedenburg 1997).

Muslims in the West, and among the young Muslims I worked with in Oslo.[124] As well as conveying pious messages of the merits of the love of God, and the importance of solidarity and unity of Muslims throughout the world, their texts often address social and political issues of importance to the global Muslim community.[125] They can thus be considered pedagogical devices that predicate particular solidarities, modes of being and acting (as when used in the context of the NMU) and not only a form of musical entertainment.

Above, I have pointed to the many ways in which the idea of a global Islamic community is underpinned by globalizing processes that facilitate communication and solidarity between Muslims in distant spaces. I have argued that the religious identities and practices of young Muslims in Oslo are informed by such global imaginaries, and that global imaginaries are underpinned by trans-ethnic spaces for religious practice in the local context. However, the global *umma* is only one of several horizons of action, and as such must not be understood as replacing or excluding other spatial imaginaries as point of orientation for religious identities and practices, as people are situated within different, multiple and antagonizing imagined communities relating for instance to place, nation, diaspora, and religion. As Stuart Hall (1996: 624) has suggested, "it seems unlikely that globalization will simply destroy national identities. It is more likely to produce, simultaneously, *new* 'global' and *new* 'local' identifications". As to be seen in the remaining part of this chapter, belonging to a Muslim community is (re)produced simultaneously within global, regional, national and ethnic imaginaries.

Situating Islam in Europe and Norway

Euro Islam and European Muslims

The second horizon of action I want to focus on is the one constituted in relation to "Europe" and "Norway".[126] Young Muslims' debates about what it means to be a Muslim, ways of

[124] This includes artists who mainly perform traditional Islamic hymns (*nashids*) with a "modern touch" like for instance Yosef Islam, Dawud Wharnsby, Raihan, Zain Bhikha, 786, SHAAM, and (the rap group) Native Deen. Texts often focus on the love for God, includes praising of Allah and encouragement to good deeds and piety.

[125] As in this excerpt from Native Deen's "Busy Bees" that one young woman played for me: "What's with the scarf girl, wrapped up like a mummy./ They all made jokes and they said that you look funny./ You ran into the bathroom and your friends began to scoff./ After that encounter you had planned to take it off./ But then you thought how much Allah likes how your dressin'. /Pleasin' him was top priority to you no question".

[126] I have chosen to refer to these as one rather than two separate horizons of action, because the issues that arise in relation to them are very similar, and because they are not clearly distinct as points of orientations and imaginaries.

organizing, and patterns of sociability are importantly shaped by this action horizon. Recently the spatial configuration of "Europe" has become increasingly important to the ways in which Muslims living in European nation-states identify and are identified. Asad (2003) has argued that Islam has been, and continues to be, excluded from representations of Europe and the narratives through which such representations are constituted (cf. Goody 2004). The construction of a European identity has meant constructing Muslims as "external" to the "essence" of Europe. Today, the "Muslim other" is an internal one and its relation to the imaginary of Europe as a non-Muslim (Christian, secular) space is hotly debated. The construction of the European Union in particular faces the question of how to relate to Islam in Europe, both in relation to the significant Muslim population within the EU, and in relation to enlargement of the Union to include Muslim countries such as Turkey. While consideration of such issues goes beyond the scope of my thesis, it is interesting to look, albeit briefly, into the ways in which Islam is currently "imagined" in relation to "Europe", and the ways in which such imaginaries influence Oslo's young Muslims' understandings of what it means to be a Muslim.

It is often suggested that Islam is now in the process of finding a European expression as it articulates with the different ways of life in European countries. This was a topic at an international Islamic conference in Stockholm which was arranged by the Muslim Youth of Sweden and which I attended together with a group from the Muslim Youth of Norway. Here, one of the speakers suggested that, "Islam in Europe will have a European taste". The concept "Euro Islam" has been introduced to indicate such a development towards a specifically European expression of Islam. This concept is vague, however, and retains multiple meanings. Often, it is used to refer to an anticipated development; that is to the kind of Islam that will in the future be the normative foundation for Muslims in Europe. It thus projects a particular future, thereby suggesting what is good and desirable. Some authors see Europe as offering a chance for Muslims to develop a more critical and liberal form of Islam (cf. e.g. Mandaville 2003; Tibi 2002). It has also been suggested that "Euro Islam" may prove to be a major driving force in the reformation and revitalization of the Islamic tradition worldwide, as critique of traditional interpretations of Islam voiced by Muslims in the West influence Muslims in Muslim countries (see Metcalf 1996a). In this sense, the imaginary of Euro-Islam proposes a vision that simultaneously contributes to upholding a vision of "Islam" and "Europe" as historically disjunctive spaces, and to suggest a merging of these spaces. It should be noted, however, that this merging is not primarily conceived as a two-way process. Whereas it is suggested that Islam will have a European taste, it is usually not similarly

suggested that Europe will have an Islamic taste. The stress is thus on the way in which Islam eventually will and needs to be transformed in and through its encounter with "Europe", while the "identity" of Europe is not similarly challenged.

Bassam Tibi (2001; 2002), who is often acknowledged as the first to use the concept Euro-Islam, has argued that only a Europeanized interpretation of Islam, which distinguishes between a private and a public sphere, can be integrated in Western Europe. To Tibi, the concept of Euro-Islam is intended to provide a liberal variety of Islam acceptable both to Muslim migrants and to European societies, and that might accommodate European ideas of secularity and individual citizenship along the lines of modern secular democracy (Tibi 2002: 37). These questions have also been addressed by non-Muslim politicians, who have embraced the idea that Islam in Europe needs to be developed in a way that accommodates European ideas of secularity and individual citizenship along the lines of modern secular democracy. European governments and public media have generally supported the idea that Islam should be re-interpreted in order to meet the challenges of European modernity. Although the Norwegian government has so far been less directly involved in the development of "Norwegian Islam" than e.g. the French in encouraging "French Islam",[127] state agents and other public figures have on several occasions encouraged Muslims to develop Islamic interpretations of more "modern" and "progressive" kinds. A case that aroused much public debate in Norway was when the minister in charge of immigration and integration for the Conservative Party suggested that Islam had to be "modernized" in Europe.[128] She claimed that "Islam in Europe must function differently than it does in Islamic countries" and encouraged Norwegian Muslims, whom she saw as "lagging far behind", to look to the development in other European countries in this respect.[129]

Another, and perhaps the most prominent, contemporary promoter of Euro-Islam, Tariq Ramadan (2002; 2004), argues that Muslims in Europe need to re-define the ideological imaginaries that traditionally structure the worldview of Islamic jurisprudence. This implies a critique of the distinction made in Islamic jurisprudence between *Dar-al-Islam* (the Abode or House of Islam) and *Dar-al-Harb* (the Abode or House of War), distinguishing regions or countries which are subject to Islamic law, from non-Islamic regions or countries. With this

[127] E.g. through close cooperation with Muslim countries, and the state-initiated establishment of successive "representative" national Islamic councils.
[128] *Dagladet* 4 November 2003: "Solberg utfordrer norske muslimer" [Solberg challenges Norwegian Muslims].
[129] This construction of "Europe" as more progressive than Norway may be seen to mirror a more general attitude in the Conservative Party towards the European Union as more modern and cosmopolitan than Norway.

critique, conceptual categories such as *dar-al-ahd*[130], *dar-al-dawa*[131], and *dar-al-shahada*[132] have been employed to reformulate and reassess the relationship between *dar-al-Islam* and *dar-al-harb* (see e.g. Vogt 1995). Such a critique is at the centre of efforts to argue for a full commitment and involvement of Muslims to Western-European societies, as well as for the continued obligation and possibility of Muslims living outside Islamic countries, to conform to religious prescriptions. In order to realize this double commitment, Muslims in Europe must, according to Ramadan and others, revisit the Islamic sources so as to (re)interpret the Islamic sources and make them relevant to Muslims living in a European, secular context. Whereas Ramadan offers to rethink *sharia* in terms that make sense to modern, democratic European life, other Muslim authorities in Europe, such as the European Council for Fatwa and Research,[133] headed by Qaradhawi, have sought to meet a perceived need on the part of the growing Muslim community in the West for advice and counsel based on *sharia*. In answer to questions put forward by Muslim believers, the ECFR issues non-binding authoritative rulings by qualified Islamic scholars (*fatwas*), and presents itself as not in competition with the established jurisprudence bodies of the Muslim world, but rather as a complement "aiming to contribute to a reflection of the *fiqh* of minorities" (Qaradhawi quoted in Caeiro 2003).[134]

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[130] House of Treaty, Truce or Covenant. Used in Islamic jurisprudence to describe the Ottoman Empire's relationship with its Christian tributary states. Today, the term refers more broadly to those non-Muslim governments which have armistice or peace agreements with Muslim governments. Muslim scholars in Europe have used the term to indicate that Muslims living in non-Muslim societies have entered an agreement that implies accepting the laws and common order of the society they live in.

[131] House of Invitation, is a term used to describe a region where Islam has recently been introduced, and has been used with reference to the Meccan period during which Muslims considered themselves as responsible for bearing witness to their faith before their peoples. Recently, the term *dar al-Dawa* has been proposed to describe the status of Muslims in the West, notably by Tariq Ramadan, who argues that in the current world order, and in particular in industrialized societies, Muslims are facing the same responsibilities, "Assertive and confident, they have to remind the people around them of God, of spirituality and, regarding social affairs, to work for values and ethics, justice and solidarity" (Ramadan 1999: 145).

[132] World of Witness. This terms was proposed as an extension of the term *dar-al-dawa* by Tariq Ramadan who argues that the current situation of Muslims in Europe should be seen as one in which the Muslim gives witness, through his behaviour and his participation in the institutions of democracy, to his faith and identity as a Muslim (Cesari 2004; Ramadan 1999).

[133] The ECFR was founded in 1997 and presents itself as an "Islamic, specialised and independent academic entity" with the aim to "issue collective *fatwas* that respond to the needs of Muslims in Europe, which resolve their problems in conformity with the rules and the objectives of *Sharia*". Between 30 and 40 *sages*, all of which must be European residents and have a degree in Islamic jurisprudence, assure the decisions of the Council. Yosef Qaradhawi is one of today's most influential Muslim scholars in the world. Like many of those who are prominent among Muslims in Europe, his life histoy and work may be characterized as "transnational". He is the chairman of the European Council for Fatwa and Research, established by the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe in 1997, and has published exensively , notably on *fiqh* in the minority context. He is also very present in different media; he has a weekly programme on the Arab TV-channel Al-Jazeera and his writings and *fatwas* are distributed as books and pamphlets and are easily accesible on the Internet.

[134] This does not necessarily entail that the ECFR is more "liberal" or more responsive to the requirements of European states, a point that was illustrated when Chirac sought scholarly support for the French ban on wearing

In reassessing the relationship between *dar-al-Islam* and *dar-al-harb* Tariq Ramadan has also suggested that non-Muslim governments in which Muslims are able to participate democratically, are more Islamic than authoritarian governments run by Muslims (Ramadan 1999; 2004). This view was largely reflected by the young Muslims I worked with. Looking to Wolasmal's essay, he refers to Afghanistan as a "so-called 'Muslim' country" when judged in terms of what he holds to be the universal standards of Islam. It is not uncommon that Norway is viewed as "more Muslim" than some of the countries conventionally categorized as such, when judged according to the same standards. In a workshop on the Islamic state in the NMU for instance, the speaker (a Norwegian convert) was challenged by the public to name the country that in her opinion was closest to the ideal of Islamic governance today. The speaker played the ball back to the public, and a young man named Abid immediately suggested Norway. The speaker was somewhat caught by surprise and reluctant to accept Abid's suggestion, but Abid defended his position by arguing that when viewed in terms of the rights prescribed by Islam, Norway is closer than most Muslim countries today. Zameelah supported his argument by contrasting Norway to Turkey's fervent secularism and to the Iranian suppression of fundamental Islamic human rights. Although the issue remained contested and unresolved, the incident shows how a universalist approach to Islam opens to the possibility that what is formally Muslim may nevertheless be (wittingly or more often unwittingly) in contradiction with Islam, and what is formally non-Muslim may been seen to embody universal Islamic values.

The idea of Euro-Islam remains largely an "intellectual" imaginary where the primary issues are how Islam should relate to the political and public arenas of modern European nation-states. This imaginary nevertheless impacts, as will be further elaborated in the following chapters, on the way in which young Muslims in Oslo conceive of their role as citizens of a non-Muslim European state, and the way in which they attempt to create a Norwegian-Muslim identity. Tariq Ramadan and his promotion of Euro-Islam, is familiar to some. Similarly, the ECFR, and notably its leader Qaradhawi, are well respected among many in the MSS and the NMU, and *fatwas* relating to particular minority issues from the ECFR are sometimes distributed. The concern with developing ways of being active citizens in their "at home" countries, while "remaining within Islam" and retaining a "Muslim identity" is

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the hijab in schools from Al-Azhar in Egypt rather than at the ECFR, which has been opposed to French policies on this issue. Sheikh Tantawi of Al-Azhar defended the right of France to ban headscarves from the public sphere, referring to the fact that France as a non-Islamic country has the right to pass any law, and that those Muslim women who did not wear the hijab because of the ban, would be considered as acting under coercion.

reflected in the ways that the goals and orientations of the NMU and the MSS are formulated in their statutes, and in their self-presentations in diverse fora (see next chapter for a further discussion of ideas about citizenship). Many young people nevertheless remain ambivalent towards the idea of Euro Islam and the "European taste" of Islam in Europe. This ambivalence reflects the more general ambivalence towards issues of assimilation, adaptation and integration in general (Jacobsen 2002). Some suspect that Muslims will never be fully accepted as a part of Europe unless they are willing to "give up their identity" and "become assimilated". Some invocations of Euro Islam are, in line with this, suspected of being attempts to construct a form of Islamic religiosity that is acceptable to Europe, rather than a religiosity that is true to Islamic principles.

While there is a great deal of ambivalence with respect to what "integration" should entail in terms of a reshaping of Muslim identity and the Islamic tradition young the NMU and the MSS share in the idea that Muslims in Europe should contribute actively to the societies in which they live. As mentioned in the introduction to the NMU in the previous chapter, the organization was founded by young Muslims who had participated at a conference on the integration of Muslims in Europe in Stockholm in 1995, together with young Muslims from a number of different countries. This conference also saw the founding of the Federation of Muslim Youth and Student Organizations (FEMYSO), with its institutionalization of European co-operation between Muslim youth organizations and its work towards and within the EU. As stated by the FEMYSO in its self-presentation printed in the Swedish magazine *Ung Muslim* nr. 2, 1999, "FEMYSO envisages a Europe in which Muslims take pride in their historical contribution to the development of European civilisation and their 800-year presence in Spain; to look to the future to contribute to European Society as European Muslims". Here a stress is thus put on changing the historical imaginaries through which Islam has been constructed as external to European identity. In a speech at the conference "European Muslim Youth - Enrichment of Society?!" (Monday 15 September 2003, in the European Parliament), the FEMYSO President at the time, Khallad Swaid, said that:

> […] being European and Muslim are not two distinct identities. They mutually enrich each other in the process of building a positive and creative commitment to citizenship. FEMYSO works together with other faith-based as well as secular youth organizations for greater justice and respect. We as young Muslims feel it is our duty to contribute to Europe and its societies (http://www.femyso.com/).

FEMYSO proposes a multicultural vision of Europe in which, "FEMYSO is committed to fighting prejudice at all levels, so that the future of Europe is a multicultural, inclusive and tolerant one, in which all people can work hand in hand to create a peaceful and prosperous

society" (in the Swedish magazine *Ung Muslim* nr. 2, 1999). These goals resonate importantly with the stated goals of the NMU and the MSS, in their focus of making Muslim identity a basis for "positive participation" in society at large, and parallel the engagement of the NMU and the MSS in co-operating with a broad array of other organizations in the Norwegian landscape in order to counter racism and intolerance.

The NMU has been involved in the work of FEMYSO for several years and representatives from the working committee have attended a number of FEMYSO meetings. Due perhaps to the fact that Norway is not a member of the EU, and that the question of "European citizenship" is less an issue in Norway than in member countries, the NMU's involvement in the FEMYSO seems to be less oriented towards "contributing to Europe" than to a particular European country: Norway. Inter-national cooperation between Muslims in different (European) countries contributes to the imaginary of a Norwegian Muslim community, in that participants are made representatives of their "at home" countries, and in that national stereotypes serve as frames of interpreting differences between them. At FEMYSO meetings, the delegates represent their "at home" countries. In the meeting that took place in Stockholm in 1999, for instance, flags planted on the table in front of the delegates served to identify their nationality. As I have argued elsewhere (Jacobsen 2002), these European meetings serve to actualize stereotypical national identities. For instance, the Norwegian delegates tend to feel "small" within the context of the FEMYSO, since they represent a small country that has not "come as far" as the larger countries in their work as Muslim activists. On a positive note, the Norwegian delegation is seen to be more evolved when it comes to the engagement of women in organizational work, and with respect to their co-operation with non-Muslim Norwegian (youth) organizations. At the 1999 meeting, the two young women from the NMU were the only female representatives at the FEMYSO gathering. According to the Norwegian women, the other countries envied them and talked about how they needed to mobilize women in their respective "at home" countries. The Norwegian women explained their success in mobilizing women with reference to Norway as a land of gender equality, an ideal that is central to the construction of Norwegian national identity. They pointed out to the other delegations that it was a Norwegian tradition that women were "frampå" (active, outspoken, self-confident). The Norwegian Muslim young woman thus assumed the position as Norwegian Muslims by identifying positively with the Norwegian tradition of gender equality as a constituting aspect of their Muslim identity. This positioning importantly differs from the representation of Muslims in the dominant Norwegian public discourse, in which these are usually portrayed as the "Other", and a threat to, Norwegian gender equality.

Norwegian Muslims

As I have demonstrated, certain issues arise about national identities within the sphere of "Islam in Europe". The future of Muslims in Norway is imagined and contested through a horizon which envisages a common Norwegian Muslim identity and language, and which re-casts it within Norwegian national imaginaries. To young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS, creating a common identity as Norwegian Muslims is seen as a necessity in order to reproduce Islam and Muslim identity in the migrant context. During a discussion in the NMU, Mohammed, one of the founders of the organization, pointed to the importance of language in creating a Norwegian Muslim identity:

> That is our main goal: to create a Norwegian Muslim identity, because in the long run the identity [related to where people come from] will die away. I mean, 60 years from now it's not that big of a thing to state over a cup of coffee that "I'm really from Morocco" or that "My grandfather was from Morocco". So then the thing is really to say that I'm a Muslim, because Islam doesn't have any borders. So in order to strengthen the Islamic identity of future generations we need to use the Norwegian language and to create a Norwegian Muslim identity.

Organizations such as the NMU and the MSS are seen as vehicles in the process of such unification, and to the development of a Norwegian Muslim identity. As Habib put it:

> In the long run I think that organizations like the MSS and the NMU will contribute to uniting Muslims, who are now split into ethnic groups, you know. Over a longer period of time, let's say about twenty, thirty, or even forty years, there will be Norwegian Muslims, rather than Pakistani and Moroccan Muslims. And that will make us stronger, I believe, in the long run.

Young Muslims often see the way in which Islam in Norway is structured on the basis of ethnic differences as an obstacle to the realisation of a common Norwegian Muslim identity. In the process of constructing a common identity as Norwegian Muslims, individual ethnic attachments are set aside through a conceptualization of Islam as a religion that knows no boundaries (the global Muslim community). This loosening of Islam from ethnic identification allows Muslim identity to be combined with a new identity as Norwegian Muslims. The efforts of constructing a common Norwegian Muslim identity through religious practice may be exemplified with the engagement of the MSS in the so-called calendar question. The celebration of Muslim festivals and particularly the month of Ramadan are important signifiers of Muslim community throughout the world. However, the religious calendar is also an important site of contestation, actualizing divisions within, and questions of authority. Since their establishment in Norway, Muslim immigrants have tended to rely on

authorities outside of Norway in order to determine the exact date of the *id* marking the end of Ramadan. Some follow the "back home" countries, others Saudi Arabia, or the Muslim country first announcing the sighting of the moon. *Id* has thus been celebrated on different days in different communities and mosques, thus accentuating internal divisions (cf. Vogt 2000).

In *Tankevekkende* (Spring 1998), an article is devoted to this issue, criticizing the mosques for "splitting into national groups" and for not being able to cooperate. In a later issue (Spring 2001) the fact that "relatives, friends and persons in the same home or town have to celebrate *id* on different days" is deplored and said to split the Muslim community in Norway. This concern was reflected in interviews, where some of the young spoke about how their hopes for a unification of the Muslim community in Norway were disappointed when Muslims could not agree upon when to celebrate *id*. During fieldwork, I also observed the intense activities in the days before *id*, when people were phoning each other and trying to make arrangements for celebrating together. In order to counter this, the MSS contacted the Islamic Council in Norway just before Ramadan 1997/1998, in an initiative to make the mosques agree upon a common start for Ramadan. Representatives of different mosques were subsequently invited to make a common decision, but agreement was not reached and different groups thus again started Ramadan at different times. In September 1998 the MSS and the IRN took a new initiative by founding the so-called *hilal*-committee, whose task was to collect information from different institutions, talk to imams in different mosques, and develop a suggestion for a practical solution that all could agree upon. As a result of these efforts, a *Hijri*-calendar agreement was signed by 12 of the larger mosques in Oslo in November 2000. For the first time, at least a majority of Muslims in Norway started the fast on the same day. The agreement was welcomed by the MSS, who distributed a letter of congratulation to its members by e-mail on the occasion of *id-al-adha*[135] in 2001. In 2002, however, some unforeseen events lead to disagreement concerning the exact date of the *id-al-adha*. Following this event, several young Muslims expressed disappointment and distress, and were concerned about what this meant for the future of the Muslim community in Norway and its possibilities for uniting.

The structuring of religious organizations as "national" organizations (the IRN, IKN, NMU), is important in underpinning the imagined "Norwegian Muslim community". Questions of practical cooperation in terms of gaining certain rights from the State so that

[135] The feast of sacrifice performed on the 10th of the month of pilgrimage (*Dhu l'Hijja*) imitating Ibrahim's (Abraham's) projected sacrifice of Ismail (Ishmael).

rituals and other religious practices may be performed in a manner that Muslims find to be satisfactory are central here. A range of issues, from the practical necessities of getting *halal* meat, the intense debates about blasphemy following the Rushdie-affair, to debates on whether a national Sharia council should be established, have energized cooperation across ethnic, linguistic and denominational boundaries. Efforts to construct a common Muslim identity among Muslims in Norway, and the downplaying of difference within, are also related to management of "the difference between"

Muslims and non-Muslims in the Norwegian context, as such oppositions are constructed and reconstructed in various ways. Furthermore, a public space of discussion and debate among Norwegian Muslims is secured among other things by the emergence of Norwegian-Islamic sites on the Internet, such as islam.no, muhammed.no and islamnorge.cjb.net. The use of Norwegian language in these fora and their focus on upcoming events in Norway (mainly Oslo) narrow the scope of the community to Muslims who live in Norway and speak the Norwegian language, but at the same time these fora point to and make use of references from around "the global Muslim community". For instance islamnorge.cjb.net. has a section named *Ummah* with information about Muslims in conflict-zones around the world: Iraq, Palestine, Bosnia, Kashmir and Afghanistan, and links to ummahnews.com – a transnational information site providing "news from around the Muslim world".

The 'vernacularization' of Islam

Creating a Norwegian Muslim community is envisaged as a future that young Muslims may contribute to realizing through their work in organizations like the NMU and the MSS. Language is important to the realization of such a goal. Several writers on Muslims in Europe have pointed towards a process of "vernacularization" of Islam, in which Islam comes to find a "local" expression through the use of national languages to express and formulate Islamic identities, beliefs and practices (see e.g. Vertovec and Rogers 1998). This development is attested to by numerous publications on e.g. "Islam in Norwegian" (Vogt 2000), and "Islam in Swedish" (Otterbeck 2000). The question nevertheless remains whether the use of vernacular languages, and the ways in which Muslim discourses relate to local and national conditions, would justify claims to the emergence of e.g. "Norwegian Islam", "Swedish Islam", "French

Islam" etc.[136] While I do not think that the process of vernacularization justifies claims to the emergence of a "Norwegian Islam", the process of vernacularization is important to the construction of a Norwegian Muslim community. The fact of speaking and writing the Islamic tradition in the Norwegian language, and interpreting it with reference to the contemporary Norwegian context, creates a common discursive space that underpins the construction of a Norwegian Muslim community.

The linguistic practices of young Muslims who were born and/or grew up in Norway – as well as of Norwegian converts – contribute to the development of "Islamic Norwegian". In contrast to most mosques and Islamic organizations, Norwegian is the common language spoken in the NMU and the MSS. The use of Norwegian in addition to Arabic is an explicit goal to the young Muslims. As Mohammed, a former leader of the NMU stressed in a group-interview:

> A main goal is to have a mosque where we can speak both Arabic and Norwegian, and where the Friday prayer is in Norwegian, in combination with Arabic. When we achieve this, we will have come one step further, and then we will be able to create other, long-term goals.

This concern with the vernacularization of the religious language is related not least to the linguistic capabilities of young Muslims, and the concern that young Muslims should be able to access and practice Islam through a language they understand. Many youngsters read and write more fluently, and understand better, Norwegian than Arabic or the other languages spoken in the mosques.[137] Given the status of Arabic as the language of revelation, the participants in the NMU and the MSS also generally hold that every practising Muslim should strive to learn enough Arabic at least to perform the prayers, and preferably also to be able to read the Quran in its original form.

In linguistic terms, the "vernacularization" of Islam is a hybridized process in which the different languages involved (Arabic[138], Norwegian, and a diversity of "maternal languages") are transformed. While Norwegian is increasingly used in books, *darses*, *khutbas* and discussions, Arabic remains the language of revelation and continues to be a constitutive aspect of religious practice as well as a privileged way of accessing the Islamic sources (rather

[136] Most academic publications respect the fact that, to most Muslims, Islam cannot "be" of any nationality, so that e.g. "Norwegian Islam" is to be avoided, whereas "Islam in Norway" is acceptable.

[137] For instance, in the Pakistani mosques Urdu is commonly used, while the young might have learned Punjabi from their parents at home. Similarly the North-African mosques tend to use Arabic, while the young might have learned to speak Berber at home. However, this has been rapidly changing lately, and now increasingly more mosques and organizations offer Friday prayers and religious lectures in Norwegian.

[138] Arabic, in this context, should not be seen as referring to the language of a particular group of people (Arabs), but as the language of revelation permitting Muslims (regardless of their mother tongue) to access the founding texts of Islam and to perform the Islamic rituals.

than translations, that are sometimes piously referred to as "interpretations" of these texts). The "vernacularization" of Islam thus refers primarily to the area of conversation and debate about Islam, rather than to ritual practice. In speaking and writing the Islamic tradition in the Norwegian language, some central Arabic-Islamic terms are included. In this process, the Arab-Islamic vocabulary is finding a Norwegian form: words are written in the Latin alphabet and adapted to Norwegian grammars, and transliteration is simplified as to fit the sounds and spellings of the Norwegian language. The linguistic practices of the young Muslims I worked with varied with respect to whether they used Arabic terms, terms from their "mother tongues", or translated Norwegian terms, and how they translated different concepts. Whereas some words acquire an established form in Norwegian (such as "prayer" that is used interchangeably with *salah*), others remain spoken in Arabic and are incorporated as such into the Norwegian language (this is notably so for *Allah* who is seldom referred to as God and words that do not have any obvious equivalent in Norwegian such as imam).[139] In addition to Arabic words, Islamic Norwegian incorporates concepts with a variety of linguistic origins (e.g. see the discussion of "religious reward" in chapter six).

Such a linguistic change is less banal than it may appear. It involves a complex process of cultural translation in which Islamic concepts are brought in touch not only with the Norwegian language, but also with the "mother tongues" of each of the members. To take but one brief example: during a *dars* in the NMU on the notion of *kadr,*[140] the young man giving the lecture said that he was uncertain whether this concept could in fact be translated with the word "skjebne" in Norwegian.[141] A discussion followed in which those present sought to seize the meaning of this Norwegian word by explaining how they understood it. Several also evoked corresponding concepts in their mother tongues and the ways in which they were generally understood. The discussion as such realized a complex form of cultural translation, in which the meaning of a theological concept had to be established at the intersection of a variety of different linguistic traditions. The meaning of *kadr* was thus negotiated through the prism of several languages, as the attendants tried to arrive at a common understanding of what the Islamic teaching of predestination might be said to entail.

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[139] New expressions such as "*halal* kjøtt" (meat that is slaughtered according to ritual prescriptions and therefore permitted to Muslims), "å gjøre *nikah*" (performing the Islamic marriage ceremony) and "å si *shahada*" (pronouncing the attestation of faith), "God *Eid*" (*Id mubarak*), "å ha rett *niyat*" (having the right intention) are established.

[140] *Kadr* (or *Qadar*) is usually translated in English as predestination, more specifically as referring to "divine predestination" or "divine determination".

[141] "Skjebne" in Norwegian covers what in English is expressed by several terms such as destiny, fate, chance and predestination. In current language use it does not particularly refer to any religious idea of predestination.

Choosing a particular Norwegian translation means that concepts are thereby related to new systems of meanings and associations. For instance, hijab would be referred to as veil, kerchief, scarf, shawl, and Muslim headgear, by different persons and in different contexts. Such translations were contested. Scarf and shawl were acceptable to most, whereas many found "veil" to evoke too much of an exotic imaginary, connoting harems and female seclusion. The kerchief alternative was used by some, but was often seen as too evocative of old ladies and the countryside. Young Muslims are thus aware that choosing a particular translation, or choosing not to translate, has important consequences for the associations that are brought forth, and the images that are thereby created of Islam and Muslims in public discourse.

In *American Medina,* Schmidt (1998) notes that in a first move, American Muslims translated religious concepts into English (e.g. *Allah* to God and *Subhanallah* to God be Praised). This, according to Schmidt, expressed a want for inclusion and to underline familiarity. In the 1990s, during Schmidt's fieldwork, she noted a reverse movement, as increasingly more Muslims adopted an Islamic-American English vocabulary. Schmidt suggests that the large number of particularly African-American converts to Islam may have accelerated this linguistic process. To many converts, the wish to signal "difference" from mainstream Christian/secular American society was central to forging new identities as Muslim, "Difference produces visibility, and visibility challenges, in this case intentionally, that which the majority perceives as obvious" (1998). In the NMU and the MSS, there seems to have been a parallel development towards an increased use of Islamic-Norwegian terms instead of translations. This might be due to the fact that young Muslims are increasingly assertive in their formulation of a Muslim minority identity and their right to be "different", as will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, but it might also be due to the fact that a growing number of young Muslims have become familiar with Islamic-Arabic terms as they are employed e.g. in books, pedagogical material, audio-visual material, and in conferences.[142]

[142] Though mostly used by Norwegian Muslims, non-Muslims e.g. in the media, have started to pick up on certain common Islamic-Norwegian words. In August 2003, for instance, the newspaper *Dagbladet* did a coverage of Islam, in which they included a list of Islamic-Norwegian terms. The Islamic-Norwegian vocabulary is thus not only changing the linguistic practices of Muslims in Norway, but also those of non-Muslims. Words such as imam, halal, hijab, sharia, and ayatollah are increasingly familiar to a non-Muslim public. Lately, the terms *jihad* and *fatwa* have come in to use not only with reference to Muslim politics, but also as metaphors characterizing non-Muslim Norwegian politics. Here *fatwa* comes to mean something like a strong or dictatorial opinion censoring other opinions and *jihad* an uncompromising struggle against someone or something. In both cases, the words take on a highly negative meaning, as opposed to the meaning they take on within an Islamic framework. Although the Norwegian public is increasingly familiar with a range of Islamic-Norwegian terms,

While language remains important as a primary vehicle for imagining and interacting within a Norwegian Muslim community, Muslims in Norway must confront national imaginaries in which Islam and Muslim identity are not included. In the next chapter, I will discuss how these confrontations are played out in young Muslims' politics of identity. Here, I will limit myself to considering some ways in which young Muslims' discursive practices performatively connect Islam to Norwegian national symbols and markers of identity. An e-mail posted on the MSS-list on the occasion of the 17th of May (Constitution Day)[143] illustrates the ambivalence of such attempts well:

> Dear Muslim, Norwegian countrymen! :-)
> wa'salaam o doa
> Three hurrahs for the day today
> hip hip hurrah, hurrah, hurrah... hurrah, hurrah, hurrah... hurrah, hurrah, hurraaaah
> I wish all brothers and sisters a great celebration of the national day! :-)

The use of smileys in this e-mail is not just to convey a happy national day attitude. It is also an ironic acknowledgement of the fact that the way in which readers are addressed as Muslim Norwegian countrymen may provoke many Muslims as well as the non-Muslim majority. This was particularly forcefully brought out a couple of years earlier, when the appointment of the Norwegian-Pakistani labour party politician Rubina Rana to lead the 17th of May Committee in Norway and precede the parade in Oslo was subject to discussion in the national papers after she received a racist threatening letter stating that "This job is for white Norwegians. Go home to Pakistan" (cf. Gullestad 2001b; Jacobsen 2002). Whereas this particular episode reflected a nationalist imaginary from which non-white, immigrants and Muslims are categorically excluded, the 17th of May has also been central in representing Norway as a "multicultural" nation. The e-mail thus plays on the ambivalences and dilemmas experienced by young Muslims' in their efforts to constructing a Norwegian Muslim identity, while simultaneously negotiating boundaries and discursive attempts to construct "Muslim" and "Norwegian" as mutually exclusive categories of identity.

In an article called "Henrik Wergeland – the first Norwegian Muslim?" posted on www.islamnorge.cjb.net, links are established between Islam and Norwegian national identity by way of the poet, Henrik Wergeland. Based on an interview in *Dagbladet* with Yngvar

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considerable contestation arises over the correct meaning of such terms as these are used and misused, adopted and adapted to the local context.

[143] The importance of Constitution Day as a ritual construction and display of Norwegianness has been discussed in numerous ethnological and anthropological publications (Blehr 2000; Brottveit et al. 2004; Eriksen 1993; Klausen 1984; Witoszek 1998).

Ustvedt,[144] the moderator of the Internet site[145] writes that Henrik Wergeland, in fact died a Muslim, "Yes, I believe you know him? Henrik Wergeland, the guy who instituted the day. The 17th of May, I mean, Norway's national day. But that he died a Muslim, you didn't know?" The moderator explains that, "Wergeland believed in the wonders of nature. Islam became to him a religion that gave God – Allah – the right place within it. It became the religion that he felt closest to, and of which he spoke with the greatest sympathy. He preferred Allah to the Christian God, and considered Mohammed a distinguished prophet". Wergeland's embracement of Islam is also related to his sympathies for oppressed peoples and his support for their battles for freedom, thus confirming the universality of Islam as the religion of the oppressed and embattled. The moderator further suggests that Wergeland's views on Islam have not become common knowledge because many people "do not want to hear about it". In conclusion, the case of Wergeland is used as an invitation to Islam addressed to Norwegians, "When Henrik Wergeland was inspired by Islam, why shouldn't others also be? Read about Islam yourself! As you can see, good Norwegians have already done so".[146] Here, Wergeland, as an exemplary figure of the "good Norwegian" is thus held forth as someone who resolves the distinction between "Muslims" and "Norway" through his ethical practices.

In the religious imagination of the young Muslims, nature is integrated as a sign of God's greatness. By linking Wergeland's sympathies for Islam with "the wonders of nature" a creative link is established between Islam and Norwegian national symbols (17th of May and "nature" which is important in Norwegians' conceptualization of Norway and Norwegian-ness). Young Muslims also take their religious practice into the nature, e.g. when they go hiking ("Å gå på tur"), which is in Norwegian national imaginaries highly valued as recreation and as "healthy for body and soul". Islamic rituals such as prayers are highly "portable" in the sense that they require no "sacred place" (cf. Metcalf 1996a). It is through the practices performed in a place that an "Islamic space" comes in to being. The way in which nature is transformed into the most beautiful "mosque" through the performance of the ritual ablutions and the congregational prayer, and through the sound of *adhan* is well illustrated in Tulay Gider's description of NMU's trip to Tryvann in *Explore*:

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[144] Salem Aleikum Henrik. *Dagbladet* 16.05.1997. Ustvedt is a writer and journalist and has written his PhD dissertation on Henrik Wergeland. His suggestion that Wergeland might have been a Muslim was debated in the aftermath of the interview in *Dagbladet*, and was countered among other things by the suggestion that although Wergeland might have found some fundamental truth in all religions, he valued Christianity most.

[145] The moderator is active in the Muslim community and is one of the young Muslims with whom I worked.

[146] Interestingly, a similar discursive move to localize Islam in Germany has been made by the Muslimische Jugend Deutchland, suggesting that Göethe and Kant were Muslims. This was pointed out to me by Synnøve Bendixen (personal communication) who has done fieldwork with youth from Muslimische Jugend Deutchland in Berlin.

> We were finally there. The place was by a lake and it was beautiful. Autumn has its own particular beauty. Even though it was cold outside, we could feel the warmth of the colourful trees […] It was time for salah-ol-dhohr. Those who were going to do salah did wodo down by the lake. Hearing adhan in the middle of the forest sounded so beautiful to me that I cannot put it into words […].

As seen in Wolasmal's essay about his journey to Afghanistan, "*adhan* in the open" powerfully invokes and serves to constitute a Muslim space. Performing and hearing *adhan* in the middle of the forest, thus performatively establishes Islam as a visible and audible aspect of the Norwegian landscape. This is all the more important when we look to the heated debates that have surrounded the question of whether or not Muslims in Norway should be allowed to perform the *adhan* publicly for the Friday prayer in mosques.[147] The *adhan*-debates dramatized nationalist imaginaries in a way that excluded Islam and Muslims from a common national "We" (cf. Jacobsen 2002; Naguib 2001). The debates were structured according to a dichotomy where *adhan* represented "them/the foreigners", whether they were constructed as a legitimate or illegitimate presence in the Norwegian landscape (This dichotomous framework will be further elaborated in the next chapter).

"Europe" and "Norway" are important horizons of action in and through which young Muslims constitute their religious identities and practices. Instead of treating these as "given" and naturalized spaces that somehow automatically confer upon people who belong there a given "identity", I have tried to give some glimpses of how they as a horizon of action for young Muslims, shape the ways in which they reflect on themselves as Muslims, the way they anticipate their future and look to the past, how they organize their religious practices and how these reflections and interventions contribute to problematizing the "identity" of "Europe" and "Norway".

Family, kinship and the 'ethnic diaspora'

So far I have focused on horizons of action and imagined communities that in different ways transcend or challenge belonging created in reference to "back home". It would be wrong, however, to ignore this latter dimension. Most young Muslims continue to identify and orient themselves towards a "national homeland". Such references do not point towards a fixed and

[147] This discussion arose after the World Islamic Mission, holding the only purpose-built mosque in Oslo, applied for a permit to perform *adhan* for Friday prayers. The city council in Oslo granted permission on the condition that they did not break health regulations about urban noise (60 decibels). Gressgård (2005a) refers to the political treatment of such issues as *adhan*, *halal*-meat and hijab in terms of national law pertaining to "health and security" rather than as questions of "religious freedom", as instances of "category mistakes" – the employment of faulty categories of description and ethnocentrism (cf. chapter four).

bounded community, but is constituted through a multiplicity of social relations and practices that somehow relate to family-relations, kinship, and country background. They way in which ethnicity is produced and altered in the context of migration and globalization is not the focus of this thesis. However, it is necessary to have a look at how emotional ties to family and kin, as well as close social relations with people sharing their background, constitutes a central horizon of action for young Muslims. Although the term "ethnicity" is problematic in this respect, I will refer to this horizon as "the ethnic diaspora" .[148]

In her study of youth with an immigrant background in Norway, Prieur stresses the importance of the family for how young people come to identify with an "ethnic category":

> Through the family the individual gets a name and a language, together with a series of culturally specific practices (food, music, clothes…), and to a certain extent also culturally specific ways of being and structures of feeling (show respect for parents, experience commitment towards them…) (Prieur 2002: 8).

Also in my study, the attachment to family and kin and the identities conferred upon them within this context, and that of the "ethnic diaspora" more broadly, were important to how young Muslims came to perceive of themselves as in terms of where they "are coming from", their "background", and their "roots". Some in particular took an interest in tracing their family history in order to get a fuller picture of "where they come from". Many were also concerned with passing on such things as language, musical and literary traditions, and family history to their own children. Enduring, long-term social relations continue to be importantly shaped within family, kin and ethnic networks of sociality and exchange. The horizon of action that relates to the family, the "ethnic community" and the "back home" country is founded in intimate social relationships. Such relationships continue to impact on young Muslims' identities and senses of self, and on how young Muslims act e.g. with respect to marriage, and career.

In envisaging both their past and future lives, young Muslims continually invoked the family, kinship and "ethnic community". The young continually stressed their "social obligations" towards the (extended) family. They envisaged their own lives to a large extent as part of larger family projects. This was particularly important when it came to the issue of marriage. Most of the young Muslims in my study came from families where marriages were "arranged" and seen as "family-affairs". That marriage is a critical aspect of creating and maintaining collective identities across generations, is of course at the heart of much

[148] In the next chapter, the issue of ethnicity is broadened by attention to how processes of Othering impact on young people's identification with "ethnic categories".

anthropological theorizing. It ensures that communities and collective identities are maintained for the future. Especially regarding the selection of a life partner, it may indicate how identity and difference is inscribed through contested ideas of endogamy and exogamy (cf. Raj 2003). In this respect it is interesting to look briefly into how the young Muslims I worked with reflected on marriage. The young Muslims I worked with contested widespread ideals and practices of ethnic endogamy and instead promoted religious endogamy.[149] Whether a person was Muslim or not (and degree of piety) was seen as the primary criteria for choosing a spouse. It should be noted that there was a marked difference between normative statements and practice in this respect.[150] Although ethnicity and nationality were discarded as normative principles for regulating marriage, actual identification in terms of language and "culture", practical considerations as well as loyalty to, expectations and/or pressure from family and kin, still assured that most marriages were endogamous in ethnic and or/national terms. The move from ethnic endogamy towards religious endogamy was thus part of the anticipated future of Muslim unity.

Nisha, for instance, told me that for a long time, she only considered Kashmiri suitors since her father would only accept that she married within the group he saw them as belonging to. As her parents communicated with considerable difficulties in Norwegian and English, she also worried that her parents might be unable to communicate with her future husband should she marry someone with another national background. To "take up that battle" would be too problematic in relationship to her family, which she showed affection and commitment to, so she had been preparing to find someone that her father could accept. Her mother did not care so much about origins, and said that as long as it was a Muslim she would be fine with it, but she nevertheless worried about the example Nisha would thus set for her younger sisters, these being "even more Norwegian than her". Recently, in particular after he went to *hajj*, Nisha got the impression that her father had grown a little softer on the issue. She saw this partly as a result of him having become more pious after *hajj*, and partly as a result of the way

[149] I should hasten to add that this is not an attempt to generalize about marriage practices among young Muslims. It is only meant as an illustration of how young Muslims identify with different communities. For an excellent discussion of marriage practices among South-Asian minority youth in Norway see Bredal (2004). The limits of religious endogamy are contested. Among the young Muslims I worked with, marrying someone who was not a Muslim was generally considered unacceptable. In line with many *ulema*, some argued that Muslim men could also marry "women of the Book". Women could not do the same, as religious identity was seen to be passed on by the father. Why this was so, was debated, and references were somewhat uneasily made to a man's position as the head of the family. More often, however, the young Muslims tended to explain religious endogamy with the practical difficulties living with a person of a different religion would cause, in particular in relation to raising children.

[150] Figures from Statistics Norway (Lie 2002) show that most marriages consist of men and women from the same region, and that there are relatively few marriages across country background.

she and her siblings had been “standing up to him” on a number of issues over the years. This had included negotiations on a variety of issues, from which clothes to wear, to whether or not they could travel on their own. One of her older siblings had already married a non-Kashmiri, after considerable protest from the parents.

On one occasion Nisha and her father discussed a couple of marriage proposals that her father had received. Nisha was reluctant, as on previous occasions, to accept the candidates her father presented to her. So her father, seemingly somewhat discouraged and impatient, asked her, “But what is it that you want, my daughter?” Nisha replied, “I don’t want to be as you taught me, Kashmiri first and then a Muslim. I want to be a Muslim first and then a Kashmiri”. In so replying, Nisha made a powerful statement to her father about whom she wanted to be, a statement that explicitly opposed the priorities that her father attached to belonging. Nisha’s statement was not only a powerful statement about belonging, but also an effective way of challenging the standards of ethnic endogamy that she saw her father as imposing on her. Being a Muslim first, rather than a Kashmiri, would mean that it was whether a suitor was a good Muslim or not, and not his ethnic or national background that was the most important criteria for determining the pool of potential partners. Indeed, when she spoke to me and her friends about the candidates she had been presented with it was usually their piety – or lack of such – that she accorded the highest importance, along with other issues pertaining to education, economic status, and appearance. When she married a few years later, however, it was to a well-educated, pious Kashmiri that met her own, and her father’s criteria.

Although most continue, like Nisha, to marry within the ethnic community despite their normative widening of the pool of potential partners to religious endogamy, there are some changes to be noticed. There have been several interethnic marriages in the networks around NMU and MSS, a few Internet-initiated engagements and marriages, and marriages arranged by friends in the Muslim network instead of by the family. Islamic conferences and multi-ethnic organizations as well as Muslim marriage-bureaus on the Internet, are sites in which Muslim spouses may be found outside of the ethnic community. It is interesting to note that those who marry across ethnicity are sometimes referred to as “really Muslim”, since they have apparently managed to let themselves be guided by Islamic principles rather than by cultural traditions or expectations from the surroundings. In a sense, these couples thus represent an anticipated future where the Muslim community is no longer divided by ethnic and national differences.

Whereas this anticipated future thus provides an important horizon of action for young Muslims, there are reasons to agree with Naguib (2001: 16) in that "at the present time in Norway, we should think in terms of several Muslim diasporas based more on nationality/ethnicity rather than a common religion". To most of the young Muslims I worked with, socialization into Muslim identity and practice was indissolubly linked to the area of family and kinship, and the "ethnic diasporas" imagined in their extension. The transmission of religious traditions and practices like reading the Quran, prayer, dress code, food etc. was part of informal socialization in the family and in mosques dominated by different ethnic communities. Although young Muslims made reflexive efforts to distinguish religious from ethnic identities, and culture from religion, these points of identification continued to intertwine in daily life, where references to ethnic and religious communities were sometimes interchangeable, as were references to culture and religion. Muslim identity and practice thus remained tied to the cultural and religious values transmitted within the family, kinship networks, and the (ethnically based) mosques.

Despite their orientation towards ethnically mixed religious Islamic organization, and their vision of creating a common identity for Muslims in Norway, most members of the NMU and the MSS retain an individual or family-based affiliation with mosques that have their base in particular ethnic communities. A relation to the mosque that their families affiliate with is assured for many by the attendance of Quran education in the mosque in childhood. In subsequent years this affiliation is preserved through communal celebrations of religious holidays and rituals in the mosque. In some cases, the affiliation with a particular mosque remains limited to special occasions, in others the affiliation is not upheld at all. A distinction should thus be made between the importance of the "ethnic diaspora" as a horizon of action for individuals and as a horizon of action for defining an anticipated future for Muslims in Norway. Although the young may work actively towards transcending ethnic boundaries in the NMU and the MSS, the ways in which individual lives are oriented in terms of an "ethnic imaginary" varies greatly. This horizon may also become more pronounced as the young enter new life cycles and move away from organizations like the NMU and the MSS.

In so far as I have not focused on any particular "ethnic community" it would be impossible to trace the various ways in which particular ethnic imaginaries and patterns of sociability interact with other horizons of action. However, I would like to reflect somewhat on how belonging to an ethnic community intersects with, and is partly challenged by, global Muslim imaginaries and the emergence of a Norwegian Muslim identity. In doing so, I base my discussion on an ethnographic account of a young woman moving through the city of

Oslo. The example draws attention to how the different horizons of action and imagined communities discussed above are actualized in intersection with, and mutual differentiation from, each other. This, together with crosscutting differences in for instance gender, sexuality, and age make them into sites of control and cultural play, consent and resistance, reproduction and change.

Journeying through multiple horizons

It is ten o'clock in the morning and Alesha sits with a group of other students from the MSS registering participants for the second International Islamic Conference in Oslo.[151] The conference takes place in a part of Oslo Centre West where the stream of men and women of different colours, and in a variety of Islamic dresses, attracts the attention of passers by. Alesha, who normally does not cover her head, is wearing black pants, a wide white shirt and a white hijab; the latter on request of the conference organizers, who prefer female aids to cover their heads at the conference site. All the MSS young women have followed this recommendation, except for one who is just "attending" and not "helping out". In the school building that is temporarily converted into a conference hall, numerous activities are taking place. Books, audio and video tapes and some "Islamic consumer goods" (e.g. hijabs, *halal* make up (*khols*), *halal* perfume (without alcohol), prayer time alarms, calligraphies and Kaaba key rings) are displayed in the entrance hall. The NMU and the MSS are among the organizations presenting themselves at stands, where brochures are distributed and people may approach to inquire about the work of the organizations. Food is served in the cafeteria during conference breaks. In the toilets and wardrobes ritual ablutions are performed before *salah*, which takes place in the school's gymnasium. The school site is organized by a gendered division of spaces. There are separate entrances, separate seating in the conference room, separate prayer rooms, and separate lines and eating areas in the cafeteria. Well into the first lecture Alesha finishes up with registration and joins the approximately 500 listeners in the main conference hall. Throughout the day Alesha, who is one of few Pakistanis attending the otherwise Arab-dominated conference,[152] listens to speeches by internationally renowned scholars from around the world on, among other things: *dawa*, the truth of the Quran, morality

[151] This is a biannual event, staged by the *Masjid Bilal* in cooperation with other Muslim organizations in Oslo, and in which a range of scholars from Muslim as well as European countries and the United States are invited to lecture on and discuss a range of issues, but particularly in relation to the condition of Muslims in Europe.

[152] A majority of those who attended the conference were of North-African, Middle Eastern and Eastern-African, in particular Somali and Sudanese, origin. There were also some Norwegian converts, and smaller numbers from a variety of national backgrounds.

and ritual worship.[153] At midday she joins in communal prayer, led by a Somali woman. In a coffee break later on, she and her friends discuss the speeches they have attended. All agree that they have learned a lot about "their religion". However, they deplore the general absence of female speakers, and agree that some of the scholars from abroad spoke about things that were not relevant to Muslims in Norway and that they had no understanding of the situation young Muslims in Europe are in. Some of the scholars are also characterized as "very conservative", and as operating with simplistic divisions between Islam and the West.

In the late afternoon I catch up with Alesha on the subway. We are both headed for the *henna*-party[154] of Haleema, a 22-year-old friend of Alesha who also has a Pakistani background. The henna-party is to be held in a community house in an Eastern suburb of Oslo, and the journey takes us from the bourgeois Centre West through the City Centre and to the more immigrant dense areas of the Eastern suburbs. Alesha has kept the hijab she wore at the conference, and before I get time to ask her if she has started to wear it, Alesha points towards her headgear and explains that she kept it on as an "experiment". As she is considering donning the hijab, she wants to "check out how it feels to wear it". It is the first time she has worn the hijab in a public "Norwegian" space, and she is feeling oddly visible. "It feels like everybody is looking at me", she says somewhat embarrassed. Upon leaving the subway station we meet another Norwegian-Pakistani friend of Haleema and Alesha, headed for the henna-party. Alesha once again rushes to explain why she is wearing Islamic headgear. Seemingly somewhat relieved upon hearing Alesha's explanation, the other young woman admits that she had in fact started wondering whether Alesha was really "like that". Just before we arrive at the community house Alesha excuses herself and explains that she needs to drop by her house to change for the wedding party. Half an hour later she arrives in a beautiful green and gold *shalwar kameez*, her long hair hanging loose over the *dupatta,* that she has carefully draped around her shoulders.

[153] Among these were a number of internationally renowned "diasporic" scholars, such as Shabbir Ali**,** Abdullah Hakim Quick, Jamal Badawi, and Tasneem Zaman. These lectured in English, whereas a number of speakers from different Muslim countries lectured in Arabic.

[154] The traditional *mehnde*-ritual is termed "the henna-party" (henna-festen) in Norwegian. The henna is a red colouring matter traditionally used to beautify the bride during the wedding ceremony. It symbolizes protection and purification from evil. The henna-party is a traditional Pakistani party in connection with the wedding celebration, and usually takes place on the night before the actual wedding. Haleema was marrying a man from Pakistan whom she would go and live with for a while before returning to Norway together. Since she wanted to have a *mehnde*-ritual with her family and friends before leaving Norway, the henna-party was held some time before the wedding ceremony, which would take place in Pakistan.

All the guests, except for a couple of girls with an Indian background and myself, are Pakistanis.[155] The women of Haleema's family and her closest friends gather on the floor, playing the drums (*dholak*), singing and clapping their hands. The lyrics of the songs contain challenges and insults to the women on the groom's side. Since the groom's family is not present, Haleema's friends alternately take the role of the groom's side and tease and challenge Haleema's family.[156] Haleema, who I know as a trendy-looking and self-confident young woman, arrives draped in layers of yellow tissue, head bent, her eyes turned down. Normally, the groom and his closest family would be present at this moment, but as he is in Pakistan, Haleema enters the decorated room accompanied by the closest women and men on her side and is seated on a "throne" lighted by spotlights and candles. The guests approach and greet Haleema who gracefully enacts the role of a shy and modest bride-to-be who is sad to leave her family and friends and anxious about meeting her husband-to-be. The guests participate in an elaborate ceremony. Approaching the bride-to-be one by one, they smear henna in the bride's hand, and oil in her hair. Later on, they approach to feed her sweet cakes called *mithai* made from chickpeas, sugar and *ghi.*[157]

Music, dance and masquerade make up for the main celebration of the *mehnde* party. Alesha and some other friends stage a dance performance imitating the Bollywood-genre, accompanied by music and dancing varying from the more traditional tunes, through Bhangra to hip hop. Haleema's younger brother and three of his friends appear to perform a dance combining traditional and modern steps. Some girls, masquerading as boys, enact a passionate love drama, miming to a popular Urdu song. In between, pizza and coca cola is served using paper trays and cups, and later on loads of sweet cakes and a huge chocolate cake. The entertainment continues with a performance in which Haleema's brother and some of his friends dance together with three young female friends of Haleema. They enact the story of a young couple courting each other, alternately begging and resisting the other. Haleema's brother also performs a very emotional song he has composed about how much he will miss his sister when she leaves the house. The public as well as Haleema are moved to tears. To cheer Haleema up again, she is brought on to the dance floor. To a combination of Asian and

[155] I should note that in this context, people are spoken of as "Norwegians", "Pakistanis" and "Indians". When I arrive, a young boy looks astonished at me and asks, "A Norwegian?" This does not mean that those who here construe themselves as "Pakistanis" do not also, in other contexts, construe themselves as Norwegian-Pakistanis or Norwegians.

[156] Traditionally these are performed as a competition between the bride's and the groom's family. In this case, only the bride's family and friends are present.

[157] The young Pakistani women at the party knew how to perform the central rituals, but were unable to give a discursive explanation of the different ritual elements, "It is just the way we do it", was the standard response to my questions.

Arabic tunes, the dancing gradually gets more energetic and sensual, drawing attention to parts of the body which are normally carefully covered. Towards the end, female family members and friends perform self-composed songs humorously mocking different family members, until Haleema's father appears to tell us that the party is over and to thank the guests for contributing to the party.

Multiple horizons: heterogeneous spaces

Alesha's journey through the city interrupts assumptions about a homogeneous national space and allows us to explore the complex cityscape of Oslo and the ways in which Muslim identities are constituted and re-configured within this locality. The Islamic conference temporarily transforms an ordinary Oslo school into an enactment of the global Islamic community. The "imagined community" of the Islamic conference is defined primarily by adherence to Islam and its *umma* of believers. Islamic symbols and performances, such as the hijab, *salah* and the gendered organization of space, define a common Muslim space that transcends national and ethnic boundaries. The ritual of *salah* brings the *umma* into being through its separation of the sacred from the profane (ablutions, the pronunciation of *niyat*[158]), its transcendence of national differences in a unison prostration before God, and through its iconographic rendition of a gender system guaranteeing social order. In the subway, linking west to east, Alesha's hijab turns into a marker of ethnic and religious difference between the non-Muslim majority and their Muslim "others" (cf. next chapter). It accentuates her "visibility" as a "stranger" to majority, non-Muslim Norwegians. The henna-party is located in a community house, used by different local organizations and communities, in an eastern suburb. Here, being a Muslim is a feature of the collective identity defining the event, but as an aspect of what constitutes the ethnic community and their "common culture" rather than with reference to a global Muslim community. Whereas the henna-party relates to Islam as a dimension of an ethnic collectivity (but a dimension that is both integrative and potentially transgressive), the Islamic conference relates to Islam precisely as a means of transcending ethnicity by way of belonging to a global Muslim community.

At the party, the young mix Norwegian with Urdu and Punjabi when speaking to each other, and education and future careers are discussed in terms of the Norwegian school system and labour market. A "global" or Americanized consumer culture is also actualized through

[158] The declaration made by the believer before the five daily prayers of the meaning and the purpose of the act.

the pizza and coca-cola served at the wedding. Hip-hop beat and dancing is introduced as an element in the musical performances, and performed as an element of the hybridized henna-ritual. The henna-party also draws importantly upon a common South Asian popular culture of film, poetry, dance and music that includes Indians as well as Pakistanis, Hindus and Sikhs as well as Muslims. In the opinion of the young Muslims present at the henna-party, its intertwining with different cultural traditions makes it into an arena for the performance of "culture" as a contrast to "Islam", but that is sometimes taken to be Islamic. Haleema, the bride-to-be, thematizes this with respect to the rituals of the henna-party:

> Most of our traditions are adopted from Hinduism, especially those involved in weddings. Clothing, dancing, music, language and even looks are so similar. We have even adopted their rituals into Islam. As the *qawwali* for instance: the religious songs.[159] Hindus sing religious songs to their gods, you know. And it is almost like a competition: if they have religious songs we should have them too.

Like Haleema, many young Muslims are concerned about this intertwining of religion and cultural traditions, and the ways in which it continues to inform the practices of Muslim migrant communities. The Islamic conferences in which Muslims from different parts of the world come together as well as trans-ethnic organizations like the NMU and the MSS are experienced as privileged sites in which Islam and cultural traditions can be untwined. As Alesha's friend, Rabab, accounts, the Islamic conference gave her new perspectives on things because the other participants were not Pakistanis. This allowed her to compare, to see what is the same and what is different, and to isolate the practices that are "just cultural traditions" and "not really Islam".

Some of those of Pakistani background particularly worry about the influence from South-Asian popular-culture on the Norwegian-Pakistani Muslim community. This concern was also the subject of a discussion on the MSS e-mailing list with regard to the celebration of Id where Hamdan wrote that:

> In a previous *Id*, I remember that quite a few Muslims went to the Soria Moria movie theatre to watch an Indian movie screened as a special-*Id* arrangement! When the Id of Muslims is celebrated with Indian film at Soria Moria, I feel a deep twinge in my heart. I feel that something very pure, very beautiful, is soiled and bereft of its beauty.

It would be tempting to interpret such concerns as illustrations of Eriksen's suggestion that young of the so-called second-generation are "tempted by pure identities" that "define clear-cut boundaries, define rules for behaviour and prohibit negotiation of values and moral"

[159] *Qawwali* is the traditional form of Islamic song found in India and Pakistan. The development of the *qawwali* historically closely parallels that of the Hindu devotional songs know as *bahjan*. The Chisti school of Sufism has been important in propagating the *qawwali* in Pakistan and India, and its adepts brought this devotional practice with them to Norway.

(Eriksen 1999: 9). The metaphors of soilure and defilement, as a contrast to purity and beauty, certainly convey a particular set of values and morals related to being a Muslim that opposes it to "Indian movies".[160] However, there are several further points to be made here. Firstly, such concerns with purity and impurity were usually highly contextual. Most, not least among the young women, continued to watch, listen to and enjoy South-Asian music, Pakistani soaps and Indian movies. An alternative reading would suggest that in the criticism quoted above, it is not Indian movies as such that are "impure" and "defiling", but the fact that a religious holiday is turned into an event of entertainment and popular culture, instead of being centred on its religious significance. If this is so, it is not the upholding of boundaries and the construction of "pure" identities that are the primary concerns when young Muslims decry the influence of South-Asian popular culture on the Pakistani community. Rather, it is the values and ethical orientations that this popular culture is seen to involve, and the kinds of subjectivities it shapes, that are questioned. For instance, in another debate among some MSS's members, it was discussed whether the fact that young people spent their time watching Bollywood movies and soaps was a hindrance to a more active engagement in society, and for being active in ameliorating the condition of Muslims in Norway as well as elsewhere. In this respect, one could argue that rather than "prohibiting negotiation of values and moral", such criticism opens a space precisely for debating what kinds of values and morals that should guide people's lives, through trying to convince and persuade others of living more piously.

Werbner (2002a) has argued that the aesthetic community constituted on the basis of a shared South-Asian popular culture, in contrast to the one built around the notion of an "authentic Islam", is characterized by "fun" and "pleasure". She identifies a tension between "the puritanical intellectual sobriety of Islam" and "the sheer pleasure of South Asian food and dress, films and poetry, comedy and parody, music and dance" (Werbner 2002a: 12) and furthermore that South-Asian popular culture constitutes a transgressive aesthetics, transgressively interrupting pure narratives of origin and faith or over-policed boundaries (Werbner 2002b: 130). It is the source of powerful counter narrative in the struggles of marginalized groups, in particular women and youth, to challenge the agendas and diasporic consciousness of British Muslim South Asians as predominantly defined by Muslim male

[160] The "South Asian" is also fragmented by the conflict between India and Pakistan, in Kashmir and Gujarat in particular, a conflict that spills over in the young Pakistanis' relation to the dominance of India in South Asian popular culture. Members of the PSS and MSS have made appeals to other Pakistanis to boycott Indian cultural arrangements. This shows that conflict lines from "back home" still play an active part in the identity projects of young Muslims in Norway.

elders (Werbner 1996b; Werbner 1999; Werbner 2002b). Comparatively, one could argue that in so far as young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS tend to enforce a boundary between "Islam" and "culture", and to see South-Asian popular culture as "polluting" Islam, they undermine the legitimacy of an imaginary that might otherwise be transgressive and contribute to destabilizing hierarchies between elders and youth, women and men, and experts and lay people. This does not mean that such hierarchies, and hegemonies of defining what a Norwegian (Pakistani) Muslim community should be like, are not challenged. As Werbner (1996a) also acknowledges, young people also find support for a legitimate challenge to hierarchies between elders and youth, women and men, through the discourse about distinguishing "cultural tradition" and Islam. I have already touched on this with respect to debates about ethnic versus religious endogamy, and will show in later chapters how young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS challenge established hierarchies from a position "within Islam", rather than by drawing on a popular culture that challenges religious norms of puritanism and sobriety.

(Re)imagining Muslim identity

This chapter has sought to show how young Muslims' lives are formed at the intersection of different horizons of action. Each of the horizons simultaneously involves processes of boundary making and hybridization, continuity and change, and normative suggestions as to what is good, just, and desirable. In doing so, I have wanted to provide a way of speaking about the relationship between identification, community and space that does not rest on a homology between place cum people cum culture, a homology that has been pervasively criticized in anthropology and elsewhere (cf. e.g. Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Massey 1994). In this respect, the chapter attests to the importance of developing analytical concepts that do not essentialize communities, cultures and identities. Rather than discussing the realities of young Muslims' lives in Norway as exemplifying an existential suspension between two "communities" or "cultures" I have tried to paint a more complex picture of how young Muslims orient themselves in relation to different horizons of action. Identifying three main such horizons, I have shown how the subjectivities of young Muslims are constituted in relation to the different visions of community, the normative suggestions as to what is good, just, and desirable, and to the different visions of the future and the past, that these horizons offer.

Based on the analysis it is possible to suggest a way in which we may understand the relationship between the local and the global when it comes to producing points of orientation and identification. Although processes of globalization engender "global belonging" to a "global Islamic *umma*", such global belonging does not replace imaginaries related to other spatial configurations such as Europe, Norway or "back home". While young Muslims imagine themselves as belonging to a "global Muslim community", Muslim identity is simultaneously re-imagined in relation to the "at home", and to a Norwegian Muslim community. Rather than seeing global imaginaries as impeding the construction of local Muslim identities, I have argued that the idea of a global Muslim community based on identification with a universal religion enables the construction of a Norwegian Muslim identity across ethnic divisions within the local Muslims community. Migration and globalization thus produce both new global and new local imaginaries.

By focusing on horizons of action I have wanted to stress that the imagined communities in terms of which young Muslims orient their lives and create solidarities and linkages to the past and the future are multiple, internally differentiated, heterogeneous and contested. I have wanted to show how this multiplicity articulates in the discussions and performances of young Muslims in Oslo, and how it simultaneously energizes processes of hybridization and boundary making. The horizons of action that young Muslims in Oslo interpret their belonging in terms of provide sometimes overlapping, sometimes contradictory visions of the world and scripts for how people should live and act. In several ways, the chapter has hinted towards how the horizons of action overlap and interpenetrate, but also how they are marked by boundaries and processes of exclusion and inclusion. Far from simple acts of bricolage or hybridization, these processes of identity renegotiation are sometimes painful and conflictual. The contemporary mobilization of Muslim identity in the political space of European nation states, as well as the apparent increase in (cultural) racism and discriminatory practices towards "immigrants" and "Muslims", demonstrate that migration and globalization also energize a focus on identity and borders. This "reactive" moment of globalizing processes, expressed within the dynamics of a so-called identity politics and "politics of recognition", is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter four

The politics of recognition: (re)constructing identity/difference

This chapter concerns the emergence of new political subjects that are currently mobilizing a "politics of identity" based on Islam. The NMU and the MSS are important arenas in such mobilization, in so far as they provide spaces for challenging dominant social imaginaries on "otherness" and Islam, for mobilizing claims for recognition for a certain vision of Muslims' own identity as Muslims, and for negotiating and forging a Muslim citizenship. To say that young Muslims are involved in a *politics* of identity that is centred on Islam necessarily involves seeing their Muslim identity as "politicized". That Muslim identity is politicized should not be confused with the notion of "political Islam", however.[161] There are several dimensions to the current politicization of Muslim identity and practices. For one, Muslim identity and practice is politicized by the way in which an increasing number of practices require the consent of the law (e.g. with respect to marriages, divorces, funerals, clothing, the education of children), and therefore of the nation-state, and the way in which the state intervenes to secure that those laws are upheld (Asad 2003). Furthermore, the ways in which Muslim identity and practice are represented in dominant social imaginaries politicizes the relation of Muslims to the nation state and the imagined national community. It is on the grounds of such politicization that Muslim identity is constructed as a position from which claims of rights, recognition and justice are made. Engaging critically with theories on "the politics of recognition", I develop an analysis that both makes use of its analytical potential, and moves beyond it by paying attention to the ways in which general dynamics of identity politics articulate with the Islamic discursive tradition within which the identity politics of young Muslims are framed. The religious framework is more than a mere cultural framework for identity claims, I argue, it is also a normative framework were conceptions of religious duties and obligations inform, and are informed by, the politics of identity and recognition.

[161] This concept is contested. Some writers like Roy (2004) provide a narrow definition of "political Islam" as the attempt to create an Islamic state. Others provide wider definitions focusing on how Islam has been associated with different political projects throughout history. In the context of this chapter I use the terms "political" and "politicized" more broadly to refer to young Muslims engagement as Muslims in the public sphere and their engagement with questions of rights, recognition and representation. As Mahmood (2005) argues, one should also be attentive to the political implications of movements that are only marginally organized around such issues. In so far as an increasing number of dimensions of human life have been brought under the juridical and political apparatus of the nation state, the effects of people's practices outside the political field as narrowly defined will inevitably have political consequences.

As a basis for understanding young Muslims Islamic engagement as a politics of recognition, I first point to some major features characterizing the social imaginaries[162] in and in response to which Muslim identity politics in Norway are developed. In continuity, I focus on experiences of (mis)recognition and how such experiences energize collective efforts to deconstruct ascribed categorical identities and to obtain "recognition" for particular identities. The chapter further discusses the religious practices that are made relevant in the quest for recognition, and how identity politics is intimately linked to a religious imaginary about what Islam is and how one should be a "good Muslim". The consequences of this imaginary with respect to understanding such issues as representation and citizenship, are also addressed.[163] Focussing on young Muslims' discussions of the issue of "public representation", I bring out some aspects of their understanding of what it entails to be a Muslim in Norway, and the normative visions of Islam that are produced in contestations over who is authorized to represent Muslims and Islam in the public sphere. I further discuss the normative visions of Islam that are implied in the Muslim youth and student organizations' ideals of "active citizenship", and how they may be seen to reproduce and challenge the understandings of citizenship that dominate in the Norwegian public sphere. Lastly, the chapter addresses some aspects of the complex relationship between recognition and socio-economic inequality. I argue that in the identity politics of young Muslims, the quest for recognition is intimately linked to a quest for socioeconomic mobility.

The dilemmas of contemporary politics

Is "the politics of recognition", as outlined in chapter one, useful as a master concept for reflections on the disparate array of socio-cultural movements and struggles that are now subsumed under this term, and for understanding the religious identities and practices of young Muslims in particular? An important objection to this endeavour from an anthropological point of view would be that the term "recognition" is too general and vague to be useful to social anthropological analysis. As Baumann (1999: 110) has noted, Taylor has

[162] Taylor (2002) uses the term *social imaginary* to refer to the ways in which ordinary people "imagine" their social surroundings: The social imaginary is that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy (2002: 106). My use of the word refers rather to the dominant discursive framework as articulated by politicians, the media etc, assuming that this discursive framework has consequences for the ways in which ordinary people imagine their social surroundings.

[163] I use the terms citizenship in the broader sense of the word here, as referring to the (social, economic, cultural etc.) rights and duties that are associated with being a Norwegian citizen in the broad sense rather than in the sense of holding a particular passport.

put into the term of "recognition": "a truly staggering range of meanings; awareness, appreciation, respect or merely due respect, acceptance, and even admiration". According to Baumann, the lack of precision in the use of the concept makes it of little analytical use to anthropologists: to postulate that what different (sexual, racial, ethnic, religious etc.) minorities are all about is the struggle for "recognition" seems in fact to say little of the different political scopes, philosophical arguments and assumptions about "difference" or "identity", underlying these different quests. While Baumann's (and other's) scepticism towards making "the politics of recognition" into such a master concept is well taken, I will nevertheless argue that the theoretical debates that have arisen in respect to this topic may help to shed some light on the activities and concerns of the young Muslims I worked with. However, such a perspective must also investigate the "particular" form that this identity politics take, as framed within a particular religious tradition.

In *Justice Interrupts: Critical Reflections on the "Post socialist" Condition,* Fraser (1997) contributes to giving the concept of *recognition* a better defined content. In contrast to Taylor and others, who sees recognition as a matter of self-realization, Fraser objects that since there is "no single conception of self-realization that is universally shared, nor any that can be established as authoritative", we had better regard recognition as a question of justice (Fraser 1998b: 3).[164] To be misrecognized, in Fraser's view, is not simply to be thought ill of, looked down on, or devalued in others' conscious attitudes or mental beliefs. It is rather to be denied the status of a full partner in social interaction and prevented from participating as a peer in social life as a consequence of institutionalized patterns of cultural value that constitute one as comparatively unworthy of respect or esteem. Fraser introduces an analytical distinction, and dilemma, between "redistribution" and "recognition". Whereas redistributive injustice is rooted in the political-economic structure of society (exploitation, economic marginalization and deprivation), the injustice of recognition is cultural or symbolic and rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication (Fraser 1998a). Examples that Fraser gives of such injustice include cultural domination (being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture and/or are hostile to one's own), nonrecognition (being rendered invisible via the authoritative representational, communicative, and interpretative practices of one's own culture) and disrespect (being routinely maligned or displayed in stereotypic public cultural representations and/or in everyday life interaction). Fraser herself maintains that the distinction between redistribution

[164] This is an important point to my analysis, as will become clear from chapter six, where I discuss young Muslims' religious practices in relation to different forms of self-realization.

and recognition is an analytical one, because such issues are usually intertwined (although in complex and various ways) in social life. Although a problematic distinction (Jacobsen and Gressgård 2002; Young 1998),[165] this approach allows us to explore how the struggle of young Muslims in Oslo over the right to define identity/difference, is intertwined with concerns for the very real material, social and cultural consequences that such definitions entail.

In contrast to Taylor, Fraser maintains that the politics of recognition cannot be equated with identity politics, because recognition does not need to involve only affirmation of a group's specificity, but may have to include the transformation of "wholesale patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication that would change everyone's social identity" (Fraser 1998a; 1998b). This is an important distinction to Fraser, as she sees politics of identity as a strategy that tend to reinforce restrictive identities, rather than allowing for a multitude of cross cutting differences. Whereas the politics of identity may be vital in challenging cultural domination, nonrecognition and disrespect, it also tends to essentialize differences between groups, in ways that simultaneously place important restrictions on the behaviour of individual group members. As has been noted by e.g. Yuval-Davis (1997), such restrictions tend to be more forcefully imposed on women, who are often constructed as symbolic as well as biological guarantors for the reproduction of the identities in question (of a nation, an ethnic group, a religion). In contrast to this, Fraser evokes a "politics of difference" that resists such (imposed) social identities as gender, ethnicity etc., in so far as these are seen as restricting and normalizing difference. As Calhoun (1994) notes, this distinction is not a clear-cut one, as the operations of claiming and deconstructing identities tend to coexist and inform each other. The identity politics of young Muslims in this study, exemplifies this co-existence and its tensions, as it involves both questioning and opposing restrictive identity categories, and attempts to re-appropriate, re-claim and re-define identities and differences on the basis of certain visions of what it means to be a Muslim.

The "politics of recognition" serves as a starting point for investigating the activities and concerns of young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS. It should be noted, however, that my analysis is also informed by anthropological perspectives on the formation of ethnic groups and boundaries, and their critique of essentialist understandings of identity and culture that

[165] Arguing against this partition-in-two, Young (1998) claims that it overlooks the continuities between socio-economic and cultural injustice. She suggests that moral philosophers need more nuanced approaches to address the question of justice in contemporary society, and proposes seeing "oppression" in terms of "five faces". Although I agree with Young's critique in many respects (Jacobsen and Gressgård 2002), I find Fraser's approach to be elucidating for the analytical task at hand in this chapter.

underlies much current theorizing about recognition and multiculturalism (cf. Turner 1994b). While addressing the politics of identity of young Muslims, rather than assuming that "Muslims", "immigrants" or "Norwegians" form pre-defined collectivities or groups, I pay attention to the ways in which the boundaries of such collectivities are constructed and contested. I also pay attention to the ways in which young Muslims' identity politics is inscribed in a wider framework of religious references and religious duties and obligations. Through this inscription, Muslim identity politics becomes part of a wider engagement with religious revitalization, which aims at realizing certain internal goods[166] that are deemed important to individuals as well as to society.

The faces and logics of misrecognition in the Norwegian context

Saturday the 17th of January 2004, on the so-called international day of solidarity with girls wearing the hijab,[167] around 300 Muslims gathered in the centre of Oslo under the paroles "Don't touch my hijab",[168] "Hijab is my dignity" and "Language is the key, hijab is no hindrance". They expressed their opinions through a diversity of banners and posters: "Hijab is our pride and joy", "Do not get blinded by my beautiful hijab", "Let the children know their parents religious conviction", "I'm intelligent and qualified", "My hijab hurts no-one", "Media creates harassment and much ado. They do not decide what we shall do", "Hijab is my identity", and "Stop the Islamophobia".

On the day of the demonstration, protest letters were sent to the Norwegian Parliament and to the French Embassy in Oslo. They targeted both the announced ban on the hijab in French schools and the discrimination of women wearing hijabs in Norway and elsewhere. In the months leading up to the event a number of public figures had declared support for (and

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[166] MacIntyre (1985) uses the concept "internal goods" to make a contrast between those goods that can be defined only in terms of the activity of a practice and those "external goods" (such as money, power, respect, or status) that can be defined without reference to a particular practice.

[167] In the middle of the debate on the hijab in French schools in December 2003, Yosef Qaradhawi and several Muslim organizations, in protest against the French law banning religious symbols in school, launched the 17th of January as an international day of support for the hijab. In July 2004, during a seminar in London where, among others, Yosef Qaradhawi and Tariq Ramadan participated, The Assembly for the Protection of *Hijab* declared the 4th of September as a worldwide International *Hijab* Solidarity Day. The 4th of September was a follow up to the 17th of January, when, according to a FOSIS newsletter (The Federation of Student Islamic Societies in the UK and Ireland) events took place in 35 countries around the world, and marked the return to school of girls in France.

[168] The literal translation of the Norwegian slogan is "Don't bully my hijab". It is a rephrasing of the expression "Ikke mobb kameraten min" that was adapted by the Norwegian branch of the SOS-Racism as the translation of the French SOS-racism slogan "Ne touche pas a mon pote" ("Don't touch my buddy"). The slogan was used in different European countries to protest the ban on the hijab; In France "Touche pas à mon foulard", in Belgium "Blijf van mijn hoofdoek" etc.

others opposition to) the French ban. Suggestions by, among others, the Norwegian-Iraqi writer Walid al-Kubaisi,[169] the Progress Party,[170] and the Human Rights Service,[171] that a similar ban should be introduced in Norway, contributed further to bring the hijab-debate to centre stage of media attention. In the same period of time Norway had its own hijab-affair, involving a young woman named Ambreen Pervez, who was fired from her job at a furniture store because her employers, according to the media coverage, worried that her hijab would "create fear and thereby damage sales".

The MSS and the NMU were among the main organizers of the demonstration, together with the Urtehagen Muslim School, different mosques and Muslims organizations, the National Association of Immigrants, and Centre against Ethnic Discrimination. An *imraa* (women's) committee had been working for months to coordinate the demonstration and mobilize the Muslim community. The young women in the committee had been making web pages, hanging up posters, distributing flyers, writing paroles, copying material for distribution, spreading the word in the mosques, encouraging imams to include information in the Friday *khutba*, and writing articles in the newspapers. In addition, they had been busy participating in political meetings and media debates, and the MSS was planning the publication of an informative booklet on Islam that could rectify what was seen as widespread misunderstandings about the hijab.

While defending the right to practice what they saw as a part of their "religious conviction", the banners used at this hijab-demonstration reflect the language of anti-racism, of human rights, and of personal freedom. In various ways they also speak of perceived misrecognition that relate to social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication.[172] They evoke the experience of being made invisible, of being discriminated against, and of being subject to stereotyping and disrespect, and – in opposing this - offers the

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[169] Al-Kubaisi has been a critical voice in Norwegian public debate with respect to Muslims and Islam. He has published *Min tro din myte* (1996) and *Halvmånens hemmeligheter* (1998).

[170] The Progress Party is a populist right-wing party which frequently profiles itself as immigration-restrictive and opposed to multiculturalist policies. Central members of the Party have repeatedly referred to Muslims and Islam as a "foreign" and "threatening" presence in Norwegian society.

[171] The Human Rights Service is a controversial human rights organization whose prime activities are directed towards securing the individual rights of young women with a Muslim immigrant background against their families and communities.

[172] In 2003 the NMU and the MSS filed a complaint to the PFU (Norwegian Press Complaints Commission) about a journalist's article in the newspaper *Natt og Dag* called "A guide to having sex with Muslims". The photo illustrating the article showed a young man in intimate contact with a naked woman with a hijab, set on a background of Urdu letters (including a translated citation from the Quran). The complaint concerned both the use of the quote from the Quran in such a photo-montage, the reference made to Muslims in general as "the sons and daughters of Mohammed", and the general impression created by the article in its use of particularly coarse language. The newspaper apologized. The PUF subsequently affirmed that the article was blameworthy from the point of view of the ethical guidelines for the Norwegian media.

hijab as a source of identity, pride and joy. A thorough analysis of the social imaginaries and structures underpinning the discourses that this hijab-demonstration reacts to would require a genealogical inquiry into a range of institutions, processes and historical ideas that are beyond the scope of this thesis. As a framework for understanding the identity politics of young Muslims, however, some aspects of the contemporary social imaginaries and structures within and in response to which these politics are developed, must be addressed. I will focus here on the level of public discourse, and not on the ways in which social encounters are structured (or not) by these imaginaries. However, the conversations I had with young Muslims indicated that these imaginaries were often actualized in day-to-day social encounters (cf. Andersson 2005; Jacobsen 2002). Young Muslims' identity politics thus not only aim at creating an alternative public representation of Islam and Muslims, it is also linked to their daily interaction with others and the effects that cultural domination, non-recognition and disrespect have for these interactions. I should also note that the following discussion of the social imaginaries in Norwegian public debate remain sketchy and generalized, as it is the response to such social imaginaries I want to investigate, and not the imaginaries in themselves. It may also be objected that I focus only on negative representations of Islam and Muslims, and the way "otherness" is constructed, whereas I do not consider the representations that in different ways oppose and challenge these. This bias is partly a consequence of the fact that it is a certain kind of imaginaries that young Muslims respond to in their politics of recognition. Furthermore, I also believe that the imaginaries I discuss below are fundamental in structuring public debates, so that alternative representations remain embedded in the logic of "othering".

Before I do this, let me offer a very brief description of the particular form of "secularism" of the Norwegian public sphere as a context for the claims for "recognition" articulated by young Muslims. Norway is a social democratic welfare-state with an established state church system. One might argue that historically this state church system has in may ways been an integral part of the social-democratic construction of a master narrative, an encompassing structure, where each member of society is included from birth to death through the rituals of the state church. About 85% of a total population of 4.4 million are members of the Lutheran State Church. Since the 1960s, religious pluralism has been increasingly accommodated. In 1964 the paragraph in the Constitution establishing the Evangelical-Lutheran religion as the public religion of the state, was supplied by the provision that "All inhabitants of the Realm shall enjoy free exercise of religion". Particular arrangements were developed for "faith and life stance communities", notably to compensate for the fact that the budget of the Church of Norway is still importantly integrated in municipal and state budgets. Every religious

community in Norway is entitled to the same amount of financial support per member as the state church receives for each of its members. The way in which the state handles the situation of having a state church in an increasingly pluralized religious context tends to transform minority religions into "membership religions".[173] The Church-State system further entails that a certain number of state authorities have to belong to the Lutheran State Church, and that public schools have a Christian objects clause (cfr. Chapter five).

During the last decades the State-Church system has been repeatedly challenged and is up for revision. These challenges come both from those who wish to secure the freedom of Church from the constraints of (earthly) State power, and from those who base their arguments on the necessity of a "neutral" secular State to ensure "freedom" and "equality" between citizens. Interestingly, opposition has been expressed both by those who fear that the Church would become more "conservative" if it escapes state-control, and by religious minorities who fear that a church-state separation will weaken the general legitimacy of religion in the public sphere. The "secularity" of Norwegian society is of course more than a question of the functional separation of politics and religion. As Asad (2003) argues the "secular" can be understood as a concept that brings together certain behaviours, knowledges and sensibilities in modern life. It is not my aim to investigate how these behaviours, knowledges and sensibilities operate in the contemporary Norwegian context. It should be briefly noted however, that the way in which the category of "religion" is constructed in the Norwegian context is still to large extent as a "communal concern", even as it comes to be conceived of as a plural category, including several religions. Based on her analysis of how Muslims struggle for the right to practice their religion (e.g. with respect to halal-meat, *adhan*) Borchgrevink (2002 p. 21-22, my translation) has noted, that the particular form which secularity takes in Norway:

> […] gives a configuration which is hard to understand: A religious indifference which simultaneously allows Christian interests to impose themselves relatively unrestricted; something unprincipled and unreflected, preventing anticipation and maybe accommodating a mixture of arrogance and sloppiness on the part of the majority.

[173] Due not least to such structurations, membership in registered mosques and Muslim communities increased significantly from the 1980s and onwards (from about 10% of those with a Muslim family background in 1980 to 50% in 1990, and between 60-70 % in 2001) (Leirvik 2004). In addition there are several un-registered Islamic organizations. In comparison, one may note that only about 10% of those of a Muslim background in France are registered in Muslim organizations where there is no equivalent state funding accorded to faith communities. The structuring of Islam as a "membership" religion has contributed to giving mosques and organizations a certain bureaucratic structure. As religious communities which receive state support, they are instructed to perform certain tasks, such as membership registering, writing applications and annual reports (Vogt 2000). The State has also bestowed mosques with certain rights that are otherwise bestowed on the State Church, such as that of conducting marriages and funerals.

As a characteristic of Norway as a "secular" society, one could perhaps best see it as mixing a state-supported Christian communitarian vision of national community[174] with an unreflected secularity in state bureaucratic institutions. This is also expressed by the way in which Norwegian Muslims have forged varying alliances with representatives from the majority religion, from other religious communities and from the secularist humanist association. With resepect to how such issues as halal-meat, *adhan* and the hijab have been dealt with both legally and/or in public debate it is striking how they tend to be treated not in terms of "religious freedom", but in terms of Norwegian civil laws regulating such things as "health" and "security" (Borchgrevink 2002c; Gressgård 2005a). This may be seen as a result of what Borchgrevink refers to as "collective lethargy", "sloppiness" or "arrogance", or, in more structural terms, as Gressgård argues, a consequence of the ethnocentrism in Norwegian integration policies more generally, and the way in which it partciularizes "the other" and universalizes "Us" (see below).

Defining the 'Other': culturalism and neo-realism in contemporary social imaginaries

Social imaginaries related to immigrants in contemporary Norway have been analyzed as being based on an overarching discursive dichotomization of Us (the Norwegians) and Them (the immigrants) that fundamentally structures understandings of identity and difference (Andersson 2005; Gressgård 2005a; Gullestad 2002; Jacobsen 2002). Although public discourses on immigration and integration rest on a complex conglomerate of partly contradictory values, ideas and imaginaries, they tend to merge in an overall discursive framework, which creates Self and Other as mutually exclusive poles: "immigrant" equals "non-Norwegian" whereas "Norwegian" equals "non-immigrant". In Gullestad's (2002) view, this discursive framework constitutes a hegemony, although an unstable one, that constructs "Norwegianness" as an unthematized and undefined normative centre, and "immigrant" as that which is different. In this way, the categories are part of an exclusionary interpretative framework in which the poles mutually constitute and exclude each other.

Central to the discursive dichotomization of Us-Them is the way in which immigrants tend to be ethnicized and culturalized. When social differentiation, inequality and social deviance is thematized in relation to "immigrants", focus is increasingly directed towards "culture" as

[174] This vision is expressed among other things in policy documents where Christianity is referred to as a part of the Norwegian people's "common and unified ways [of being]", and where Christianity, civil virtues and national identity are equated (Borchgrevink 2002c).

an explanation (Andersson 2005; Fuglerud 2001; Gressgård 2005a; Gullestad 2004; Jacobsen 2002; Ålund 1991). On the basis of such culturalized interpretations, solutions as to how problems among immigrants should be handled are isolated from the social power and status hierarchies in society; so that dealing with e.g. "Pakistani gangs" and "family violence" becomes a question of knowing "the Pakistani code of honour". Since the 1990s, this culturalization has been coupled to a "neo-realism"[175] in the representation and administration of immigration-related issues – increasingly regarded as "problems", which must be governed and supervised (Andersson 2005; Fuglerud 2001; Gullestad 2002; Ålund 1991; Ålund and Schierup 1991).[176] With respect to the Swedish context, Ålund (1991) argues that scientific and institutional practices together constitute and support the "neo-realist" shift from "the right to one's own culture", that dominated in the early 1980s, to a focus on "integration problems" (still voiced in terms of cultural difference). Neo-realist politics are still articulated in terms of integration into a pluralist society, but behind the rhetoric of equality, Ålund argues, there is a complex and contradictory immigrant policy directed towards a "planned pluralism"; a technocratic, rational and scientifically controlled form of integration. This "planned pluralism" is governed by a polarization of two ethnicities; a Swedish, institutionalized ethnicity is normativized and the particularisms of immigrant ethnicities are constituted as a deviant contrast to this norm.

A similar dynamics may be found when studying Norwegian integration policies in the 1990s and early 2000s. Politics are articulated in terms of a multiculturalist ideal, but this multiculturalism is defined by the polarization of Norwegian versus Other ethnicities, and Norwegian history, tradition and everyday life is defined as the overall "frame" of cultural pluralism (Gressgård 2005a; Gressgård and Jacobsen 2003; Jacobsen and Gressgård 2002). According to Gressgård, this implies a doubleness in the relation to the "Other" of simultaneous assimilation and culturalization/subordination (Gressgård 2005a). Assimilation here refers to a subsumption of the "other" under one's own standards of judgement, while culturalization refers to constructing the "other" as particular in opposition to the neutral majority. This inevitably leads to a hierarchy between Us and the Other (Gressgård 2005a).

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[175] Neo-realism refers to the shift in parts of the public administration, among certain left-wing politicians who previously supported "multiculturalism" and "tolerance", and certain researchers. A main feature of this neo-realism is that "difference" is regarded as a problem (Fuglerud 2001). Rather than being conceived as a basis for collective participation, "immigrant culture" is increasingly depicted as a problem for individual integration and "freedom". Neo-realism is usually underpinned by claims to depict "reality" in contrast to what is seen as the political correctness and ideological nature of multiculturalist positions.

[176] I do not mean to indicate that there are no legitimate problems of "governance" to be addressed. I am simply arguing against reducing issues related to immigration solely to this dimension.

In the contemporary construction of otherness, this logic may be seen to acquire two main expressions, in "neo-realism" and "neo-racism". In Norway, as in Sweden, scientific and institutional practices together constitute and support a "neo-realist" turn. Fuglerud argues that several of the most highly profiled immigrant researchers have "seen it as their role to deliver arguments to a growing "neo-realism" in public administration"; arguing for limiting cultural pluralism and down-playing the importance of racism (Fuglerud 2001). In this line of research, he argues, the cultural specificities of the majority are made invisible while cultural difference is considered as deviance.[177] Neo-realism as it manifests itself more broadly in public debate is hallmarked by rhetorical urges to "call a spade a spade", and to "face reality". In general, it advocates the position that "integration has failed", a view that has become increasingly accepted in the Norwegian public debate, and warns of the dangers of "ghettoization", the formation of a new underclass, and sometimes of clashes between ethnic and cultural groups and their incommensurable values. Neo-realism calls for an end to previous "naivety", "political correctness" and "snillisme" (a Norwegian neologism that is used to criticize "excessive goodness" which purportedly undermines individual responsibility and leads to a situation where demands are no longer made on individuals) towards the immigrants.

The logics that have been described above may be seen to also find their expression in what has been characterized as neo- or cultural racism, and that was seen to increase throughout Europe in the 1980s and 1990s.[178] "Cultural racism" is characterized by the construction of "otherness", and subsequent practices of exclusion and discrimination, on the basis of "cultural" rather than "bio-racial" difference. According to Gullestad (2002), contemporary Norway has seen an increase in ethnic nationalism in which the focus on a

[177] Fuglerud discusses works of three researchers in particular: Unni Wikan, Sigurd Skirbekk and Inger Lise Lien.

[178] Martin Barker (1981) introduced the term "neo-racism", Pierre Taguieff (1988) has termed the phenomenon "differential racism", and Stolcke (1993; 1995) "cultural fundamentalism". The analytical validity of the terms neo-racism and "cultural racism", and issues pertaining to its newness and relationship to biological racism, has been a matter of intense debate in Norway as well as abroad (see e.g. Andersson 2005; Brottveit 1996; Gilroy 1992; Grillo 1998; Gullestad 2002; Gullestad 2004; Kjelstadli 1999; Wikan 1995). My interest here is not in reviewing the debate on cultural racism, although I believe there are considerable insights to be retained from the discussion of cultural racism and cultural fundamentalism (as detailed by e.g. Schierup 1995; 1993; Stolcke 1995). Among Norwegian scholars, the analytical utility of the term "neo-racism" has been particularly criticized by those who wish to restrict the term racism to its "original meaning", who argue that contemporary constructions of cultural otherness are primarily expressions of universal cognitive processes of ordering and categorization inherent to any social formation, and who see the use of the term racism as hindering public debate about the "real problems" of multicultural societies (Brox 1991; Lien 1997). Although these latter objections are well taken, I still think it important to grasp particular kinds of ordering processes and categorizations and to explore the particular ways in which they produce different relationships of power and domination.

common culture, descent and origin is re-invigorated at the cost of the civil and political aspects of national citizenship. In the revitalisation of Norwegian national identity, she argues, the concept of "culture" is central in maintaining the distinction between Us and Them, and thus of constituting a national identity. The exclusionary effects of this national identity is all the more effective, one might argue, in so far as "sameness" is an important cultural value that in many ways colours social interaction in Norway (Gullestad 2002; Longva 2003). This re-invigoration of national identity has involved a stress in public discourse on the need to reassert "core values" of Norwegian society. The values that are invoked are typically those associated with Christian, Western, and European liberalism, and are typically contrasted with those thought representative of Islam: segregation and suppression of women, veiling, forced/arranged marriages, female circumcision, (religious) intolerance, and authoritarianism.[179]

Although a revitalization of ethnic nationalism in the face of transnational migration is no doubt important to the ways in which such things as cultural difference and integration are conceptualized in the contemporary Norwegian imaginary, the understanding of these latter are also importantly conditioned by what we may term a "neo-liberal" ideology that see the individual rights and free choices of individuals as in opposition to, and threatened by, group identities and cultures. Integration has thus increasingly come to be conceived of largely as a matter of "defending the individual" against the abuse of the minority groups (Brochmann 2003; Eriksen 2002b). The argument is that values such as personal autonomy and individual freedom must form the basis for all citizens. Minorities cherishing value systems that restrict their members' freedom of making their own choices and which emphasize the collective at the expense of the individual, are not acceptable (Gressgård and Jacobsen 2003). This neo-liberal valuation of the individual as against the group is coupled to a universalization of "Norwegian values". The cultural specificities of the majority are made invisible, and "Norwegian national identity" and "Norwegian culture" are not regarded as restrictive in the same way as the identities and "cultures" of immigrants. "We" become the defenders of individual rights and free choices of individuals (modernity), while "They" become the culturalized, subject to group restrictions and power abuse (tradition) (Gressgård 2005a; Gressgård and Jacobsen 2003).

[179] See Grillo (2005) for a discussion of a broader "backlash against diversity" in other European countries.

The emergence of Muslims as the Other

In the last decade, Islam has come to occupy an increasingly important position within the overarching discursive dichotomization of Us (the Norwegians) and Them (the immigrants).[180] On this basis, it has been argued that in Norway, as elsewhere in the West, there has appeared generalized "enemy picture" of Islam, according to which there is an unbridgeable cultural gulf between "Muslims" and "the West" (Eriksen 1995a; Eriksen 2001). In some radical expressions of Norwegian racist discourse, as studied by Bjørgo, migrants and asylum seekers are represented as, "'pioneers' in a Muslim army of conquest. According to this theory, the 'so-called refugees' have come to establish 'bridge-heads' for Islam in Norway. This is part of an evil Muslim conspiracy to establish global Islamic rule" (Bjørgo 1997: 60). Bjørgo concentrates on the rhetoric of the extreme right. Although importantly differing from the discourse of the extreme right, there are other, apparently more acceptable, discourses that contribute to the construction of Muslim otherness.[181] The role of the media is particularly important to the construction of social imaginaries about Us and Them, and several writers have pointed to the largely negative representations of Muslims in Islam in Norwegian media where Islam is often presented as static and monolithic and Muslims as a homogeneous other (Andersson 2005; Dessau 2003; Lindstad and Fjeldstad 1997; Næss 2003; Sultan 2006). Examples can also been drawn from the area of political debate, where in particular the Progress party have repeatedly invoked Muslims and Islam as a menace to Norwegian society and to "national values" drawn from a Christian, Western tradition.

This development, which has been intensified after 9\11, reflects the post cold war development in world politics through which Islam has been singled out as an "enemy" to Western civilization, an enemy at the same time outside (in the Muslim world), and within (in the form of Muslim immigrants). At the level of European nation states, Muslims have been constructed as the ultimate "Others" of national communities and Western democracy in general, and Islam has increasingly been essentialized and portrayed as an immutable and

[180] Baumann (1996: 23) notes that ethnic, national or migratory boundaries are often transformed into religious ones in complex situations of social strife. He argues that because religion faces us with the semblance of absolute dividing lines that most people take for granted throughout their lives, it can be used as a translation for other, more relative, forms of conflict.

[181] During a television debate in November 2004, 97% of the approximately 50 000 callers responded affirmatively to the question that was being debated, "Are Muslims a threat to Western values?" The immediate backdrop for the debate was the killing of the Dutch film-maker Theo van Gogh 2nd November the same year. Although the polls of such TV-shows are by no means statistically representative of the population as such, they both illustrate and contribute to the making of broad categories that construct "Us" as against "the Others" in contemporary public discourse. In the last few years, there has also been an increasing focus on the number of Muslims in Norway, and some public debaters and politicians have "worried" that Muslims will in the close future "outnumber" "Norwegians". In this processes national censuses have become increasingly politicized.

homogeneous cultural system that invariably dictates the behaviour of its followers.[182] Thus constructed, the "Muslim Other" serves to constitute the national identity of European nation states (Lithman 1993). This has been particularly so with regard to discourse on immigration, in which Islam (or at least some versions of it, usually branded "traditionalist" or "fundamentalist") is frequently interpreted as a main obstacle to successful integration and as being in contradiction with "liberal- democratic values".

In the context of these broader developments, Norwegian discourse on immigration in the 1990s increasingly came to focus on Islam as the "source" of cultural confrontation, and issues such as forced marriages, female circumcision and female subordination have been repeatedly associated with Islam and Muslim culture.[183] A succession of "affairs" and events – some of them of local origin, others arising elsewhere – fed into the discursive construction of identity and difference in the Norwegian setting; thus privileging Islam as the negative "Other" of Norwegianness. Religious difference has of course been central to the constitution of ethnic and national identities in historically and geographically disparate spaces, but what

[182] In Britain the notion of "Islamophobia" was introduced in the nineties in the context of the so-called race-relations policy, and used not least by the Runnymede Trust report on Racism and Islamophobia (1997) to define "dread, hatred and hostility towards Islam and Muslims perpetuated by a series of 'closed views' that imply and attribute negative and derogatory stereotypes and beliefs to Muslims". According to the Runnymede Trust, the ways in which this dread, hatred and hostility is expressed includes: negative or patronising images and references in the media and in everyday conversations, attacks, abuse and violence on the streets, attacks on mosques and cemeteries, discrimination in employment, lack of provision, recognition and respect for Muslims in most public institutions. Since then, the term has been widely used to indicate the shift from race and ethnicity towards Islam in contemporary rhetorics and practices of exclusion and discrimination (Allen and Nielsen 2002). It has also gained a certain currency in the Norwegian debate. In my opinion the term Islamophobia is problematic, just as other "phobias", such as homophobia and xenophobia, notably in that it seems to underemphazise structural power relations and locate hostility towards different minorities in a "feeling" of "anxiety", implying that it is an individual, clinical entity rather than a social phenomenon rooted in cultural ideologies and inter group relations.

[183] This development may be noted among other things in the number of books, both scholarly and literary, that focused on Muslims in this time period. In 1995, the same year the MSS was established, the Norwegian anthropologist Eriksen (1995a) argued, along with several international writers at the time, that Islam had succeeded communism as the "enemy" of the West. The same year, Eriksen's colleague Wikan, arguing against this theory, claimed that the reason why "immigrants" and "immigrant problems" had become synonymous with Muslims to most Norwegians was that "Muslims in Norway *are* problematic in many ways" (1995: 85). Among such problems, Wikan argued, was the impression one gets that not all Muslims, but "way too many", distance themselves more strongly from fundamental Norwegian values than other groups, that they practice segregation and that they don't want their children to have Norwegian friends. She also referred to high use of social security and disability benefits, and heavy representation in statistics of violence and criminality of certain Muslim groups (1995: 86). (for a critique of Wikan see e.g. Gullestad 2001b; Gullestad 2002; Jacobsen 2002). In 1996, the year that NMU was founded, Nasim Karim published *Izzet – for ærens skyld*, (Izzet – in the name of honour) (Karim 1996) a novel telling the excruciating story of a seventeen year old Norwegian girl of Pakistani origin who is married by force to save the honour of her family. The same year, the journalist Hege Storhaug's reportage book on forced marriages in Pakistan *Mashallah* (1996) elicited public debate, as did her book, *Hellig Tvang* (1998), on forced marriages among young Norwegians of Pakistani background two years later. In *Min tro din myte – Islam møter norsk hverdag*, another journalist, Walid Al-Kubaisi (1996), defended his right to be critical of "Muslim culture" and Islam without being called a racist, and argued that the cultural background and religious attitudes of Muslims in Norway posed serious problems to Norwegian society.

characterizes the contemporary situation is that "Muslim" increasingly tends to encompass other differences (ethnic, national, cast etc.) and to name a collectivity of people who supposedly share a "Muslim culture". This group and culture is not constituted mainly in contrast to "Christian" or other "religiously based categories", but to ethno-national and politico-geographical categories such as "Norwegian", "European" or "Western" (cf. Bloul 1996; Roy 2004; Saint-Blancat 1997; Schmidt 2002).

In continuity with Orientalist discourses from the colonial era, gender stereotypes have been central to the construction of Muslims as troublesome others. Muslim men alternately assume the position of oppressor and oppressed, victimizer and victimized, subject and object, in public discourse. They are the oppressors of women, the victimizers of women and children, oppressed by the majority, victims of racism and discrimination, and the objects of policies. They are also regularly portrayed as dangerous e.g. Islamists, terrorists, child-robbers, or wife-abusers. Muslim women mostly emerge in the position of oppressed, victimized and object. They are usually portrayed in relation to male Muslim victimizers, but much more rarely as victims of racism and discrimination. Recently Muslim women have also become more visible as "objects" of state policies (e.g. in policies aimed at combating forced marriages, or female circumcision). Whereas Muslim women are thus often constructed as passive victims, hijabi-women are somehow more ambivalent. The "reclaimed hijab" of educated young Muslim women who claim to have chosen it themselves, threatens the ordering process of modernity and its dependence on distinguishing modern from traditional, rational from irrational, autonomy from obedience (Gressgård 2005b). It also threatens common conceptions of what it means to be an "emancipated" or "free" woman and what it means to be Norwegian. Gendered ethnic and religious stereotypes of Muslim women (and men) have thus contributed to make gender questions the most contested area of Islamic otherness in contemporary Norway.[184]

The "otherness" of Muslims and Islam is constructed both as representing a spatial and temporal difference to "Us". Islam and Muslims are seen as "foreign" to Norwegian society, as belonging somewhere else. In a way similar to that identified by Fabian (1983) as operating in the achievement of "Western" hegemony over the "non-West" in the colonial era, otherness is also constructed in temporal terms. In the Orientalist imagination and its culturalist

[184] I stress the word contributed, because the importance of gender questions is not only due to gendered ethnic and religious stereotypes. Debates about gender arrangements are important not only with respect to Muslims and immigrants. My argument here is nevertheless that gender arrangements in many ways have come to symbolize the boundaries between us and them.

successor, distancing in time has been most successfully achieved in modernization theory, where "Muslims" or Orientals are constructed as the traditional others of Modernity. This imaginary is structuring contemporary discourse on Muslims in Europe, which constructs Islam not only as spatially "external" to Europe, and potentially in conflict with its most fundamental values (cf. Asad 2003), but also as somehow representing "the past" of a linear model of development. Such a temporal distancing of Muslim immigrants is also found in anthropological literature, for example in the writings of social anthropologist Wikan (Wikan 1995) on Muslims in Norway, in which she constructs them as "reactionary" ("bakstreverske" literally means striving backwards) and as "living in the past".[185] What emerges through Wikan's argument is that "going backwards into the future" is the same as thinking collectively, and prioritizing the collective over the individual (Wikan 1995: 183, 190). "Any acknowledgement of identity that emphasises the collective at the expense of the individual" Wikan writes "undermines the uniqueness and dignity of the human being (Wikan 1995: 94).

Another way in which such temporal distancing is achieved, is through historicizing cultural differences, by constructing "their" social practices as somehow similar to "our own past" (Larsen 2005). We are thus often told that the immigrants are in fact not that different after all since "We" used to practice arranged marriages just like "They" do, and "We" used to be more collectively oriented just like "They" are. Difference is thus assimilated through the construction of a historically continuous national "We", that "They", on the basis of a temporal asymmetry, may be likened to. The problem with such temporal constructions of difference, as I see it, is that they understand difference in relationship to a unilinear model of development; a model that is firmly rooted in Western modernity. They imply a certain kind of historicity, a temporal movement of social life in which "the future" pulls us forward, and where "the future" in a measure represents something that can be anticipated and *should* be desired, and that at least *the direction* of that desirable future is known (cf. Asad and Mahmood 1996). In this view, all actions that are geared towards conserving daily life or maintain the status quo somehow come to appear as "reactionary".

An important but nevertheless largely overlooked question is how the particular dynamics of these symbolic and structural configurations develop as they are thrown into "Modernity at large". In Appadurai's (1996) terminology, one could perhaps conceptualize cultural racism based on religious difference as transnational ideoscapes that move through different scapes.

[185] It should however be noted, that these characteristics are used by Wikan to speak specifically about Muslims in Norway, and that she argues that Muslims she has studied in the Muslim world are less "reactionary".

Processes of globalization allow historical events[186] like the Rushdie affair, the French headscarf-affairs, the Gulf war, and 9/11, to become transnational, in the sense that they have effects on Muslims in particular localities around the world and on the construction of solidarity and affinity across national boundaries, as well as on the majority populations in countries where Muslim immigrants live, and their understandings of Muslim otherness.[187] In this perspective, conflicts energized by such symbolic and structural configurations are not primarily local, but "implode"[188] in local contexts, finding (g)local expressions akin to the hijab-demonstration in Oslo that was referred to earlier. Such (g)local expressions may in turn be recast into transnational imaginaries.

Such "implosions" have decisive consequences for the identity management of young Muslims in Oslo. Consecutive age groups relate to particular "events", be it on a local, national or global level that in different ways intensify and actualize the experience of *misrecognition*. For the older ones, the Rushdie affair and the Gulf war were important moments of Othering and identity formation (cf. chapter three). At present, 9/11, the war in Afghanistan, the Palestinian Intifada, America's war against Iraq, and the so-called war against terror constitute such vantage points. As argued in the last chapter, young Muslims thus relate to transnational social imaginaries linking their experiences of misrecognition and discrimination locally to the global cause of oppressed Muslims worldwide. Such alignments tend to reinforce the basic dichotomization between Us (Muslims\immigrants) and Them (Westerners\Norwegians), but it may also disrupt it by constructing other oppositions, as in the case of the Iraq war where young Muslims aligned with a broader trans-cultural and trans-religious opposition to the war and the arrogance of the USA.

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[186] These are "historical events" in the Ricoeurian sense (Ricoeur 1981). As Werbner (2002a: 108) notes with reference to Ricoeur, *The Satanic Verses* "'imprinted' its mark on time and history and went 'beyond' its original situation of aesthetic production, becoming 'detached' from its author's expectations or intentions during the process of its production. It opened up unexpected new 'worlds' of reference, and came to be the subject of multiple readings".

[187] On the 12th of September the NMU received two hate e-mails in their guest-book on the Internet: "Carpet bomb all Muslim areas in the world" was the message from "Uzi" and then "I got that damned Quran from the library in town and burned it together with other garbage – under great cheering from friends and people I know. Next Ramadan my little private plane will be loaded with pig blood and crashed in Mecca".

[188] I take this expression from Appadurai's (1996) discussion of "ethnic implosions" as a more useful approach to ethnic confrontations than the primordialist model. Drawing on Rosenau's (1990) concept of "cascades" and Tambiah's (1990) discussion of focalization and transvaluation, Appadurai suggests that macro events (or cascades) "work their way into highly localized structures of feeling by being drawn into the discourse and narrative of the locality" (p.153). Appadurai uses "implosion" in a structural as well as a historical sense; it relates to the ways in which pressures and ripples from increasingly wider political arenas are folded into local politics; and to the ways in which the local political imagination is increasingly subject to the flow of large events (cascades) over time, events that influence the interpretation of mundane occurrences and gradually create a repertoire of adversarial (ethnic) sentiment (p. 156). Although Appadurai uses this theoretical model to understand the outburst of ethnic violence, I believe it is more broadly enlightening to the issue of contemporary processes of Othering.

Constructing and contesting Ourselves as the Other

In critical dialogue with Taylor's perspective on recognition, Andersson (2005) argues that experiences of being constructed as Others in the dominant discourse spur different kinds of identity work[189] among "youth of immigrant background". She analyses the ways in which youth's identity work in different contexts (i.e. the Pakistani Student Society, a multiethnic sporting club, and a "street gang") is conditioned by what she refers to as the categorical identity of ethnicity, opposing Us, (the natives), to Them, (the immigrants). According to Andersson "ethnic identity" may in this perspective be defined as a categorical identity that, in the case of immigrants and refugees, point to large aggregates of people sharing one specific characteristic; that is their assumed difference from the natives. Whether this difference is referred to in terms of ethnic background, race or culture, the crucial point is that it designates an "Other-identity" (Andersson 2005). Andersson argues that the attribution of Otherness, as supplied from majority-minority interaction, both in direct and indirect forms, provides a potential for solidarity and identifications between the youth. This potential for common identification, she argues, does not rest on internalized patterns of ethnic values, but on the common *experience* of being treated, seen and talked about as the Other.

Such ascriptions of Otherness are adopted and rejected, resisted and celebrated by those to whom they are supposed to apply. Some aspects of the ways in which the young Muslims' I worked with identified with, refused or questioned such imposed categorical ascriptions of an "ethnic Otherness" are worth noting. First, it should be noted that young Muslims of the so-called second generation are somewhat ambivalently located within the dominant discourse opposing "Us" to "Them". Most often they are categorized as belonging to the "ethnic others" (as immigrants, or foreigners) of the Norwegian majority, at other times they are included in the ethnic Norwegian majority (in opposition to the "parental generation" of migrants). Often, they are categorized as neither-nor, or as being "between two cultures". Inhabiting this position *in-between* means being exposed to a set of often contradictory discourses about how they – as a category – *are* and how they *should be.*[190] Sometimes, the young understood being

[189] Andersson (2005) understands identity work as a fluid and ongoing process of self-interpretation conditioned by the interpretational frames that fellow actors and contemporaries (such as politicians, journalists and others) use for judgements of "who" one is, "why" one acts in a specific way, and "how" one's conduct can be explained by a specific identity category.

[190] They have been described as rootless, between two cultures and hybrids, as criminal gang-members and suffering victims of racism and patriarchal traditions. They have been expected to integrate and said to represent the hope for the multicultural society – or "the colourful community" as the saying once went in Norway.

a Norwegian and e.g. a Pakistani as mutually exclusive, and defined themselves as mostly e.g. Moroccan or Norwegian, or in terms of percentages as 90% of this and 10% of that. At other times, as already argued in chapter three, the in-between-ness was re-combined as hyphenations, e.g. Norwegian-Moroccan, and as a basis for a "multicultural identity".

Broader categories of Otherness, constructed on the basis of a common otherness from "the Norwegian", were also points of self-identification. Researchers on multiethnic townships and youth groups in Oslo have noted that youth with an immigrant background often refer to themselves as "foreigners", thus locating themselves within the dominant discourse (Andersson 2005; Jacobsen 2002; Vestel 2003). This label is not associated with formal citizenship, but with identification, and with experiences of "Otherness" within Norwegian society. In Andersson's (2005) study, "the city strollers" were those who most commonly used this term to position themselves, whereas students and athletes less commonly referred to themselves by the term foreigner. The young Muslims in my study used the terms "foreigners" and "immigrants" as self-categorization in some contexts. Sometime the terms marked not only a common other-position, but a collective identity that was contrasted to being Norwegian, and that related to a "common culture" in contrast to "Norwegian culture". For instance, the young would speak of themselves as "we immigrant youth", "I was the only foreigner in my class" or make statements such as "we foreigners respect elderly people" or "we foreigners don't drink alcohol". Because "we" are not Norwegian, "we" are "us".

Within the overall dichotomy, marking "Us" of from "Them", however, social life includes a host of expressions marking the border, attesting its salience in structuring the perception of difference but also its potential porousness. These practices of categorization are more flexible than the overall "Us" — "Them" dichotomy in the sense that it is behaviour, rather than persons, that are allocated to the different categories. Marking boundaries and categorizing certain ways of thinking and acting in particular situations, these practices of categorization are situationally defined. The categorization of individuals within this system depends partly on who participates in the interaction, partly on the codes that different social contexts entail in terms of for instance behaviour and appearances. The way in which young Muslims identify with a "we" that is defined in contrast to the Norwegian majority, also

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Muslim immigrant parents, on their side, have often expected their children to be upwardly socially mobile, to guard family values and traditions and ensure cultural and religious continuity. Muslim preachers and intellectuals in Europe have expected them to revitalize and reform the Islamic tradition into more dynamic and "modern" forms.

reflects the overlapping and multiple groups they identify with. “We” may thus be “the foreigners”, “the immigrants”, “the Somalis”, “the Muslims” etc. in different contexts.

Concepts like “overintegrated”, “potato”, and “whitey”, are used by youth to describe and refer to the ethnic majority, but also to those among minority youth who are considered having become “too Norwegian”, “Wanna-Be-Norwegians”, or not expressing pride over their own background or belonging to a minority group. Potato refers to what is typically Norwegian, usually in a negative sense, and is analogous to derogatory terms such as “Paki”. Both majority-Norwegians and foreigners are categorized as potatoes when they behave in a manner associated with the typically Norwegian (e.g. eat their packed lunch without proposing to share[191], pay back five kroner they have borrowed, have different romantic/sexual partners, or get drunk). An example is Sarah, who was often talked about as “potato”, “overintergrated”, or “too Norwegian” when she voiced her opinion on Muslim men and their lacking respect for gender equality (*likestilling)*. Concepts like overintegrated, potato or whitey thus serve not only to reproduce boundaries between “Us” and “Them”, but also to patrol the borders of acceptable behaviour and boundaries towards becoming “too Norwegian”.

References to coloured and racialized terms appear alongside those of “ethnicity” and “cultural difference”. African youth, and sometimes also Asian youth, refer to themselves, and are referred to, as “black” or “coloured”. Pakistani youth sometimes name each other “Paki” and Pakistanis in general “the Pakis”, and derive terms such as Paki-problems, and Paki-mentality. Some youth of Pakistani origin have suggested a parallel to the ways in which blacks once reclaimed the term “nigger”, and that the word Paki has lost its effect as an abusive term among whites because Pakistanis themselves have started using it. Although aware of the possibilities of the above-mentioned strategy, youth of Pakistani background in my study tended to use “Paki” in a less subversive way. It usually referred to those who were “typical Pakistani” in a negative sense, and whom they distanced themselves from (cf. Andersson 2005). “Paki” was also used more generally as synonymous to “foreigner” or “immigrant”, as when Sarah, who is of Turkish origin herself, affectionately addressed and referred to her son as “my little Paki”.

In addition to this kind of more or less subversive reclamation of the language of otherness, joking is a common way in which stereotypes are brought to the fore, shared and subverted. During fieldwork I heard an amazing number of “ethnic jokes”, participated in imitating

[191] The Norwegian lunch packet is a central symbol of Norwegianness and often the issue of contestation between minority families and public institutions such as schools and kindergartens.

different immigrant ways of speaking Norwegian with a funny accent, and joined in "theatrical" enactments of stereotypes in public space, playing with the assumed fears and prejudices of the majority population. On one such occasion, a woman wearing a hijab held forth a picnic knife in a threatening manner while we were waiting for the ferry to take us home from an NMU-picnic. This was a direct response to a newspaper article that was problematizing the issue of integration of immigrants. On other occasions, young Muslims would call me and introduce themselves as the Norwegian security services (or Hamaz) – thus alluding to the construction of Muslims as a threat to national security. Such joking usually refers to and comments upon assumed stereotypes and racism in the majority population, and serves to make these appear less humiliating or threatening to the youth. It also addresses difficulties that the young experienced in relation to their families and the "ethnic communities" they identify with, notably in relation to marriage, moral double standards, rumours, and gender inequality.

With the shift towards a focus on Islam as the culturalized Other *par excellence*, "Muslim" has increasingly come to be constituted as a "quasi-ethnic" group marked by their "foreign origin". Such processes of ethnicization constitute a point of identification for youth with a Muslim immigrant background. As they were categorized together on the basis of their religious "difference", young Muslims increasingly became aware of their Muslim identity as something they had in common. We may thus say that the dominant representations of Otherness, as a basic distinction between "Us" and "Them", and the culturalizations such constructions of Otherness entail, are partly confirmed and integrated into the self-understandings of the young Muslims I worked with. It is in this sense that we may speak of Muslim identity in Norway as a process of ethnogenesis or the constitution of a "new" or "symbolic" ethnicity, based on reference to a common religious heritage (cf. Naguib 2001). It is this construction that allows us to understand why young Muslims speak of "Norwegians" as a contrast to "Muslims" (as in an article in the NMU where a conversion story is entitled "Was Norwegian, became a Muslim", or as when the young speak of having had a Norwegian period before having "come back" to Islam, see chapter six), and that allows young with an immigrant background to identify as Muslims and "defend Islam" regardless of their religious beliefs and practices. While it is important to note this process of ethnogenesis, the analogy with "ethnicity" should not be pushed too far. As I have pointed out in the above two chapters, the tendency to focus on a common religious tradition is also related to a broader process of Islamic revival, where Islamic identity is premised on individual identification with a "universal" religious tradition that transcends ethnic and cultural differences, and that

opposes the tendency to reduce being Muslim simply to (an aspect of) ethnic identity, and want to suggest it rather as a "way of life".

The NMU, the MSS and the politics of recognition

In light of the above discussion, I suggest to see the NMU and the MSS as a context in which young with an immigrant background mobilize a politics of identity on the basis of the *experience* of being treated, seen and talked about as the Other. I do not see the common identification of young Muslims as resting on such experiences of Otherness alone. On the contrary, as I have already argued, common identification is also enabled and energized by the contemporary Islamic revitalisation and the forceful imaginary of identification offered by the "global *umma*". However, I argue that young Muslims identity politics is nevertheless importantly energized by experiences that relate to cultural domination, nonrecognition, and disrespect. Such experiences are grounded both in the local context as related to immigration politics, racism and discrimination, restrictions on religious freedom, and the media coverage of Muslims, and more broadly, in the "global" context that currently shape identification with the conditions of Muslims across a global Muslim community. Although these experiences are sometimes related to unjust distribution of wealth and material resources, they most often relate to cultural domination, nonrecognition, and disrespect.

An important part of the activities and goals of both the NMU and the MSS are directed towards changing the cultural patterns of representation, interpretation and communication of Muslims in the Norwegian public debate. They share the basic premises that Taylor identifies as the central thesis underlying the "politics of recognition". The negative images of Muslims that are mirrored back to them by the society at large may lead to negative self-images among individual Muslims, they argue. Negative representations of Muslims in the media, and experiences of discrimination and racism in everyday life make young Muslims "insecure" and "shameful" of themselves. As a response to this, many try to "pass" as Norwegians, leaving Islam and their ethnic identity, until they finally realize that they are not in fact accepted as "the same". This realization is seen to have a variety of results, including that of "falling out" of society and becoming a confused and "maladapted" youth. Another result, and this is how many young Muslims view their own Islamic activism, is to strengthen one's Muslims identity as a way of assuming difference rather than attempting to erase it. Young

Muslims thus partly understand their own activism in terms of "resistance" to racism and discrimination towards Muslims locally, nationally and globally.[192]

The NMU in particular focuses on providing a "secure" identity for Muslim youth. The ways in which such identity is sought provided for, is in many ways reminiscent of consciousness-raising in other groups working against oppression (notably the women's movement and the black movement). This is so in the sense that individual experiences of misrecognition are located within patterns of oppression structuring these experiences. People who frequent the organizations are made aware of "Islamophobia", "racism", and "discrimination" towards Muslims and such phenomena are explained in relation to larger structural schemes within a global order, where Muslims are generally despised and persecuted. Similarly, social ills and intergenerational conflicts experienced by the young are mapped on to a certain understanding of the world, in which the loss of Islamic moral and identity is seen as a structuring root cause. The infamousness of immigrant youth is explained by reference to "identity problems", and anti-social behaviours are seen partly as consequences of the fact that these youth are trying to deny "who they really are"; trying to conform to Norwegian norms without ever being really accepted.

As Young (1990) notes, "consciousness raising" and the affirmation of a positive group identity are central to the politicization of identities. Both the NMU and the MSS engage in the construction and affirmation of a positive group identity, as exemplified by slogans such as, "We are Muslims, and proud of it" and "Hijab is our pride and joy". The negativity of the social categorizations and group identities that mark them in majority discourse is countered by a reversal of the value attached to being a Muslim and to symbols of Muslim identity. Similarly to other groups who engage in various forms of identity politics, young Muslims "find themselves defined from the outside, positioned, placed, by a network of dominant meanings they experience as arising from elsewhere […]" (Young 1990: 59). In this respect their identity politics may be seen as an active response to the experience of being marked as different, and an effort to "rename" difference (cf. Raj 2000: 538). By asserting a positive meaning for their own identity, groups like the NMU and the MSS "seek to seize the power of naming difference itself, and explode the implicit definition of difference as deviance in relation to a norm, which freezes some groups into a self-enclosed nature" (Young 1990:

[192] Historically, Islam has been at the core of various movements of resistance; e.g. to colonialism and in black American opposition to the racial dominance of white Christians in movements such as the Nation of Islam.

171). Just like black activists once stated that "black is beautiful", the Muslim youth of Norway are Muslim, and proud of it.[193]

Young Muslims assume that "secure identity" is not only vital to individuals. It is needed in order to participate and integrate in the society at large. This is so in so far that multicultural and multireligious dialogue is assumed to be dependent on a "rooting", a firm and basic identity from where to engage others.[194] But given the logic of exclusion and inclusion of the "national order of things" and the dominant discourse on difference, ethnic identities (whether e.g. Norwegians or Pakistanis) appear unable to provide such a firm and basic identity for youth with an immigrant background. In this respect, privileging Muslim identity provides an alternative that allows youth to assume their position "in-between", and redefine the difference it marks. This finding is confirmed in the literature on the Islamic activism of Muslim youth in other European contexts, where Islam is described as a mode of identification that allows youth with an immigrant background to transcend the ethnic and cultural dilemmas of the migrant context, and to inscribe themselves more fully in the new European context (Cesari 1998; Fadil 2005; Khosrokhavar 1997; Roy 2004; Vertovec and Rogers 1998).

Identity politics and the problem of essentialism

If we assume, as many theories of identity do, that identity always implies some kind of boundaries against the other (whether as abjection in the psychoanalytical post-modern jargon, or as boundary-maintenance in Barthian ethnicity-theories), the problem arises how positive elements of group affinity can be articulated without essentializing "them" and without raising boundaries (Baumann 1999; Werbner 1997; Young 1990). It has been rightly noted, that identity politics may entail a pressure towards homogenization and a suppression of internal difference. Such pressure towards homogenization and strategies for coping with internal difference, also arise in identity politics mobilized around Islam, and sometimes intertwine with theological discourses that seek to define the limits of the correct and legitimate form of Islamic practice. In this process, relations of power and patterns of exclusions are simultaneously (re)produced and challenged. Some Islamic (and particularly

[193] In the magazine *Young Muslim* (nr. 1, 2000), the "Muslim Youth of Norway" logo is followed by the phrase "…and we are proud of it".

[194] This idea reflects the dominant notion in the multicultural policies of the state, in which a firm knowledge of "our common cultural heritage", including notably "our Christian-humanistic heritage" is seen as fundamental to the enhancement of an "open" multicultural society, implying that lack of such knowledge will lead towards a more "closed", non-tolerant society.

Islamist) organizations have thus tended to produce a kind of "reversed Orientalizing" discourse in which the Occident:positive::Orient:negative is reversed, and the "West" emerges as the negative mirror-image of Islamic virtues (cf. Schmidt 1998). This was sometimes reflected in the ways in which young Muslims spoke of themselves in contrast to a representation e.g. of "the West" (as materialistic and egoistic), or "the Western woman" (as over-sexualized and objectified). Just as the dominant majority discourse, such discourses, when articulated in the immigrant context, produce their own identity in a negative relationship to the "other", and thus define difference as exclusion and opposition (Immigrant vs. Norwegian, Muslim vs. Christian/Norwegian/Western). "Muslim" often takes on an ethnic aspect in this context, as an antonym to Norwegian rather than to Christian, and sometimes as a synonym to immigrant.[195] However, it should be noted that these processes cannot be seen as a symmetrical reversion, in that they are played out in a public sphere structured by the hegemonic discourse of Otherness as discussed above.

Although both "Muslim identity" and "Islam" may sometimes appear as homogenous and given categories in the identity politics of the NMU and the MSS, the politicized identities that manifest themselves in identity politics are results of complex negotiations of identity/difference (cf. Werbner 1997). They are essentializations situated in a particular *time and space,* and may in different ways, situations and to different people at different times of life come to serve as a basis of identity politics.[196] For one, the focus on Islam does not mean that young Muslims do not engage outside the organizations in identity politics related to e.g. gender, ethnicity, or in other forms of politics. Secondly, the discourse on *misrecognition* within the NMU and the MSS brings together various struggles over identity/difference that relate not only to being Muslim, but also to being an immigrant, a woman, black etc. Identities related to various differences are thus mobilized partly in relation to particular contexts and what people feel they need to react to. This intersection and multiplicity of identities within the identity politics of young Muslims, defies any simplified concept of "recognition" as the self-realization or self-affirmation of a homogeneous and static group identity.

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[195] The oscillation between an understanding of difference as opposing two bounded, homogeneous blocs and understandings that privilege overlap, variation and heterogeneity is significantly related to the impact of mediated discourses and events (both local and translocal) that regularly reinforce the former understanding of difference and more rarely the latter.

[196] There are obvious parallels to what is spoken of as "strategic essentialism" in that young Muslims consciously focus on what they have in common and, as we saw in chapter three, claim that "working together" is more important than "which imam people follow". However, as will become clear, I argue that this also needs to be seen in relation to the production of "truth" and "essentials" in Islam and to the process of internal reform.

Critics have argued that much of the contemporary debate on recognition and multiculturalism pays too little attention to the way in which individuals are constituted at the intersection of differences, and how this complexity impacts on experiences of misrecognition. The situational and multiple character of identity/difference must be taken into consideration, even when groups (re)present themselves in terms of fixed boundaries and a given culture or religion. This touches a core difficulty in Taylor's theorizing of the politics of recognition and in particular in the way in which it has come to be used to underpin "multiculturalism" as a normative ideal and political strategy. The way in which the concept of culture tends to merge with that of ethnic identity (e.g. in Taylor's use of the concept ethno-cultural groups) ignores a fundamental insight in Barthian theories of ethnicity (Barth 1969): that ethnic groups, rather than being pre-defined collectivities who share a given culture, are constructed in a process of cultural boundary making. The way in which some theories of recognition picture people as somehow unambivalently belonging to a given group that share a given culture or religion, risks, to quote Turner on the matter:

> [...] essentializing the idea of culture as a property of an ethnic group or race; it risks reifying cultures as separate entities by overemphasizing their boundedness and mutual distinctness; it risks overemphasizing the internal homogeneity of cultures that potentially legitimize repressive demands for communal conformity; it tends to fetishize them in ways that put them beyond the reach of critical analysis – and thus of anthropology (Turner 1994b: 407).

This is important when it comes to understanding the identity politics of Muslim youth, because the question of what it is that should be recognized is inherently contested and continually negotiated. According recognition will thus always depend upon by whom and how "Islam" or "Muslim identity" is defined and represented. The politics of recognition of the young Muslims I worked with may in this perspective be seen as a process of mediation between such contradictory definitions. In the case of the young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS, they do not want recognition for a variety of traditions that their parents and other Muslims groups deem to be constitutive for Islam and Muslim identity. On the contrary, they use (as will be discussed more carefully in the next chapter) Islam and Muslim identity to challenge a range of such practices, while at the same time promoting a unitary Muslim identity. In this, they must struggle with actors representing other claims to which Muslim identities and practices should be recognized, and to what Islam really is. It is within these dynamics that the "Muslim identities" for which "recognition" is sought are constituted.

Religious practice in identity politics

The analysis presented so far in this chapter should not be read as implying that young Muslims' identification with Islam is simply a "reactive" identity, determined by its opposition to current negative representations of Islam and Muslims. The NMU and the MSS were established at a time when Islam had come to occupy central stage in the construction of "otherness", a process that no doubt contributed to centring young Muslims' identity politics on Islam, rather than for instance ethnicity or "race". The fact that developments in the Muslim world in the aftermath of colonialism had already established Islam as a particularly powerful idiom for opposition and resistance towards domination certainly stimulated such a development. We cannot assume, however, that some kind of misrecognition or oppression focusing on a particular trait (skin colour, culture, religion, gender etc.) automatically generates a mobilization of identity politics around that trait, or that such politics will take the same form regardless of what one mobilizes around (although there are certainly some identifiable social logics). In order to understand the particular form that young Muslims' identity politics comes to take, we must inquire into not only the imposed or prescribed identities they refuse, but also into the identities that they claim and the kind of persons that they aspire to be on the basis of such identities. The identity politics of the young Muslims I worked with was inscribed in a wider framework of religious references and religious duties and obligations, where religious practices and symbols were not only, or even primarily, defined in terms of identity politics. Through this inscription, Muslim identity politics became part of a wider engagement with religious revitalisation, which aimed at realizing certain goods that were deemed important to individuals as well as to society. The religious practices that become central to identity politics (see below) were thus not only "functional" in countering misrecognition, but went together with the construction and disciplination of an Islamic ethical and moral subject (cf. Mahmood 2001; 2003; 2005) (see chapter five and six). In the following, I will pursue the subject of how certain religious practices come to be mobilized in identity politics, and how identity politics thus comes to be represented not just as a quest for recognition, but as a religious duty and obligation, central to what it means to be a good Muslim.

Jihad and dawa in identity politics

When questioned about their religious practice, the young Muslims would list "defending Islam", "trying to present a better picture of Islam", or "working to counter stereotypes", along with the five daily prayers and fasting in Ramadan. Countering negative images of Islam, in the media, politics, the classroom or the streets – by writing, speaking or providing a good example through one's acts – has thus come to be seen as a fundamental aspect of a person's religious practice. "Defending Islam", in the sense of countering negative representations, was sometimes referred to as a form of *jihad*.[197] To defend Islam, to promote a good image through participation in media and debates, to learn and teach others about Islam, and to strive towards being a good role model and an active participant in society, are central to this understanding of representation as a kind of *jihad.* In an interview with Abid, he told me about the aspects of religious practice that were most important to him. Besides *salah*, the "pillars of Islam" were of little relevance to him. As he had no income he could pay no *zakat* and the pilgrimage to Mecca was still years ahead. He did observe the fast during Ramadan, but after all, Ramadan only comes once a year. What he stressed, however, was the importance of defending Islam:

> I feel that I have a huge responsibility in defending Islam. Especially after all the shit that happened lately.[198] And I do feel that I'm doing a decent job. Because it is my job, I feel, to get rid of the misunderstandings that arise, and there are certainly a number of them. It is my responsibility to show another picture of Islam. In half an hour I can get rid of a lot of those misunderstandings and get people to become more open [...]. In the magazine we publish, I do this through symbolism. For instance I take pictures of women who are a bit free to illustrate that our girls are not really that oppressed. For the next issue we were planning on an article on Islam and knowledge using four students. I suggested they should all be girls, so that we would show that there are after all many girls who get an education and choose untraditional professions. But the others on the board disagreed - it was too extreme - it had to be two boys and two girls. I use a lot of energy, trying to show another picture of Islam. We have to, since there are so many misunderstandings. To defend Islam is kind of like my *jihad*. But then again I often feel somewhat hypocritical when I do things that are against my religion while at the same time defending it. But I've heard that God shows quite a bit of understanding for us growing up here: things are less strict, although we shouldn't take advantage of it as I feel that I do sometimes. You think that you're so smart, and you forget about the fact that God is actually watching. And then you think that He shows understanding again and again.

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[197] This use of *jihad* as a concept covering any productive activity that Muslims undertake, on their own initiative, to improve the well-being of the Islamic community, importantly resonates with the understanding of *jihad* in contemporary revivalist movements such as e.g. the Muslim Brotherhood.

[198] "The shit" Abid refers to includes 9/11 and a series of "affairs" related to forced marriages, so-called honour-killings and female circumcision.

"Defending Islam" is generally seen to depend on individual and collective efforts to acquire and spread knowledge of "true Islam". It is important to note, however, that many of the young I worked with worried that having to defend Islam against misrepresentations prevented them from the broader engagement in society they initially envisaged for their organizations. It forced them to concentrate on issues that were defined as problematic by the majority-society, rather than on broader concerns with how for instance environmental issues, education, ethics, and community life could be addressed from an Islamic point of view. The defensive position thus reinforces a more general dynamic in the Norwegian public sphere, in which people from the immigrant population are given public voice primarily on "immigrant-related issues", and less so on issues that relate to envisaging a "good society" more broadly speaking (cf. Rogstad 2002b).

Dawa work is one particular activity through which young Muslims seek to acquire and spread knowledge of "true Islam". The term *dawa* (call, invitation, and appeal) has historically encompassed a wide range of meanings in different Islamic traditions. As it has come to be used in contemporary revivalist Islam it carries the meaning of the duty of some or all members of the Islamic community to convey Allah's message to humanity, and encompasses a wide range of activities towards fulfilling this duty. Some recent interpretations of *dawa* in Islamic revivalist movements have increasingly come to stress that *dawa* is the obligation of every individual (*fard al-ain*), a "civic duty" so to speak (Hirschkind 2001; Mahmood 2005). *Dawa* may be conceived primarily in terms of encouraging fellow Muslims in the pursuit of greater piety in their lives or as also including conveying the message to non-Muslims. This distinction is of particular importance in non-Muslim societies, and sometimes, as in the Norwegian context, implies that internal and external *dawa* take different forms. With reference to Poston (1992) Otterbeck (2003) distinguishes between *dawa* activities that are face-to-face and mediated. He further makes a distinction between passive and active *dawa*. Passive *dawa* simply refers to the act of being visibly Muslim and provide a good example, showing Muslims as "good people". Active *dawa* may be both face-to-face (e.g. giving *dars*, door-to-door calling, or talking to friends and colleagues) and mediated (writing or publishing other mediated materials on Islamic issues). Although pointing to some important modalities of *dawa* work, the distinction between active and passive *dawa* is somewhat misleading in so far as "being visibly Muslim" and "providing a good example" are far from "passive" undertakings.

The young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS have increasingly come to see Muslims in Europe as having a particularly important role in doing *dawa*. The key relationship between

Muslims and non-Muslims, and – usually more importantly – between those who are nominal Muslims and those who are practising Muslims – is thus one of "calling" to Islam. The focus on education is important in this respect, both in terms of passing Islam on to future generations and in terms of countering misrepresentations of Islam. The increasing importance of the concept of *dawa* among young Muslims in Oslo reflects the theological development by which certain Islamic scholars have sought to solve the problem of Muslims living outside the abode of Islam, by characterizing Europe as *dar-al-dawa*, and Muslim minorities as engaged in the work to spread Islam (cf. chapter three). As Nabil puts it:

> Muslims need to realize that they have a task here in Norway; to do *dawa*. […] A Muslim leader told us the same thing at a seminar: You have a job to do in Norway! You are to be exemplary models! What he meant was that we should be such models both to Norwegian society and to the Muslim community.

Dawa is dependant on both self-education and the education of others. In order to provide a good example through one's acts, one has to know what it takes to be a good Muslim, and to cultivate the virtues that are thus learned. As Abid's reflections on the matter indicate, failure to live up to religious standards while at the same time encouraging others to follow them, or defending Islam in light of them to non-Muslims, may be experienced as a form of hypocrisy. This is related not least to the ways in which *dawa* is premised not only on the ability to speak to people about Islam, but on having cultivated certain virtues that allows one to do *dawa* by being a exemplary model for others. In order to do *dawa* properly, one must cultivate certain virtues both when it comes to being able to realize Islam in one's own daily life, and in terms of learning to invite people to the way of God in the right manner (e.g. by being prepared to answer the most common questions about Islam, by using certain forms of e.g. rational argumentation, "advertising", comparing the advantages of Islam to the disadvantages of Christianity etc.).

Two ongoing concerns among MSS and NMU members are reflected in the *dawa* courses that have been arranged the last couple of years. The first is the notion that young people of Muslim background are "far away" from their religion, and need to be called back to Islam. There is thus the aspect of internal Islamizing activity. Secondly, the *dawa* courses address the concern with how Islam is presented to, and understood by, the Norwegian non-Muslim majority. Acquiring knowledge of "How to present Islam to non-Muslims" (the title of the *dawa* course held by the MSS) is a way to increase individual capacities to defend and ameliorate images of Islam. To Nabil, *dawa* work has become especially important because of the current situation:

> Many Muslim scholars have said that now is the time for *dawa*. Because very many people regard Islam as a threat and it is important to show that it is not, that Islam is not about terror-bombings. Like the girls who are very often portrayed as pitiful; it is important that they come forth and show that they are not. And the same for boys, we are all presented as terrorists.

In his own *dawa* work, Nabil was thus concerned with presenting a positive image of Islam to non-Muslims:

> Last week a group of aged people who were engaged against racism came to our mosque to attend a lecture on Islam. They commented upon the fact that Africans, Pakistanis and others were gathered together in the mosque. Since they asked me, and one of the national newspapers was present, I said: there is no racism in Islam. I was very conscious not to say Muslims [laughs dryly] - because there are of course racist Muslims – and that's what I said. So I referred to a citation from the Quran[199] that I had learned by heart, you know. But on such occasions I am playing a role, as an advertisement for Islam in a way. Especially when I'm doing *dawa* work, it is a bit like an advertisement.

Such "advertisements" are not uncommon when young Muslims represent Islam to non-Muslims. As in this case, they are often based on distinguishing "real Islam" from the actual practices of Muslims that are categorized either as "extreme variations" or as "cultural Islam". Another strategy that is frequently used is that of confronting negative stereotypes of Islam by attaching them to ethnic communities and "cultures", rather than to the religious community and Islam: Pakistanis may be racists, but there is no racism in Islam. Pakistanis may not let their daughters decide whom to marry, but there is no coercion in Islam. A range of "problems" can thus be ascribed the label "cultural tradition" in contrast to "Islam". In doing this, Nabil and other young Muslims, represent Islam as a transcendent, unchangeable and coherent truth. Its coming-into-being in different localized cultural forms is viewed as a corruption of authenticity that breaks with the normative ideals of "real Islam". In so doing they contribute to establishing a norm for what being a good Muslim should entail (not being a racist, not forcing your children into unwanted marriages etc.).

In *dawa* work, representations of an "ideal" Islam are often contrasted to "real others" (whether it is the West, Christianity, Norwegian society, or e.g. the Pakistani community). Whereas Islam refers to an *ideal,* "the others" are not depicted likewise as possessing alternative ideals. Such a "slip of comparison" confronts a likewise slip of comparison in the Norwegian majority discourse in which an ideal "we the Norwegians/we the Christians",

[199] Nabil refers to Quran 49:13: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)". Often, only the first line of this Sura is cited when the argument is made that there is no racism in Islam.

representing gender equality, individual freedom and human rights is compared to "their reality". In social situations were young Muslims confront this idealized representation of Norwegian society, the picture of Islam and Muslims tend to be more idealized than in "closed" forums, where such idealized representations are more frequently subject to debate and contestation.[200] *Dawa* work, as a means through which young Muslims invite Muslims or non-Muslim colleagues or friends to discuss Islam with them, to some extent encourages debate and dialogue. On the other hand the practice of *dawa* is structured by the context of identity-politics in such a way that the content of such debate and dialogue remains importantly determined by the logic of idealized representation and counter-representation. In this context of making *dawa* to non-Muslims as a means of changing dominant representations of Islam, *dawa* activities thus tend to limit the aspect of discussion and deliberation that e.g. Hirschkind (2001) has shown to be a vital part of *dawa* as a political practice in Egypt[201], and take the shape of a politics of "representation" within a logic of identity politics.

The Hijab in identity politics

Whereas Muslim women also engage in *dawa* work and work towards representing Islam in public debate, they are in particular called upon to counter ideas about Islam being a religion that is inimical to women. In the MSS and the NMU Muslim women who could publicly counter the dominant representations of Islam by showing that they where neither oppressed nor passive, were repeatedly called for. The hijab has increasingly come to occupy the central stage in public struggles over representations of a gendered Muslim otherness/identity. Several European countries have struggled their way through scarf affairs, most notably so France and its seemingly never ending *affaires du foulard islamique*.[202] Although the

[200] The mailing list of the MSS is a "semi-closed" forum. Whenever a discussion gets somehow difficult to continue publicly (as was the case e.g. with one heated dicussion on gender), smaller circles of people who know each other more intimately will continue the discussion in lesser fora (e.g. sending e-mails only to a group of friends) where they may express themselves more freely. Although I have not done extensive work on chat groups on the Internet, those I have visited seem to allow for much contestation and negotiation, rather than a simple idealization, as the more informative Islamic netpages tend to have. Chat-rooms may be more "intimate" because of the anonymity they provide and because of the often highly heterogeneous perspectives and views of those partcipating in them.

[201] Hirschkind (2001: 13) writes that in its contemporary elaboration, *dawa* defines a kind of practice involving the public use of a mode of reasoning whereby the correctness of action is argued and justified in the face of error, doubt, indifference or counterargument.

[202] The original affair in 1989 revolved around three girls of Maghrebi origin who were expelled from a school in Creil because of their hijab: these and subsequent events of the same kind, and the debates they elicited in French society, are commonly referred to as *les affaires du foulard islamique.* There is a large body of literature

controversies surrounding the hijab have been much less virulent in Norway than in e.g. France, it holds a significant symbolic position as a marker of Muslim difference/identity. The media have a number of times focused on the assumed oppressive character of the hijab, and suggestions have several times been advanced in public debate as to the restriction of its use (particularly in schools). It is a widespread assumption that Muslim women are made to wear hijabs by male relatives who want to control them, and it is often represented as "backwards" and in conflict with modern values (of for instance gender equality, or individual autonomy). Although this perspective has also been criticized, alternative representations of the hijab tend to confirm the frames within which it is understood, arguing that the hijab is not always a sign of oppression or that it can in some contexts be a means of liberation from oppression. The right of women to wear a hijab has also been defended with reference to universal human rights to freedom of expression and freedom of religion. Despite these differences of position, the hijab-debates have largely been contained within the frames of occidental ideology and understood in terms of a dichotomous framework opposing tradition to modernity, religion to secularism, the collective to the individual, and force to choice.

The struggles over the representation of Muslim women, and its visual embodiment in the form of the hijab, must be understood in relation to the many political efforts to control women's clothing, whether by enforcing or prohibiting particular dress codes, in the history of European colonialism in the Muslim world, and the subsequent construction of modern nation-states, in which governments sought to transform "the people" into modern (secular) citizens. The hijab thus came to symbolize on the one hand backwardness and tradition, and on the other hand cultural authenticity and resistance to Western domination. In continuity with this established historical polysemy, the hijab in Europe has been inscribed in the context of minority-majority relations and debates about integration, racism, discrimination, and multiculturalism. In this process, the hijab's capacity to symbolize anti-colonialism has come to embody an oppositional quality in relation to non-Muslim majority populations, and many Muslims have come to regard *hijabi* women as courageous defenders of Islam and the Muslim community in the migrant context.

The meaning of the hijab is hotly contested, as different actors try to define it as a symbol of the oppression of women, of rebellion, of religious piety, an Islamic obligation, or a cultural tradition. In the arguments of the young women, as expressed also in the paroles during the hijab-demonstration, efforts were made both to deconstruct and oppose the

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dealing with the original affair and subsequent developments, see e.g. (Bowen 2004b; Cesari 1997; Gaspard and Khosrokhavar 1995; Grillo 2005; Helvig 2004; Jacobsen 1999; Ramadan 1994; Søvik 1998).

meanings that are attributed to the hijab in public discourse, to inscribe it with a new meaning of "pride and joy", and to establish the right to wear the hijab as an inviolable human right. Whereas opponents argued that the hijab obstructs the equal dignity of women and men, the supporters argued that a ban obstructs the equal dignity of (members of) different religious traditions. The informative leaflet on the hijab that was planned by the MSS during the heat of the hijab-debates in 2004 aimed at "rectifying" "misunderstandings about the hijab", and at clarifying what the hijab really represents in Islam. It is interesting to note that one interpretation of the hijab that some of the Muslim women referred to as a misunderstanding was that the hijab was primarily linked to upholding women's chastity and the moral order of society. Rather, they argued, the hijab was to be regarded as a question of individual submission to the prescriptions of Allah. As such, it was a matter between each and every woman and Allah, and a question of "individual rights" rather than of "collective rights" to maintain a particular cultural or religious tradition.

Efforts to defend women's right to wear the hijab are not only a struggle over "representations", but also over the consequences such representations are seen to have in various socio-political fields. Experiences of not being "heard", whether in the classroom or in public debates, because the hijab renders the individual invisible, and makes a person appear only in terms of generalized stereotypical representations, are often invoked by *hijabi*-women. As illustrated by the case of Ambreen Pervez that was one of the immediate precursors to the hijab-demonstration referred to in the beginning of this chapter, the hijab is also an issue with respect to Muslim women's access to the labour market. The right of employees to wear religious headgears is not explicitly regulated by Norwegian law, but nevertheless follows from the dominant interpretation of the Working Environment Act and the Gender Equality Act. Despite the fact that the Gender Equality Ombudsman in 2000 and 2001 made several resolutions affirming that workplaces which prevent their employees from wearing a hijab are violating the Gender Equality Act, studies have shown that women who wear religious headgear have fewer opportunities in the Norwegian labour market than those who do not (Ghosh et al. 2001). These findings were confirmed by the young women in my study, several of whom had been confronted with this problematic in their own efforts to enter working life, or in the efforts of relatives and friends. Many also experienced being "stared at", approached by curious questioners who asked if "they had to wear that thing", or verbally abused by strangers. Such experiences were often discussed in contexts where *hijabi*-women were gathered, and although the situations did not always explicitly involve the hijab, it was generally assumed to have played an important role. To many young Muslim women, the

hijab has thus become a vehicle to talk about racism and social discrimination e.g. in the labour market.

As a vehicle of speaking about misrecognition, the hijab does not only gain its centrality from experiences of misrecognition locally, however. Young Muslims in Oslo relate their own struggle for the right to wear a hijab to struggles over the hijab in other localities and historical contexts (be it the American wishes to unveil Afghan women, the exclusion of girls wearing the hijab from schools in France, or of *hijabi*-women from political life in Turkey). As discussed in the previous chapter, the identification of *hijabi*-women's plights in Norway with their plights elsewhere is facilitated by the way in which young Muslims have come to orient themselves towards and show solidarity with a global Islamic community, and the construction of an ethical and political commitment to oppose injustice committed to Muslims everywhere. Struggles from other localities feed into the local discourse and contribute to the constitution of the hijab as a primary marker of identity/difference. In this process, girls and women wearing the hijab are perceived as struggling for the recognition of the Muslim community and its legitimate presence in non-Muslim surroundings everywhere, and not just locally. Through the hijab, the visibility of Islamic identity/difference is thus inscribed on female bodies.

Gender and generation in the quest for recognition

As Calhoun (1994: 20) argues, the struggles occasioned by identity politics need to be understood not only as between those who claim different identities, or representation of such identities in public space, but "within each subject as the multiple and contending discourse of our era challenge any of our efforts to attain stable self-recognition or coherent subjectivity". The way in which the hijab, and clothing more generally, is inscribed in contending discourses of identity and difference, piety and modesty, is well brought out in Abid's account of the way in which his younger sister Latifa fights her way through adolescence. Recently, Latifa has had recurrent conflicts with her mother. She is short-tempered, and angry that her mother does not let her hang out with her friends after school and that she is not allowed to wear the kind of clothes she wants to. According to Abid, his sister struggles to be seen by her peers as "cool". She is embarrassed by her family, by her house, and by her clothes. Abid has taken on some responsibility, as his parents seem unable to guide their daughter on this issue. They are, he says, from "another time and place", and have a scant understanding of what it is like to be a Norwegian youth.

One day Abid takes his sister to a clothing store, and tries to convince her to buy clothes that are less transparent and tight fitting, but Latifa cries and is upset about the "old-woman look" that she sees her brother as trying to enforce on her. Abid argues that in so far as she has chosen to wear a hijab, there are certain things that she needs to respect in order not to "contradict herself": "Hijab doesn't only mean a veil; it means that you should be decently dresses. But I'm not saying that you should look like an old lady. There are a lot of Muslim women at the University who are smartly dressed in stylish coats and pants and cool skirts", he tells her. The saleswomen, who is a friend of Abid, intervenes and explains to him that his sister will be poked fun at in school if she wears clothes any bigger than size 34. To Abid, however, this is precisely where he would wish that his younger sister dared to be different, in the way that his older sister did when she started wearing the hijab. In a similar way, rather than dressing in cool hooded sweaters and skater shoes like his peers, Abid wore suit pants and patent leather shoes in secondary school. He sees this as a consequence of his need to "stand out" and "be different", and adds that: "the attention was there anyway":

> I mean, the heck, in my family it has never been a problem. If someone bullied me for my clothes, I would tell them to go to hell. We always followed our own trend. For God's sake, my big sister started wearing the hijab and long skirts when the others were punking it up, with ripped jeans and stuff. It's extreme how Latifa has to bow to the rules out there.

Although Abid describes Latifa as not conforming to the rules of hijab (in the sense of dressing modestly), he realizes that wearing a scarf in itself marks her out as different, and characterizes her as a "nun" compared to her friends who wear low-cuts, expose their bellies, and dress in mini-skirts at school Christmas balls. The negotiations between Abid and his sister when it comes to what represents a proper attire also reflects the variety of clothing practices and controversies around "decency" and "modesty" among young Muslims. The young Muslim women are by no means unanimous in their ways of using the headscarf. Some young women combine the hijab with the tight and revealing clothes à la mode, high heals and make-up. In thus embracing aesthetic aspects of sexuality, they diminish the distinction between the "pure" covered and the "impure" open woman, and the headscarf might even become a vehicle for attraction in itself (cf. Amir-Moazami and Salvatore 2003). Some, like Abid, are more critical of this blurring, as this way of combining the hijab with aesthetics associated with the West and sexuality is seen as fundamentally contradicting the meaning of the hijab.

Wearing a hijab is thus associated with (contested) norms of how a proper *hijabi* woman should dress and behave. In Abid's, and many other young Muslims' opinion, if you wear a

hijab, you should not simultaneously go to pubs, hang out with boys or wear tight clothes. The fact that wearing a hijab makes one's religious identity more "visible" to others, also places a certain responsibility on *hijabi* women in representing Islam and the Muslim community, and thus for being "exemplary models" both for other Muslims and non-Muslims. By emphasizing the importance of dressing Islamically correct, while at the same time insisting that it is his sister who has chosen to wear the hijab and that it might be combined with modern stylish clothes, Abid puts himself in a mediating position between his parents and his sister. But at the same time he reproduces the distinction between a proper way of being a Muslim women and a less-proper way that blurs the distinction between a covered and an uncovered body.

Abid presents the need to respect these norms as a matter of being "consistent", rather than as a religiously defined duty. It is the fact that Latifa herself has chosen to wear a hijab that make the norms of dressing "Islamically correct" binding for her. This model of "choice" however, contrasts with Latifa's own accounts of why she wears the hijab. Here, the hijab is intimately bound up with her efforts to achieve a greater independence from her family, and of avoiding the pressure put on her e.g. to dress more modestly, and to stop hanging out with her friends. In this, Latifa's use of the hijab is similar to the one that has been pointed to in other studies, where it is argued that some girls instrumentalize the hijab in order to counter the restrictions put on them by parents and/or the "ethnic community" as to their movements in public space (e.g. Gaspard and Khosrokhavar 1995). Like many parents, Latifa's mother worried about becoming estranged from her children, and she saw Latifa's behaviour as different from her own and expressing different values. She uttered concern that Latifa was not properly deferent to her parents. She would speak angrily and loudly to them, and sometimes swear at them. The way Latifa dressed, and the fact that she spoke a language her mother could barely understand, made her mother worry that she would "lose" her, and that the family would be viewed negatively by the extended family and the "ethnic community" she identified with. Since the family was a central value to Latifa's mother she worried that her own family would eventually disintegrate, if her children became "too Norwegian". By wearing the hijab, Latifa signals to her parents that she has not become "too Norwegian", and that she is taking responsibility for her own respectability. She signals that she can be trusted not to become "entirely Norwegian" – that she will at least hold on to some of the values her parents hold dear.

In likening his own "oppositional clothes" to his sister's hijab, Abid's account ignores the fact that whereas the hijab is linked to particular norms of chastity and respectability, Abid's

own clothes do not perform a similar role. His clothes are defined as "pure opposition" rather than as markers of a particular tradition and identity, with its scripts for proper behaviour. Nevertheless, the "difference" and independence signalled by Abid's oppositional clothes also includes difference when it comes to norms of respectability and chastity For instance, as opposed to many of his peers in high school, he did not date or have sex and he did not drink alcohol. To Abid, clothing appears as a way of marking difference and of constructing a sense of individuality vis-à-vis peers. It signals personal integrity, and a will to assume a difference that "is already there" in terms of e.g. skin colour and name. In contrast to himself and his older sister, he sees his younger sister as "trying to pass" and be accepted by the Norwegian majority by submitting to the "rules out there". In his account, the hijab is seen as a refusal to submit to peer-pressure, and daring to be different. This refusal should be seen as related to a religiously motivated understanding that obeying the laws of God is more important than obeying human conventions. At the same time, and without this being necessarily experienced as a contradiction, it should be seen as related to a notion of "personal authenticity" where it is important to "be who you are". The relationship between these understandings of religious practice as obedience and personal authenticity will be further developed in chapter six.

This latter case illustrates well the need to place abstract theorizations of the politics of recognition within concrete social contexts, and of distinguishing between individuals and collectives when speaking about recognition. An important critique of Taylor's perspective on recognition, stressed notably by many feminists, is that he moves from the individual need for recognition by significant others to the claim that groups pursuing politics of identity would accommodate such individual needs (Benhabib 2002; Gressgård and Jacobsen 2003). This conflation hides the internal differences, contradictions and antagonism within groups that mobilize around a certain identity, and that I have pointed towards by discussing the way in which gender, age, generation and ethnicity intersect in the attempts of young Muslims to organize on the basis of adherence to "Islam", and the ways in which these attempts are envisaged in relation to different horizons of action and imagined communities. In negotiating what to wear, Latifa must face multiple and contending discourses of femininity. These discourses make conflicting demands on her. In order to be a respectable Muslim girl she must wear loose and decent clothes. In order to be a popular and "cool" youth among her peers, she must wear tight and daring clothes. This is not a situation where, as some participants in debates about multiculturalism would perhaps have it, the group hinders an individual from "being herself" or making an individual choice. Latifa's desire to dress as her peers is of course no less structured and socially embedded than her decision to wear the

hijab. It reinscribes forms of power related to consumerism and the sexualization of women's bodies.[203] Latifa's resistance to wearing the clothes that her parents and her brother would consider properly decent reveals an eagerness to be a part of "normality", as defined by the dominant youth culture in her surroundings at school. The recognition she seeks here is related not to her "difference" as a Muslim, but to her social identities as a "youth", "friend", or a "pupil" (e.g. a teenage girl should not dress like an old woman). The example shows how Abid and Latifa must orient themselves amid contending discourses and horizons of action. In this respect, the struggles occasioned by identity politics need to be understood not as simply between those who claim different identities, but within each subject's efforts to cope with the multiple and contending discourses it is inserted into.

The above case also raises important issues with respect to the gendered dynamics of identity politics. It has been argued that misrecognition/group marginality and the reactive identity politics they boost create and reinforce internal gender hierarchies within the group (see e.g. Cohen et al. 1999; Yuval-Davis 1997). The hijab of young Muslim women is often interpreted within such a perspective, as an example of how, in Appadurai's words, "the honour of women becomes not just an armature of stable systems of cultural reproduction" but also increasingly "a surrogate for the identity of embattled communities of males" (Appadurai 1990: 19). The Islamic discourses in contemporary Muslim identity politics place women, in different ways, at the heart of religious, cultural, and political identity. Women are not just seen as guaranteeing the biological reproduction of the group, but also as vital to cultural and religious reproduction (Jacobsen 2002; Jacobsen 2004; Yuval-Davis 1997). The centrality of women in biological, social and cultural reproduction intensifies visual, spatial and temporal regulations of women's bodies and sexualities in a diversity of ways. This is expressed in the regulation of female clothing as well as in the codification of Islamic principles in relation to family life and conjugal relations, and in the negativity attributed to "Western family life" associated with broken marriages and the break up of family life in general.

The focus on the hijab and (female) sexuality as the marker *par excellence* of difference no doubt puts a particular weight on women as bearers of Muslim group identity and

[203] My argument here is similar to the one made by Abu-Lughod (1990) who gives the example of a young Bedouin women who wears sexy lingerie to challenge parental authority and dominant social mores. She suggests that instead of simply reading such acts as moments of opposition to, and escape from, dominant relations of power, they should also be understood as reinscribing alternative forms of power that are rooted in practices of capitalist consumerism and urban bourgeois values and aesthetics (1990: 50).

authenticity.[204] In some ways the "defensive position" of organizations like the NMU and the MSS, and their concern with representation, thus creates certain rules and regularities for the performance of gendered and sexualized identities. As I have shown elsewhere (Jacobsen 2003), however, and as will be clear from the analysis in subsequent chapters, the active participation of women in the struggle for recognition in associations like the NMU and the MSS also provide them with an important collective arena for challenging "traditional" gendered norms and hierarchies, on the basis of "Islamic authenticity". As will be shown, the hijab is also central to the process through which young Muslim women "individualize" themselves by inscribing themselves into the Islamic tradition and finding new opportunities and interpretations within it.

Engaging the Norwegian public sphere

Representing Islam and Muslims

Above, we have seen current representations of Islam and Muslims in public discourse in Norway subject Muslims to a culturalized pattern of interpretation opposing "Us" to "Them", and where Muslims are subsequently maligned and displayed in stereotypic public cultural representations and everyday life interaction. We have also seen how Muslim identities and practices such as *jihad*, *dawa* and the hijab are mobilized and re-interpreted as young Muslims aim at challenging such representations. These struggles over representation necessarily raise questions regarding what kinds of public representations of Islam and Muslims that are deemed legitimate and desirable. Such questions were of continual concern to the young Muslims I worked with, as expressed among other things in their critique of those public figures who spoke about, and in the name of, Muslims and Islam in public. Is it possible at all to "represent" Islam and "Muslims in Norway", and if so; who should do it? Under which conditions can different persons speak, and to what kind of public? The whole issue of representation is problematic precisely because it tends to presuppose the existence of a "group" or "identity" that may be represented. When speaking about who should represent Muslims and Islam in the Norwegian public sphere, internal differences related to e.g. gender, age, generation and ethnicity come to the fore. As a means of overcoming this aporia, young

[204] This does not mean that "clothing" is not an aspect of young men's efforts at handling "otherness" at more individual levels. In some Muslim groups, men's way of dressing and the beards that are grown make them, like women, visible bearers of Muslim identity. In the NMU and the MSS, however, most of the boys and men wear no visible sign of their Muslim engagement.

Muslims in the NMU and the MSS tend to construct knowledge of "true Islam" as an indispensable requirement for representing Muslims and Islam. Representation in the public sphere is thus not only a question of rectifying negative representations of Islam among non-Muslims, but also an effort to change the understandings and practices of Muslims who, in the opinion of the young Muslims, contribute to the current negative representations of Islam because they lack sufficient knowledge of the Islamic tradition and live according to "cultural traditions" rather than Islam.

In the aftermath of the so-called Nadia-affair concerning "forced marriage",[205] Aydin held a *dars* in the NMU on "Home and Family" where he spoke, among other things, about the Islamic obligation of "commanding good and prohibiting evil" (*al-amr bil-maruf wa al-nahy an al-munkar*). Here, Aydin deplored the fact that there was no approved Muslim authority that could come forth in the public debate on "forced marriages" to make clear what Islam says on marriage and the issue of consent.[206] Aydin's comments on the Nadia affair expressed two related concerns. The first was a concern with the lack of Islamic scholars who could authoritatively exercise the Islamic duty of "commanding good and prohibiting evil". Such an

[205] The so-called Nadia-affair concerned a young woman of Moroccan origin, who was allegedly "abducted" by her parents to be married against her own will. The affair was widely covered by Norwegian media from September/October 1997 and onwards (see Næss 2003 for an extensive discussion). Many young Muslims were preoccupied by the affair; some because they knew Nadia and her family, others because they saw the issues of "forced marriage" as a serious matter for the Muslim community to deal with and others again because of the media coverage and the reactions it solicited among their friends, classmates etc. The Nadia-affair was an important background for the politization of 'forced marriages' in Norway, and for the action plan against 'forced marriages' that the Government presented in 1998 (although this plan was also the result of a broader process initiated by the Ministry of Children and Equality and that included contributions from several affected parties). The Nadia affair also gained attention in Nador, Nadia's parent's hometown in Morocco, where people I talked to in 2003 still remembered the drama of 1997. Nadia's parents were brought to court by the Norwegian state on a charge of "having forcibly held someone against her will" (frihetsberovelse) (although the media spoke of it as a case of 'forced marriage' this was not reflected in the charges against the parents). Both parents were found guilty. Nadia's father was sentenced to one year and three months on suspension, her mother to one year. Her father was also sentenced to pay a fine and "court proceedings costs". The charges against Nadia's mother were withdrawn when Nadia's father died six months after the trial. Social anthropologist Unni Wikan was called upon as an expert witness in the trial against Nadia's parents. She also participated actively in the media debates, and later discussed the Nadia-case in several publications (Wikan 2000; 2002; 2003). Most of the young Muslims in my study agreed that it was important to protect young people against 'forced marriages', but they were simultaneously worried about the effects of the Nadia-affair on public opinion and integration policies as well as about the way in which 'forced marriage' came to be associated with Muslims and Islam. The campaign initiated by the government, where information about 'forced marriages' and how one should proceed to get help from Norwegian authorities was distributed to girls with an immigrant background who were travelling abroad, was also met with ambivalence. Some saw it as a necessary measure to protect girls' human rights, whereas others saw it as contributing to singling out and further cementing stereotypes about the Muslim population.

[206] The Islamic Council in Norway partly functions as such an organ, and has publicly condemned 'forced marriages', 'honour killings' and terrorism as these issues have been raised in the public debate. Nevertheless, the Islamic Council does not carry any authority in terms of Islamic scholarship. What Aydin calls for is thus an organ of scholars who may determine the issues from the point of view of Islamic law, rather than from the point of view of the different mosques and imams represented in the Council.

authority could have made the correct procedures with respect to marriage from an Islamic point of view known to Muslim; thus prohibiting "forced marriages" and encouraging respect and communication between parents and children – an Islamic value Aydin often stressed in his *darses*. The second concern was with how such an authority could have been effective in challenging the many claims to speak of, and in the name of Islam, in public, so that misconceptions of Islam could be rectified.

There is currently a highly diversified gallery of differently positioned persons speaking publicly of, or in the name of, Muslims and Islam (such as imams, mosque spokespersons, community leaders, leaders of different organizations, politicians, journalists, academics and artists). In addition to different Muslim groups (notably mosques and other Islamic organizations), the state plays an important role in authorizing different voices; in choosing interlocutors when addressing matters involving Muslims, participating in mosque activities, and inviting people to join in government-initiated community and dialogue projects such as the so-called Value Commission.[207] In addition, mass media are central through the way in which they picture different groups of people, the political agendas they set, and the people they give voice to and silence.[208] By framing cases in particular ways, they work both to authorize (e.g. by naming someone an important Islamic scholar) and de-authorize (e.g. by naming someone a fundamentalists) representatives and points of view. Academics participating in the public debate have also contributed to legitimizing and de-legitimizing different voices as representative of the immigrant and Muslim population and in giving support to various interpretations of Islam.[209] Within this complex field, there are various

[207] The Value Commission was initiated by the Christian-Democratic government in 1998, in what was presented as an attempt to raise the ethical consciousness of the Norwegian population and focus on communal societal values. This undertaking became one of the most controversial in newer Norwegian cultural debate. Two prominent Muslims were on the committee (Kebba Secka, at the time the head of the Islamic Council in Norway (IRN), and Nasim Riaz, a member of the Contact Group between Immigrants and the Government and the Women's Group of the IRN). The Value Commission Committee also initiated a broader dialogue project in the period 1999-2000 where some NMU and MSS members participated.

[208] For instance, after the covert recording of imams made by Hege Storhaug and Kadra Noor on the issue of female circumcision the imam Kebba Secka had to resign from the Value Commission.

[209] One debate that pertinently illustrated this originated in a dispute between the anthropologist Marianne Gullestad and the stand-up comedian Shabana Rehman. Gullestad and Hylland-Eriksen, another Norwegian anthropologist who participated in the debate, argued that Shabana Rehman was not "representative" of immigrant women. It is unclear whether this was meant to indicate that others would be more "representative" of this category as a whole, or whether they argued for a more pluralist representation that would include a multitude of voices. Another such debate, this time concerning representations of Islam, was between a professor in religious studies who, and two young Muslims who wrote an article on what they saw as the misrepresentation of *jihad* as Holy War rather than "a struggle" more broadly (Aftenposten 08.04.2006 "Fanatikere må marginaliseres") The professor argued that "It is wrong when one's own opinions are presented as information about what Islam "really" stands for", asserting that the central meaning of *jihad* in traditional *fiqh* was in fact military war (Aftenposten 14.03.2006 "Misvisende om *jihad*"). Several Muslims responded to this article, presenting counterarguments and alternative understandings of *jihad*, and arguing that it was strange that the

ways in which authority may be claimed and various principles according to which such claims are evaluated. I will discuss some of these here, in order to bring out the criteria that the young Muslims I worked with used to evaluate different public voices.

Perhaps in lack of other "visible" alternatives, but also because of the membership structure Islam in Norway has taken on, mosques and imams have been accorded the greatest significance in representing Muslims in the public sphere in Norway (Melve et al. 2003). As many of the young Muslims complained, this has led to a gender- and age-biased representation. According to the young Muslims, many imams are unfit to speak on behalf of the Muslim community because they do not have sufficient mastery of the Norwegian language and the Norwegian social and cultural context. They may thus come to represent Islam in a way that is misunderstood by, or opposed, by both non-Muslim and Muslim Norwegians, even if what they say is correct in theological terms. On the other hand it is a common opinion that many imams who represent Muslims in the media do not only lack knowledge of Norwegian society, they also lack sufficient knowledge of Islam. Similarly, mosque spokespersons who have been appointed to serve as "public relations managers" in the larger mosques may be seen as sufficiently familiar with Norwegian society, but not sufficiently familiar with the Islamic scholarly tradition. This illustrates the dilemma of public spokespersons who must be able to put forward their claims in terms that are acceptable both to fellow Muslims, with their diverse positions and interpretations of Islam, and to non-Muslims.[210] To young Muslims, such ability depends on having sufficient knowledge both of Islam and of Norwegian society. As a solution to this problem of representation, many have been positive to the possibility of educating imams at the university level in Norway, so that one could ensure competence both with regard to Islamic education and with respect to knowledge of Norwegian language and society.

In explicit opposition to the imams (and mosque spokespersons), strong public voices speaking up on matters pertaining to Islam and the Muslim community are represented in the form of young Muslim women who in different ways criticize the Muslim community and/or

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professor denied the believers the right to interpret their own religion (e.g. Dagbladet 16.03.2006 "Feil om Islam og Jihad").

[210] In the public debate in Norway, the efforts of imams and mosque spokespersons to cope with this double exigency have been negatively represented as insincerity, disingenuity and wilfull deceit (as in the newspaper title: The imams are lying). "The imams" have been collectively castigated, and held responsible in a variety of "scandals" brought to the attention of the greater public by Norwegian media: "Harlem raser over imamene" ("Harlem in rage over imams"), "Imamer skal etterforskes" ("Imams to be investigated"), "Avslørt imam vil innføre helsekontroll" ("Exposed imam wants health control"), "Hvorfor lyver imamene?" ("Why the imams lie?").

Islam publicly. Young women like Kadra Noor,[211] and Jeanette Holm[212] mainly base their authority to speak about the Muslim community on the authority of their personal experiences[213] and their positions as "insiders" who get to know the "real" opinions of imams, rather than the discourses they hold in public. Though they claim not to "represent" immigrant or Muslim women, they operate with reference to a representational "we" and "our communities" that purports some similarity in experience between themselves and other young Muslim women. Experience as a position to speak from may be empowering for those who cannot claim the authority of knowledge or expertise. However it may also be exclusive, in that it relegates other speakers to the sideline. Researchers, for instance, are often criticized for being "out of touch with reality" or for having no idea what it is like to be a young Muslim woman. Such exclusion can also be based on gender, as Muslim men are often seen as speaking on the basis of particular interests (e.g. maintaining a gender hierarchy) when they address issues related to gender.[214] It is however clear that not all experience-based knowledge is given priority in the debates. Those, like some of the young Muslims I worked with, who criticize the problem-oriented representations on the basis of their own experiences which they claim to be less negative (e.g. those who are positive towards arranged marriages) are often defined as particularly resourceful and well-adapted, and thus as the exceptions that confirm the rule (as the saying goes) (cf. Bredal 2004).

In public debates ambivalence between authority based on "experience" and authority based on "knowledge of Islam" often arises. In an invitation from an Oslo-based anti-racist organization during the hijab debates in 2004, Muslim women were invited to talk about their

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[211] In cooperation with the journalist Hege Storhaug, Kadra Noor – presenting herself as a young women whose family wants to have her circumcised – made covered recordings of her discussions with four African imams on the issue of circumcision.

[212] The Internet based fundamental.net (where Shabana Rehman was the editor) together with the journalist Hege Storhaug sent Jeanette Holm to the two largest mosques in Oslo to reveal the attitudes of Norwegian imams towards forced marriages and violence by covertly taping the discussions between Jeanette – impersonating a young women whom her father threatens to hit and with a forced marriage – and the imams. These tapes were later used in what Nina Dessau refers to as "the imam affairs" (Dessau 2003).

[213] Experience as a basis for politics and debate has been extensively explored in feminist theory and elsewhere (see e.g. Fuss 1990). Positions vary as to whether experiences is understood as real and immediate presence on the basis of a certain identity or whether it is seen as a product of ideology and/or as a discursive effect.

[214] An example of such exclusion was discussed by the young Muslims in relation to a newspaper chronicle written by a young male on the position of women in Islam. A colleague who commented on the chronicle said that it was good, but that it would have been even better if a woman had written it – it would have more weight. Taking this into account, a considered strategy has been to write chronicles in co-operation between a woman and a man, and publish it in the name of the woman. Another example related to gender and the issue of representation, is Abid Raja, who in an interview in *Salam* says that as a male mosque spokesperson, he was often categorized in a certain way when participating in public debates about Muslims and immigrants because of his gender, and that under the circumstances it is better to have a female spokesperson.

experiences concerned with wearing a hijab in a context of racism and Islamophobia. The invitation stressed that they were **not** looking for religious reasons and what is written about the hijab in the Quran, but young women's personal experiences and opinions about the suggested ban on the hijab in French schools. In contrast to this, the NMU and the MSS were usually careful to stress that participation in public debates **required** that one was able to speak of "what Islam says", and not just of one's personal experiences and opinions. In one invitation that was forwarded on the MSS-list, for instance, it was underlined that the person appearing in a TV-debate on the hijab should be able to argue convincingly and thoughtfully on the basis of Islam and not on the basis of "what they think…or their parents say". This is related to the ways in which speaking about Islam in public is conceived of not only as an act of representation but also of "commanding good and prohibiting evil".

In addition to "knowledge of Norwegian society", "knowledge of Islam" and "experience", the authority of public voices is often evaluated, both by Muslims and non-Muslims, according to criteria of "cultural authenticity". Shabana Rehman, Kadra Noor, and Jeanette Holm, for instance, have all been criticized for having become too westernized and Norwegian and for not representing the point of views of the majority of Muslim women. According to criteria of "cultural authenticity", some people are seen to have a privileged or more authentic relation to "the culture" or "the religion" of a certain group, and thus to have more authority in speaking on its behalf. Such "authenticity" can be an economic and political resource in certain contexts, but it can also, as Chhachhi (1991) has noted, be a "burden of representation". Inhabiting a subject position that is seen as culturally authentic does not necessarily authorize one to speak for the collectivity, although it may be a necessary condition for being heard in some contexts.[215] Questions of authenticity in this sense may function in an exclusionary way towards those who are deemed "inauthentic" in relation to different truth regimes and cultural and religious constructions of sameness and otherness that establish boundaries between "Us" and "Them".

An example that serves to illustrate how notions of "authenticity" interact with the construction of broader categories opposing Us to Them is a TV-debate on arranged and forced marriages between Shabana Rehman (Norwegian-Pakistani stand-up comedian and

[215] In an interview with Aina Mumbi Sauvik (www.mirasenteret.no), the leader of the first Norwegian group for immigrant women, (The Foreign Womens' Group, the precursor of what is now the MIRA-centre, was established in 1978), Fakhra Salimi recounts how the FWG was from the beginning criticized for not being representative of immigrant women. The critique was mainly that they were too Westernized and therefore not representative for immigrant women. It seemed to be based on the general apprehension that immigrant women are oppressed and therefore unable to speak for themselves or to found an organization. The logical consequence was that the FWG could not be representative since that was precisely what they did.

journalist) and Lena Larsen (Norwegian convert, at the time the leader of the Islamic Council of Norway). In the debate Rehman appeared in the positions of the "critic" of the Muslim community and Islam, and Larsen as the "representative" of Muslims in Norway. The irony was of course that Larsen was made to defend herself and the Muslim community against the allegation that Muslims in Norway were continuing traditional practices such as forced marriages, and not respecting Norwegian values and universal human rights.[216] Larsen, argued her case by reference to what "Islam says", rather than to what "Muslims do". Here, established differences are apparently profoundly deconstructed and recombined. Norwegian is no longer synonymous to non-Muslim, and Muslim no longer to "foreigner", arranged marriage no longer to "the other" and love-marriage to "Ourselves". However, this deconstruction seems only to be partial, because, to a certain extent, whereas Rehman "becomes a Norwegian" by espousing what are generally held to be "Norwegian values", Larsen ceases to be a Norwegian by espousing what are generally held to be "foreign values". The distinction is thus arguably upheld; there is still non-Muslim/Norwegian/love marriage versus Muslim/Foreigner/arranged marriage, but the persons allowed to inhabit these positions are expanded. This case also illustrates the way in which "questions of representation" usually implies a synecdochial tendency to acknowledge only one of a subject's multiple identities, and make that part stand for the whole (i.e. Larsen's Muslim identity is acknowledged, while her identity as a Norwegian woman is erased (cf. Fuss 1990). The process of representation thus involves the establishment of essentializing identities not only at the level of the groups represented (i.e. Muslims versus Norwegian), but also within each speaking subject within a particular context of representation.

While different discourses of cultural authenticity, of personal experience, and of academic or religious expertise are invoked to authorize the right to speak about, and in the name of, Muslims and Islam, young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS tend to view knowledge of Islam and of Norwegian society as necessary requirements for a form of representation that fulfils the double exigency of opposing mis-representations of Islam so as to simultaneously ameliorate the image of Islam among those who are not Muslims and so as to "command good and prohibit evil" among those who are.

[216] Whereas most of the young Muslims I spoke to declared that they "supported Lena against Shabana", some also voiced the critique that Larsen was "too integrated" into her "husband's culture" and that she thus represented cultural traditions rather than Islam even if she had not been raised in a particular Muslim culture.

Muslim and Norwegian citizen

In the above mentioned *dars* where Aydin spoke about the importance of "commanding good and prohibiting evil", he also addressed what he saw as consequences of this command in terms of citizenship: to exercise *amr bil maruf* it is necessary to participate actively in society: "If you want to live up to Allah's commands, it is of no use to isolate yourself in a mountain-cottage". In line with this thinking, the NMU and the MSS foster an active citizenship among their members, in that they encourage their members to participate actively in the political and social life of Norwegian society. There has been mobilization around a range of issues. Some of them relate to securing the rights of Muslims to practice their religion within the Norwegian context: e.g. access to *halal*-meet in public cafeterias, prayer spaces in universities and colleges, exemption rights from Christian and religious education in schools,[217] the right to have Muslim private schools,[218] and the right to wear the hijab in working life. The NMU and the MSS also engage in a broader area of social and political issues. The MSS, for instance, had a project of visiting refugees and asylum seekers living in refugee reception centres. According to Fatima who was one of the initiative-takers of the project, it was partly inspired by the wish to provide a "Muslim alternative" to the support offered by various Christian organizations, so that Muslim refugees would feel that "there are Muslims here who take care of them – that they have their own people helping them". The NMU and the MSS also co-operate widely with other religious and non-religious organizations in the wider civil society in campaigns against for instance racism, violence and war.[219]

The ways in which members in the NMU and the MSS make Muslim identity relevant to what it means to be an active citizen, challenge the "ideal typical" model of citizenship as a "[…] unity of *residency, administrative subjection, democratic participation*, and *cultural membership*" (Benhabib 2002: 180). As Benhabib rightly notes, the hold of this model upon political and institutional imagination in Western democracies is nowhere more evident than

[217] The opinions of Muslim youth are divided on the issue of whether Muslim children ought to attend classes in Knowledge of Christianity with information about Religion and Life Stances. Many had positive experiences with attending classes on "life stances" from their own schooling, and found it a good opportunity for young people to get to know and respect each others religious traditions. What most seemed to agree about, however, was that the right to exemption should be granted so that individual Muslims could decided for themselves whether they wanted their children to attend or not. Many also saw the confessional basis of the subject as problematic and wanted a more "neutral", comparative religious education.

[218] Independently of whether they would want to send their own children to a Muslim private school or not, most considered that not allowing Muslim private schools when there are other faith-based schools in Norway was discriminatory and counter to the right to religious freedom.

[219] The NMU is also a member of the LNU (The National Association of Norwegian Children's- and Youth Organizations). Compared to similar youth and student organizations in other European countries, the NMU and the MSS seem well integrated into the wider Norwegian landscape of organizations.

in practices governing immigration, asylum and refugee rights.[220] The ways in which migrants and their social practices tend to exceed this "ideal-typical" model of citizenship (e.g. constructing houses "back home", being involved in politics "back home", marrying "back home") has become an issue in Norwegian politics.[221] From this perspective, what was described in the above chapter as an action horizon related to the imagined Islamic *umma* appears as a threat that needs to be controlled, rather than as a positive source for identification and solidarity, as it does from the perspective of young Muslims. The challenge that Islamic transnationalism poses to the nation-state and conventional conceptions of citizenship energizes invocations of a "core of common values" in policy documents and public discourse on immigrant and minority politics in Norway as well as other European countries. The national unity needs to be restated and legitimized in face of transnationalism, which has led some politicians and public debaters to re-launch assimilation as the only viable future for societal cohesion and integration.[222]

The way in which young Muslims simultaneously identify with national citizenship and a global *umma* is not without problems within "the national order of things".[223] According to Asad (1993: 266), "The politicization of religious traditions by Muslim immigrants […] serves to question the inevitability of the absolute nation-state – of its demands to exclusive

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[220] (For a discussion of citizenship-ideals in the Norwegian context see e.g. Brochmann 2003; Gullestad 2002; Sicakkan 2005)

[221] In opposing this view of especially the second generation as potentially spilling over the national border, some researchers and public debators stress the emergent "Norwegianness" of Muslim immigrants and argue that the term second-generation immigrant continues to exclude youth with an immigrant background from being accepted as Norwegian. In a political context, this has been an important strategy in order to counter exclusion. However, this way of constructing migration as a "singular event in time" and stressing the (emergent) Norwegianness of the immigrants (underlining that they "feel Norwegian", they "envisage a future in Norway" etc.) is somewhat problematic in my opinion, as it may ultimately reinforce rather than challenge the discursive framework that privileges cultural belonging to the nation in defining (legitimate) Norwegian citizenship. A more radical strategy would be to argue that becoming Norwegian in a cultural sense, feeling Norwegian or envisaging a future in Norway should not be necessary criterias for being regarded and treated as an equal citizen.

[222] This discourse no doubt presupposes a relation of power between the majority population and its minorities. When Europeans went abroad as colonizers, settlers or missionaries, they sought to change – rather than adapt – the core values of the societies in question. This relation of power was aptly brought out in a speech Shabana Rehman (a Norwegian-Pakistani stand-up comedian) held to the Norwegian community in Spain (where quite a few, especially elderly people have settled) on the 17th of May. In this speech, she applied the host/guest script and nationalist arguments for assimilation to Norwegians in Spain, whom she jokingly described as living in ghettos, disinclined to learn the language of the host country, and unwilling to integrate in Spanish society, and to assimilate their cultural practices and values. She also, in an explicitly rhetorical way, referred to Ustvedt's article about Henrik Wergeland having died as a Muslim (see chapter three). Rehman's speech on tolerance was later referred to as "the scandalous speech" by Norwegian media, both because of its use of Wergeland and its rhetorical comparison of Norwegians in Spain and immigrants in Norway.

[223] The expression is taken from Lisa Malkki (1997), who argues that "metaphysics of sedentarism" of nationalist ideologies link people to place and nation to territory so that the rootedness of peoples and cultures in "their own territories" comes to be accepted as the normal state of affairs.

loyalty and its totalizing cultural projects". The question of "loyalty" has been repeatedly raised with respect to Muslims in European nation states. As Van der Veer (2001: 4) writes:

> Where in the nineteenth century Roman Catholics in Protestant Countries like Britain or Holland were often accused of being loyal to 'the pope in Rome', Muslims today are either accused of being loyal to Mecca (and receive money from the Saudis) or to their nation-states of origin.

This is so also in Norway, as expressed not least in debates on whether Muslims in the army pose a problem, as they are presumed to have loyalties other than the Norwegian nation state that could be actualized in a situation of military conflict or war. Furthermore, in public debates Muslims and their "spokesmen" are frequently asked to show their allegiance to Norwegian norms and values, and to national law, by condemning acts committed by Muslims in Norway or elsewhere, that are in contradiction with these. The loyalty of Muslim citizens was also questioned by the deputy mayor of Oslo, representing the Progress Party, who in 2002 proposed a series of measures to enhance integration, including the introduction of a so-called vow of fidelity upon the acquisition of citizenship and a ten year "trial-period". Some of the measures were particularly directed towards Muslims since the deputy-mayor claimed that many Muslims in Norway were loyal primarily to Islam and Muslims and contributed to weakening Norwegian values (*Dagsavisen* 16.09.2002). The suggested measures were controversial and subject of considerable debate in the media, and were met with reaction from Norwegian Muslims who publicly affirmed their loyalty to Norway, and by others who criticized the deputy mayor for contributing to stigmatizing Muslims and to racist sentiments in the majority population.

The NMU and the MSS seem for the most part to be regarded as a positive development in this respect, representing a more "Norwegian" and "progressive" religious form than that of their parental generation, and being less tied to particular Muslim "back home" countries. Focus has not only been positive, however. In the aftermath of 9/11, newspaper articles inquiring about a potential "terrorist threat" in Norway, several times mentioned the student milieu as a potential location for recruitment to extremist organizations and spread of extremist ideas. As one member explains:

> A lot of us have been frustrated after 9/11. When VG writes about the *Muhadjirun*[224] we just want to knock our heads against the wall, because it is so far from the truth. We are

[224] *Al Muhadjirun* (Ar. the immigrants) is a front group for the *jihadist* movement *Hizb Al Tahrir*, led from Great Britain by the Syrian exile Omar Bakri. The movement is known to have branches in Great Britain, the United States, France, Germany, and Pakistan, is active on college campuses, and promotes its message through educational groups and professional associations (Cesari 2004). In VG 24.04.2002, the leader of *Hizb-ut-tahir* (a radical Islamist group) in Great Britain is cited as saying that his group recruits members in Islamic study circles

> all students and have a lot to do, and we're trying to run an organization. We don't want to spend all our time defending ourselves.

Negative attention was also drawn to the MSS when they invited Qazi Hussain Ahmed to give a speech "On the Purpose of Life" at the university. The university newspaper (*Universitas* 1 June 2005) argued that the MSS was furthering intolerance and xenophobia since they chose not to take a stand towards Qazi Hussain Ahmed's political utterances. The MSS, on their part, argued that inviting him was not problematic in so far as he was there to speak about religious and not political issues.[225] The article in *Universitas* further speculated whether the refusal of the MSS to position themselves with regard to religious freedom and the death penalty signalled that they had "something to hide", or whether it was based on some "essential misunderstanding" (of what kind is not specified, but one might suspect that it refers to a basic misunderstanding of such principles as democracy and the freedom of speech). Qazi Hussain Ahmed's speech caused much debate among MSS members both before and after the event, debates that did not reach the Norwegian public. Opinions varied on whether he had been able to provide "good answers" to political and religious questions or not, and many were concerned that the rendition of controversial statements by the media had a negative impact on the way in which Muslims and Islam are seen by the Norwegian society.

Transnational migration and the establishment of Muslim minorities in the West, does not only challenge Western nation-states, however, they also challenge Islamic jurisprudence, and the ways in which it has traditionally theorized the issue of Muslims living as minorities in non-Muslim societies (cf. chapter three). Although at another and less abstract level, young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS are engaged in reflecting upon and defining the status, duties and responsibilities of Muslim citizenship in Norway. The dominant position is one that encourages Muslim youth to participate actively in exerting their rights and duties as citizens; by participating in political life, by serving military duty, by conforming to national laws and regulations, and by contributing "positively to society". The participation of Muslims in a non-Muslim political community is occasionally problematized, and sometimes the possibility of establishing partly autonomous legal arrangements for Muslims is suggested at conferences and seminars. Young Muslims mostly regarded such suggestions as problematic, in terms of how it is possible to guarantee that such arrangements will not just

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at the University of Oslo. The MSS was the only registered Muslim Student organization at the University of Oslo at the time, and was subsequently contacted by several national newspapers to comment on these charges. In Aftenposten 24.05.2003, it was indicated that so-called "sleeping cells" may be hidden in Muslim student milieus.

[225] Interestingly, here a clear-cut distinction is evoked between the religious and the political, whereas elsewhere the political is said to be encompassed by "Islam as a *deen*".

institutionalize particular cultural interpretations of Islam or serve the interests of particular groups (men, elders).[226]

Reflecting on the issue of Muslim citizenship in a non-Muslim context, Aydin, one of the founders of the NMU, suggested in a *dars* that Norwegian Muslims should apply, in a positive way, the Islamic principle of integrating all that does not contradict the prohibitions of the Quran. Addressing the issues of "what Allah likes and dislikes", he distinguished between the universal and unchangeable and the particularistic and changeable in Islamic law. Based on the distinction between *fard*, (what is prescribed), *haram* (what is proscribed) and *mubah* (what is allowed),[227] Aydin explained that the proscribed and the prescribed only make up about 10% of the *Sharia*, so that a vast area remains open for men to make their own situational and changeable laws. The traditional law schools differ with regard to *mubah*, but *fard* and *haram* are universal and unchangeable. Aydin concluded that as a consequence of this the *Sharia* may in a way be said to be created by humans, thus allowing for the possibility that certain aspects of it may be erroneous, but simultaneously added that this was a controversial position on which there were different opinions.[228]

To Aydin and the other young Muslims, however, the relationship between Islamic law and national law was of less concern than the question of how they could live their lives religiously in a non-Muslim society. In so far as questions of *fiqh* were addressed, it was most often in terms of guidelines for everyday practices. Can a Muslim be a member of a Norwegian political party? What are the conditions of wearing a hijab in non-Muslim societies? How should Muslims relate to the gender-mixity of Norwegian society? Is it OK to go to school parties if one does not drink alcohol? How can one raise one's children as

[226] In Britain, e.g. the Union of Muslim Organizations, representing a small fraction of British Muslims, has argued for full communal autonomy in matters of personal law. They base their claims on the recognition in Islamic law of the right to autonomy of strangers-sojourners (*dhimmis*) in Muslim territories. In Britain there is also a self-appointed *Sharia* council who act as mediator between couples and interpret Islamic disputes (as do many other *ulema*) (Bano 1999). In Norway the advantages and disadvantages of such councils have been discussed in relation to the issue of Muslim women's access to obtain religiously valid divorces. Whereas some have argued that a Norwegian *Sharia* council would make it easier to obtain divorce for women from "conservative" Muslim countries, others have argued against the idea that Islamic law should be given legitimacy, even if within the frames of Norwegian law, in the Norwegian context.

[227] As one of the other attendants of the meeting objected, acts are usually classified according to five different principles: prescribed (*fard*) forbidden (*haram*), recommended (*sunna, mandub*) indifferent/permissible (*mubah, halal*) and reprehensible (*makruh*). Aydin's response was that this division in five was at a less general level, and that a main distiction could be maintained between what is prescribed, proscribed and the vaster area of acts of which there are no mentions in the texts.

[228] As Brinckley Messick notes (1992), what he calls "purists" of all eras, including many contemporary "fundamentalists", have made such a distinction between the divine *Sharia*, defined as God's comprehensive and perfect design for His community, and a humanly produced *Sharia*, or, more precisely, the corpus of knowledge known as *fiqh* (usually translated "jurisprudence"), a necessarily flawed attempt to understand and implement that design. In this gap between divine plan and human understanding, Messick argues, "lay the perennially fertile space of critique, the locus of an entire politics articulated in the idiom of the shari'a" (Messick 1992: 17).

Muslims in a Norwegian context? Are women entitled to work within a male-dominated profession? Is serving pork to non-Muslims *haram*? Does Islam allow plastic surgery? Can *salah* be postponed if one is in the middle of a football match? What should a Muslim woman do if her parents will not let her marry a Muslim of a different ethnic origin? Is chatting on the Internet *haram*? With respect to the position of the NMU and the MSS on such issues, Aydin asserted that it could be described as a "moderate *fiqh*", or a "middle way", "There is a large spectre of *fiqh*, and most people pick the extremes while we try to pick things that are in the middle". By "picking things in the middle" young Muslims seek to envisage Islamically correct ways of living within a non-Muslim context. In so doing, they engage in an ongoing reform of the Islamic tradition.

Citizenship and human rights

The hold of the "ideal typical" model of citizenship, understood as membership in a national, identity based community, upon political and institutional imagination,[229] and the discursive framework it creates for young Muslims' identity politics and claims to recognition is well brought out in a speech on integration given by Athar Akram, at the time the head of the NMU, at a conference held by Forum for Municipal Refugee Work (*Utrop* 02.12.2002). Akram starts by presenting himself as a successfully integrated immigrant. While his parents were born and raised in Pakistan, Akram himself was born and raised in Norway. Well knowing that "language" is repeatedly cited by politicians, researchers, and people in general as the most important hindrance to integration, Akram stresses the fact that Norwegian is his primary language and that he has a Western-Norwegian dialect.[230] He further emphasizes his estrangement during vacations in Pakistan, his friendship with ethnic Norwegians, his typical student life experience in a shared flat ("commune"), and finally his successful integration into the labour market. One by one he thus challenges stereotype pictures of "the immigrant".

[229] This understanding of citizenship as membership in a national, identity-based, community is also a more or less explicit assumption in some "immigrant-research". For instance, the Norwegian anthropologist Wikan (1995) argues that in her opinion, people who have a Norwegian passport, but dissociates themselves from fundamental Norwegian values and do not learn Norwegian, are Norwegian only in the "name" and not in the sense of contributing to the community. According to Wikan, those who are citizens only in the name are "convenience-citizens" (beleilighetsborgere) that benefit from Norwegian welfare without being committed to the community. She furthermore argues that such "convenience-citizens" contribute to xenophobia in the population.

[230] In Norway, having a specific local dialect is considered an important part of a persons belonging and identity and such dialects are generally regarded as more authentically Norwegian than the standard language (Gullestad 2003: 536).

In fact, he manages to demonstrate that not only is he "well integrated", but also successful according to general Norwegian standards of success.

Having established himself in the position of a fully integrated Norwegian citizen, Akram uses it to claim the universal rights guaranteed by this citizenship:

> As every major person in this country I have my own opinions and am allowed to make my proper choices and decisions. Those are my fundamental rights: to freedom of expression, including freedom of religion. These rights, and the rights of minorities to retain their distinctiveness, are essential to any debate on integration; an aspect I think receives too little attention. For what happens to the picture of the well-integrated Athar when I confess to being a believing Muslim? (Akram 2002: 2).

Being a believing Muslim, marrying by arrangement and wearing the hijab are examples he uses of the basic right a citizen has to freedom of expression, freedom of belief and the right to "be different" from what is "common" in Norway.

Akram demands to be accepted as *both* Muslim and a fully integrated Norwegian citizen, at the same time. By starting his speech with the Islamic opening formula, "Bismillah! In The Name of Allah, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful", pronounced in Norwegian and in front of a non-Muslim public, Akram performatively establishes himself as a Muslim Norwegian citizen. Akram is not only demanding to be recognized in terms of his particularity as a Muslim, but in terms of his universal rights as a human being and a Norwegian citizen. Underlying his claim is a principle of universal equality of human beings that constitutes the basis for an identical basket of rights. What we are asked to recognize is thus simultaneously the equal dignity of Muslims as individual human beings (what Taylor calls "the politics of equal dignity"), and their distinctiveness from everyone else related to their unique identity as Muslims (what Taylor calls "the politics of difference") (cf. Taylor 1994).[231]

The extent to which Akram's speech really challenges the understanding of citizenship as a unity of residency and cultural membership is nevertheless contestable. Akram's inscription of himself in a shared "Norwegianness" is no doubt an effort to counter stereotypical representations of Muslims by showing that they, like him, may be perfectly integrated citizens. However, in so far as Akram sees Muslim beliefs and practices as a part of the distinctiveness that minorities - in the name of universal human rights - should be allowed to retain (and not a part of what otherwise makes him a fully integrated citizen, such as speaking

[231] Note that whereas the structure of justification of the social claims Akram here names are based on the "natural" rights of individuals and human rights; the justification for those practices that are to be protected by these rights, however, start from authoritative interpretations of Islamic norms. The normative force for e.g. wearing a hijab comes from scripture; not from human rights. The reference to non-Islamic normative sources (such as human rights) is thus a means to implement Islamic norms (cf. Bowen 2004b:886-887).

Norwegian and living in a commune), he seems to uphold the notion of a homogeneous national community in which being Muslim is marked as "difference" (and not part of what defines the national community, e.g. religious pluralism). Claiming the right to be "different" is thus dependent on upholding and sharing in "the sameness" of the imagined Norwegian community. The example thus illustrates an inherent problem in countering hegemonic discourses, by which dominant categories (of sameness and difference, and of normality), are reproduced in the very act of resisting them.

Akram's speech also draws attention to the ambivalent relationship between human rights and citizenship rights. In politics, the value of "the national" tends to exceed that of other imagined communities and republican sentiments, and minority groups are thus compelled to appeal to "the national" to argue for their rights (whether as belonging to a particular nation-state as in the case of Norwegian-Muslim identity, or as constituting a nation in itself, such as in "Nation of Islam" or "Black Nationalism") (Gilroy 1993; Parker et al. 1992).[232] This is well brought out by the way in which Akram strives to establish his legitimacy as a Norwegian citizen (that is formally guaranteed by his Norwegian citizenship but nevertheless precarious by the way in which he and other Muslims of immigrant background "exceed" the dominant model of citizenship), before claiming his universal human rights to religious freedom and "difference". This brings out the paradoxical relationship between universal human rights and the nation state. To quote Agamben (1995: 126), who refers to Arendt on the issue, "In the system of the nation-state, the so-called sacred and inalienable rights of man show themselves to lack every protection and reality at the moment in which they can no longer take the form of rights belonging to citizens of a state". Agamben theorizes this ambivalence between *homme* and *citoyen* with respect to refugees analyzed in terms of "bare life" (homo sacer). However, his argument also illuminates the ways in which those who are "ambivalent citizens" must raise their claims on the basis of their national citizenship rather than on their "humanity" (cf. also Asad 2003; Baumann 1996).

[232] But this does not imply that the identification as Norwegian Muslims is merely a strategic move towards recognition. As we have seen in earlier chapters, there are important ways in which Muslim identity is being nationalized "on the ground", as a consequence of being articulated by young Norwegian Muslims like Akram, in Norwegian language and with references to important issues in contemporary Norwegian popular culture.

Identity politics and socio-economic inequality

The identity politics of young Muslims in Oslo, as elsewhere in Europe, centre on questions concerning the recognition of cultural and religious diversity. This concern is reflected in a large body of academic literature on Islam and cultural diversity, coming together in debates on "recognition", "identity politics" and "multiculturalism". Some scholars, in particular those writing from a (post) Marxist perspective, have criticized this focus on issues of cultural and religious identity and difference on the grounds that it blurs what is assumed to be the more fundamental question of socio-economic inequality.[233] Fraser (1997; 1998a) is also critical of the one-sided focus on cultural injustice in much contemporary work on "recognition" and multiculturalism. Writing from the perspective of normative political philosophy, she sees the need to address both issues of redistribution and cultural recognition. A main point of her argument is that it is necessary to maintain an analytical distinction between redistribution and recognition in order to theorize the tensions and dilemmas that may occur in different group's claims to justice. Such tensions and dilemmas are particularly poignant with respect to what Fraser calls "bivalent" communities; that is which suffer both from economic and cultural injustice in such a way that neither of these may be seen as an indirect effect of the other, but where they are both fundamental and genuine (Fraser 1998a: 27). Young Muslims in Norway may be said to form a "bivalent" collective in Fraser's terms, in that their position in society is shaped by cultural and socio-economic relations of power that are not directly reducible to each other, but nevertheless intimately linked. What I want to do here is not to pursue this as a theoretical discussion, but to pay some attention to the ways in which young Muslims themselves speak about the relationship between social inequality and recognition, and how these latter may be seen as intertwined with processes of social mobility.

I have already argued in an earlier chapter that the social organization of labour, housing, and education continue to structure the social position and conditions of possibility of immigrants and their descendants in Norway. Their access to the instruments of (re)production of the middle and upper classes is still more restricted than their non-immigrant peers (e.g. with respect to education and employment, cf. chapter two).[234] In this

[233] According to Bourdieu and Wacquant, for instance, "the woolly and spongy debate around multiculturalism" is a form of "cultural imperialism" in which particularisms from the American academic debate are misrecognized as universals. The American and European debates about "multiculturalism", in their view, blur the fact that what is principally at stake "is not the recognition of marginalized cultures by academic canons but access to the instruments of (re)production of the middle and upper classes" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1999: 42).

[234] However, one might expect that socio-economic injustice may be more acutely felt by young immigrants who were born and raised in Norway, since they most often see their future within this country and not in terms of an

chapter, I have further argued that social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication in important ways condition the life-chances and identity-work of young Muslims. Studies from Muslim countries have argued that Islamic revivalism is often entangled with processes of social mobility. Eickelman and Piscatori point to the great socio-economic and class diversity among people who are attracted to "contemporary Muslim protest movements" in the Muslim world, but nevertheless argue, in a manner owing to the so-called relative-deprivation hypothesis, that they appeal to mainly young, urban and well-educated people who "sense a gap between the status quo and their aspirations" and "who feel that their upward mobility has been thwarted by economic and political policies and conditions" (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996: 110). Aspirations to mobility and socio-economic marginalization have also been seen as important factors in some young Muslims' religious engagement in Europe (Fadil 2006; Khosrokhavar 1997). A relevant question to pose is thus whether young Muslims' activism in organizations like the NMU and the MSS is similarly energized by concerns with socio-economic inequality and aspirations to social mobility.

It has already been noted that the organizations mainly attract youth who aspire to be upwardly mobile in terms of education, professional life, economic security and social standing within Norwegian society. The possibility for such mobility is seen to be hindered by the construction of Muslims as others and the stereotypes attached to them in public discourse. On the one hand, young Muslims worry that misrecognition may cause self-hatred and low self-esteem among young Muslims. This again, they fear, may prevent them from seeking a career, or push them towards negative behaviour. Social ills such as the violence perpetrated by so-called gangs and juvenile criminality more generally are often explained as a consequence of misrecognition and its material effects. On the other hand, young Muslims worry that misrecognition prevents youth with an immigrant background, and especially those who are "visible" Muslims (e.g. wearing the hijab, but also in terms of their name and skin colour) from equal opportunities within education and the labour and housing market. As one young woman told me after having been interviewed for a job in the national television, "If this was England I would have gotten it. There they are used to reporters wearing a hijab".

Although young Muslims see misrecognition as thus thwarting their socio-economic integration and mobility in society, such processes do not alone provide them with an explanation of what thwarts social mobility. With respect to the immigrant situation, youngsters exhibiting "deviant" behaviour are sometimes spoken of as having lost their

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eventual "return" "back home". Social status is thus increasingly apprehended in relation to the Norwegian social context, and not to social hierarchies "back home".

parents' culture and at the same time having been prevented from assimilating the Norwegian culture. The position in-between is thus interpreted as one that potentially becomes a position of neither-nor, rather than of creative combination; creating a state of normlessness, confusion and non-belonging. It is important to note that most of the young Muslims in my study see themselves as "special" in this respect. Although often attesting to the difficulties of this task, they usually see themselves as having managed to turn their in-between-ness into a resource. Instead of letting misrecognition lead to lack of self-confidence, they have been strengthened by opposing it, they argue. In this respect, having a firm and secure Muslim identity is thus promoted as a way of solving the potential problems of being in-between (normlessness, confusion and non-belonging), by anchoring one's life in a universal system of norms and beliefs that gives one a "secure identity".

To some extent, the socio-economic position of Muslims in Norwegian society was also seen as being "the fault" of Muslim immigrants themselves. Reflecting a widespread popular discourse on immigrants, the Muslim population was often characterized in terms of "backwardness", traditionalism, lack of education, lack of understanding of Norwegian society, and as living according to poor moral standards. Some immigrant parents according to this understanding were perceived as bad examples for their children in so far as they, despite being Muslims, owned pubs, sold *haram* food and drinks in their shops and consumed it at home, or took advantage of the social security system. Furthermore, they were assumed to "stick to themselves" and lack sufficient knowledge of Norwegian society. The practices and social status of this category of Muslim immigrants were seen both as providing bad role models internally in the Muslim community and as degrading the image of Muslims in the society at large.[235]

Distancing themselves from this category of Muslim immigrants, the young Muslims I worked with often see it as their task to be "role models" both to other Muslims and to the society at large. They wanted to show that is possible to be both Muslim and successful in education and work, a good Muslim and well integrated Norwegian citizen. The image that the NMU and MSS wish to convey of a good Muslim – to paraphrase Schmidt's characterization of the image of a good Muslim among educated Muslims in the US (1998: 85) – fulfils the requirements of the [Norwegian] middle-class ideal: a well-defined family structure, honesty and cleanliness (a good Muslim does not lie, is honest in affairs, and takes

[235] Schmidt (1998) makes a similar argument with respect to how a well educated group of Arabs and Muslims living in the Chicago suburbs distanced themselves from the practices and social status of the inner city Muslims.

his turn in washing the staircase in the building where he lives), and respectability (such as being a good worker, getting a good education, being law-abiding, caring for one's children and contributing to their education).

The identity politics of young Muslims thus involves defining difference not only vis-à-vis the non-Muslim majority, but also vis-à-vis those Muslims who in a sense substantialize the negative stereotyping of Muslim immigrants in the majority discourse. The experiences of being perceived of as "one of them", energizes an insistence on being "special" compared to "other Muslim immigrants", both as individuals and in terms of how they see their own families and close social relations. Trying to change themselves in order to change negative stereotypes, is however a somewhat ambivalent strategy. Their own perception of themselves as "special" in a positive sense and other Muslim immigrants as "typical" in a negative sense inevitably may confirm rather than challenge the stereotypes about Muslim immigrants in general. Their project, thus, runs the risk of essentializing and homogenizing the Muslims associated with the traditional, illiterate and rural.

Seeing themselves as fulfilling an important void with respect to the education of Muslim youth, the NMU aims to attract youth who as they say "fall outside" of society and have no one "who looks after them". So far they have not been able to reach this group, however, at least not to any significant extent. New members are still predominantly recruited among socially well-adjusted youngsters, and not among those with a record of social or criminal deviance. As previously noted, a majority of members are also well educated, and come from families who are more educated than the average of the Muslim immigrant population. This to a certain extent distinguishes the NMU from its counterparts in other European countries such as France, where organizations like the *Jeunes Musulmans de France* have attracted a broader spectre of youth, including economically and socially marginalized youth from the disfavoured *banlieus* around cities like Marseille and Paris (Jacobsen 1999; Khosrokhavar 1997; Khosrokhavar 2004).

Following from this discussion, I would argue that even though the identity politics engaged by the NMU and the MSS is focused around questions of recognition rather than socio-economic injustice, these concerns are intimately linked as questions of recognition and identity are seen as having real material consequences. The question nevertheless remains whether identity politics mobilized around Islam is effective in bringing about changes in the distributive area. In her discussion of recognition and distribution Fraser (1998a) argues that those who suffer both cultural and economic injustice encounter a dilemma in that they must simultaneously claim and deny their specificity. The politics of recognition often involves

claims that call attention to, and sometimes performatively create, the putative specificity of one group, and then of affirming the value of that specificity. As we have seen, the identity politics of young Muslims exemplifies this strategy, as they mobilize to obtain a positive revaluation of Islam and Muslim identity in the majority society. On the other hand, redistribution involves claims about equality and entails an effort to make the putative specificity of groups irrelevant with respect to e.g. paid labour, housing, and education. Longva (2003) argues that earlier political struggles for equality in the Norwegian context, notably in the gender-area, have succeeded most notably by claiming "sameness" rather than "difference". It is thus questionable whether an identity politics based on Islam will be effective in mending socio-economic inequality between Muslim immigrants and their descendants and the non-immigrant population. If we pay attention to the individual level, the question of whether Muslim activism may enhance social mobility is also ambivalent. As I have argued, the "ethos" of reformist Islam, as it is articulated within the NMU and the MSS, is in many ways distinctly middle class, and as such it may stimulate individuals towards choosing mobile career paths or becoming more "respectable" (middle-class) citizens. On the other hand, and in particular with respect to women, the burden of "representing" a Muslim specificity in public spaces (e.g. the hijab) may hinder individual social mobility in so far as cultural misrecognition and social mechanisms of material inequality related to housing, employment, and education continue to reinforce each other.

The politics of recognition and the emergence of new political subjects

The identity politics of young Muslims is energized and shaped in important ways by the contradictions inherent in the Norwegian state's multiculturalist politics and discourses on cultural diversity more broadly, and the simultaneous assimilation and culturalization it entails. Expectations towards the Norwegian citizen to be a "loyal" and "participating" part of the national community, and the State's efforts to "integrate" those who are assumed not to be such citizens, contribute to politicizing religious and cultural differences. Integration policies, and the wider social imaginaries in and through which they are put into effect, notably the "Othering" of Muslims and the construction of an exclusionary national "We", hence become the basis for the mobilization of a diversity of identity politics of different kinds.

The politics of identity engaged by the NMU and the MSS implies the construction of particular kinds of political subject positions that both challenge and reproduce existing social imaginaries and power structures. As I have shown, the social imaginaries in the dominant

discourse on difference construct Muslims as outside of the Norwegian imagined moral community and attribute a range of negative stereotypes to immigrants in general and Muslims in particular. Young Muslim's experiences of being categorized on the basis of this discourse energize a politics of identity in relation to both Norwegian and Muslim "others". As I have shown, this form of identity politics is based on a modern notion of identity as vulnerable to misrecognition from others. Challenging dominant representations of Muslims and Islam and offering alternative representations is thus a way of achieving recognition, and ameliorating the situation, also in socio-economic terms, of those whose lives are affected by cultural domination, nonrecognition and disrespect. As it does in the case of the NMU and the MSS, such identity politics often involve an essentialization of "Islam" and a "defensive position" which idealizes Islam and Muslim identity. This, I have argued, may impose particular normative scripts on individuals, and in particular on women who, in the process of marking out sameness and differences, often come to represent and visually embody the borders between imagined communities.

Young Muslims' identity politics is involved in a simultaneous deconstruction and reconstruction of broad identity categories. They raise claims both to equal dignity (a universal basket of rights) and to the recognition of their particular identity as Muslims and their right to retain their distinctiveness and live their lives religiously. These claims are riddled with a set of intertwined and overlapping dynamics in the relationship between identity and difference, individual and group, national citizenship and transnationalism, recognition and distribution. I have shown that the way in which this politics of recognition is embedded in a tension field between different action horizons (including transnational relationships to "back home" and the "global community of Muslims") creates particular challenges for citizenship models that are based on the ideal model of a unity of residency, administrative subjection, democratic participation, and cultural membership. The active reference to and use of an Islamic framework to oppose cultural domination, nonrecognition and disrespect does not only inscribe Muslim identity into a politics of recognition, it also means that this politics comes to be framed as a religious duty and obligation that is central to young Muslims' religious practice. Challenging dominant representations of Islam and Muslims is conceptualized as *jihad* and *dawa*, and the hijab becomes a vehicle for asserting "pride" and speaking about the experience of misrecognition. Similarly, active participation in Norwegian society is conceptualized as a religious duty in a way that interacts with and challenges dominant models of citizenship. As a normative framework, the Islamic tradition

thus has certain consequences for how young Muslims' quest for recognition comes to be shaped.

Although acknowledging the importance of experiences of misrecognition as importantly energizing the identity politics mobilized by young Muslims around Islam, this chapter has already indicated that it would be insufficient to see the Muslim activism of youth in the NMU and the MSS simply as a "reactive" identity politics in relation to dominant social imaginaries in Norwegian society. Invoking Mahmood, I have argued that what I have discussed here as a politics of identity and recognition has to be understood in relation to a wider religious logic and attempts at living religiously. The religious identities and practices that are central to identity politics (see below) are thus not only "reactions to" misrecognition, but go together with the construction and disciplination of an Islamic ethical and moral subject, a theme that will be further developed in chapter five and six (cf. Mahmood 2005). Before we move on to this, however, the next chapter addresses the themes of knowledge and authority and continues to elaborate on some of the issues in this chapter, while moving on towards the next. Producing alternative representations of Islam and Muslims in order to counter misrecognition is seen to depend on having sufficient and correct knowledge of Islam, and on transmitting this knowledge to others through e.g. *dawa* work and exemplary conduct. How do young Muslims then engage with the Islamic tradition in the effort to acquire and distribute such knowledge? The chapter discusses contestations related to defining what Islam is and what being a Muslim entails and the ways in which young Muslims re-appropriate the Islamic tradition, and how they, in doing so, engage the potentials of transformation, reform and resistance within this discursive tradition. In so doing, it continues to focus on the intersecting similarities and differences (related to e.g. gender, generation and social status) that come to the fore as attempts are made to establish authorized interpretations of what Islam is and what it means to live as a Muslim within structures of authority that are currently in a process of transformation and negotiation.

Chapter five

The Quest for Knowledge: individualization and religious authority

Much of the activities of the NMU and the MSS are organized around acquiring and transmitting knowledge of Islam, a concern that is also reflected in individual efforts to acquire more knowledge of Islam by a variety of means. This chapter focuses on young Muslims' quest for Islamic knowledge and why such knowledge has come to be seen as so important to young Muslims. Knowledge of Islam is perceived as of crucial importance to religious identity and practice as well as to social relationships. Important issues are the maintenance of *iman* in a non-Muslim environment, how to secure correct Islamic practice and "purify" Islam of un-Islamic cultural traditions, to forge self-confident Muslim identities among immigrant youth, to counter racism, to assure gender justice, and to facilitate the integration of immigrants into Norwegian society. As shown in the above chapter, knowledge of Islam is considered crucial in order to change current representations of Muslims and Islam, and Islamic education through e.g. *dawa* work is an important dimension of young Muslims' identity politics. The next chapter concerns the ways in which such knowledges inspire, recommend, prescribe, justify and authorize religious practice (cf. Asad 1993) and how it forms the basis for work on the Self, the condition for becoming and acting as what Mahmood (2003; 2005) refers to as an "ethical Islamic subject". First however, this chapter will discuss some aspects of the social organization of religious knowledge, how it is transmitted, acquired, distributed and used in debates and contestations about a variety of issues pertaining to what Islam is and how one should live as a Muslim.

In (post)modern societies like Norway the transmission of Islamic knowledge proceeds within a context of an ambivalently secularized society, where mass education, mass mediation, and migration create certain conditions of possibility for the production, regulation, distribution and authorization of Islamic knowledge. These changes are not unique to Norway. Eickelman and Piscatori (1996) have noted a more general shift with respect to the contemporary production and authorization of Islamic knowledge, including a move from person to "print", a gradual erosion of the position of the traditional *ulema*, the advent of new communication technologies as media of transmission of the Islamic tradition, and a pluralization of authorizing discourses and institutions. These changes open new spaces for religious debate and contestation, and contribute to an "objectification" of Islam, that impact

on the on the ways in which young Muslims engage with and revise inherited religious traditions.

What are the consequences of such changing conditions of possibility for the ways in which young Muslims in Oslo relate to the Islamic tradition? In the literature on Muslims in Europe, several writers have described young Muslims' relationship to Islam in terms of broader tendencies towards "individualization". What is meant to be indicated by "individualization" is sometimes unclear, and different authors tend to use it in various ways (cf. Peter 2006). In this chapter, I will discuss the issue of individualization in relation to processes of knowledge acquisition and structures of religious authority.[236] I attempt to give an account of how young Muslims in Oslo acquire knowledge by e.g. listening to their parents, discussing with their friends, reading books, surfing the Internet, listening to conference lectures, *khutbas*[237] and *darses*, and how such knowledge is distributed and contested between genders, generations, specialists and non-specialists. I also pay attention to the institutional and socio-cultural underpinnings that generate particular patterns of distribution and authorization of knowledge, and the effects of globalization and new communication technologies on such processes. What kind of relationships do young Muslims establish to authorizing Islamic discourses and various Islamic authorities, and how do they use and authorize their knowledge of Islam when they talk about or discuss Islamic "truth"? In this respect attention will be paid to how hierarchies of class, gender and generation and socialization more generally influence readings of Islam, and the different competencies and capacities that people have for asserting their view of what Islam is and should be and to make such assertions socially effective (cf. Hervieu-Léger 2000; Mahmood 2005).

Debate and criticism have arguably been a part of the Islamic discursive tradition since its inception, meaning that confrontations about "true Islam" are not spurred uniquely by the encounter between Muslims and non-Muslims or between different Islamic discourses (cf. Asad 2003; Bowen 1993). Such processes do however seem to be stimulated and transformed by current process of modernization, globalization as well as the social dynamics operating in the immigrant context. More precisely, the space for such debate and criticism has been extended as the modern conditions of mass education and mass mediation have made an increasing number of people familiar with Islamic texts and doctrinal reasoning. On this basis young Muslims engage in debate about theological and doctrinal issues that were once the

[236] Authority here refers to someone's capacity to command allegiance to a particular set of claims.
[237] Sermons delivered during Friday prayer in the mosque.

provenance of male religious scholars. My argument in this chapter will be that focusing on Islam as a discursive tradition allows for the analysis of "challenges" to Islamic knowledge and authority, and "constraints" that continue to place restrictions on young Muslims, and to produce attempts at coherence and normativity within the Islamic tradition. By considering the religiosity of young Muslims as taking shape within a discursive tradition, an alternative perspective to individualization is offered for understanding processes of change in Islam (cf. Amir-Moazami and Salvatore 2003). As will be shown, the production of Islamic truths and essentials emerges as an active and structured process of contestation that must be understood in relation to how people are differently positioned in society with respect to e.g. age, gender and cultural and religious "Otherness".

In the first part of the chapter I explore how the socio-cultural context in which Islam is transmitted to young Muslims, contributes to the "objectification" and "normativization" of "Islam" and how it energizes a search for "Islamic knowledge" on the part of young Muslims. This search for knowledge is seen to proceed as a form of restricted bricolage, where young Muslims (assert their right to) put together their beliefs and practices from a wide field of religious discourse. Such restricted individual bricolage is contained by attempts at coherence and delimitation of "true Islam". In the second part of the chapter, I discuss the consequences of migration, mass education and mass mediation for patterns of authority, and analyse how "true Islam" is made an object of contestation and how different interpretations of Islam come to be accepted as authoritative. The last part of the chapter investigates the relationship between knowledge and belief, and discusses the challenges posed by modern sciences to religious belief. How is the relationship between Islamic knowledge and modern secular sciences negotiated, and how do these discursive traditions articulate with each other as point of authorization with regard to the construction of "truth"?

Religious knowledge and reflexivity

Umar disputes his father

Umar is 18 years old, and the oldest of six siblings. He was born into a Muslim Berber family in the Nador-area of Northern Morocco. When Umar was five years old, his father who had been working in Norway for several years, decided to bring his wife and children to settle permanently in Norway. Umar's grandfathers on both sides were respected men in the local community in Morocco; one as a local religious leader, and the other one in the regional

administration. Umar's father is a pious man, and continues to follow the Islamic practices that were handed down to him by his parents and the local community in Morocco where he grew up. Whenever the workload in his restaurant allows, he attends Friday prayers at the Moroccan mosque, and he contributes actively to raising money for mosque activities.

Umar himself recounts that he did not take his religion seriously until he started upper secondary school, "I knew that I was a Muslim and shouldn't eat pork and such things, but it was like I just knew, but I didn't know why". In childhood, he went to Quran classes, led by a "spiritual leader" who was a friend of his father. At the age of seven, Umar's uncle taught him how to pray, but it was not until he turned sixteen that he had what he refers to as his "religious breakthrough". Umar underlines that the breakthrough was related to a growing concern with the contemporary situation of Muslims around the world. He realized that something needed to be done. It was not an admonition from the surroundings, but an "inner voice" that told him to start taking religion more seriously. Gradually, he started to practice the five daily prayers, and became concerned about living his life within the frames of what is *haram* and *halal* and of acquiring more knowledge of Islam.

Umar describes his search for Islamic knowledge as something he did "on his own". He was a quick learner, and soon started to love his religion, taking it in as an encompassing part of his life. Umar explains his urge to approach Islam "on his own" with reference to the "narrow-mindedness" resulting from divisions within the Muslim community, and invokes the "original" flexibility of *fiqh*:

> If I had gone to the Moroccans, they would have taught me their ways. In Sunni-Islam the four law-schools were originally more open. The learned used to say that if you find something in my law sources that is wrong and something in another that is right, you should choose the law-school that your conscience tells you to follow.[238] Nowadays, people are more narrow-minded. A Moroccan who follows the Maliki-school disapproves of a Pakistani who follows the Hanafi-school, saying that they have their ways of practising and we have ours. I don't approve of such narrow-mindedness, so I preferred to explore Islam myself, in all possible ways.

[238] Umar refers to the debate about *ikhtilaf* – the respect for normative pluralism – that surrounds the Hadith "Difference of opinion in my Community is a mercy for people". "The learned used to say" refers to a saying by Imam Malik concerning difference of opinion among the Companions: "Among them is the one that is wrong and the one that is right: therefore you must exercise *ijtihad*". There is a debate about what this saying implicates with respect for normative pluralism and who should exercise *ijtihad* in cases of disagreement. When Umar refers to the saying, *ijtihad* is replaced by the expression "should choose the one that your conscience tells you to follow". This does not necessarily imply that individuals who are not scholars could themselves exercise *ijtihad*; only that individuals have to decide for themselves which scholars to follow. It is interesting that Umar locates this decision in the individual's conscience, which might indicate an individualization of the religious subject. Nonetheless, we should also hold open that "conscience" is not necessarily conceived of in terms of a sovereign moral subject, and that the individual's ability to judge right and good is partly seen as dependant on a process of learning and developing certain moral aptitudes and predispositions (cf. Asad 2003 and next chapter).

To learn more about Islam, Umar turned to books and the Internet, in particular the "questions and answers sections" of renowned scholars and preachers such as Yosef Qaradhawi and Abdul Hakim Quick. He started to socialize more with people who like himself took a particular interest in Islam, and learned much from their discussions. As his efforts to learn about Islam started to give results, Umar put up an Islamic site on the Internet with information about Islam, a discussion forum, and links to other Muslim web pages. Most of the material was translated from English into Norwegian by Umar and the other site moderator, but they also wrote some articles themselves. It was in another discussion forum on the Internet that Umar was first made aware of the existence and activities of the NMU, of which he soon became a member. Later on, he became engaged in a mosque youth group in internationally oriented Arab mosque that gathers Muslim activists and many converts. In addition, he attended conferences, *darses* and Friday sermons in several of the mosques in Oslo, preferring those with an Arab or international orientation.

Umar's father is a well-educated man, and since Umar's "religious breakthrough" they have often engaged in discussions about *fiqh*.

> Umar: My dad always regarded himself as the "master" in our house, but I enjoy refuting my father. My mum loves it to, when we get into discussions. To be honest – my father is a guy who "inherited" Islam. My grandfather was a religious leader, and my father regards him as someone who, because of this status as a religious leader, is never wrong. When I discuss with my father he always tries to "get" me. I think that the mistake we Muslims make today is that of regarding some people as flawless. But this is wrong, because humans are humans. There is a Muslim expression that says that we are not angels, we are humans who have a conscience. […] [239]
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> Christine: What do you and your father discuss?
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> Umar: It is often about *fiqh*-rules that we disagree upon. Sometimes it gets quite heated, and then I just shut up. You know how it is with elders. They think: how can a little 18 year old kid sit here and tell me that I'm wrong? […] My dad's only reference is to the law-school they follow in Morocco, but I am trying to combine the four, at least with respect to some things. I mean, stick to one of the schools regarding one particular practice. Many people pick the most convenient things together from the law-schools to make it easier on themselves. I don't agree with that - you're not supposed to sneak out.
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> Christine: How do you decide upon which school to follow then?
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> Umar: One should follow the one that one recognizes oneself most in. And then one should choose one and follow it in one's practices, while at the same time acknowledging the others. My dad and my granddad think that only one school is right. But the schools

[239] What Umar refers to here is that in the Islamic tradition, according to the Hadith literature, angels are usually considered the one creation that always obeys Allah and never transgress and disobey. That humans are not angels means that they have been given the capability to transgress and disobey and that they are bound to make mistakes.

> are all right since they stem from the same source; the Prophet. […] The problem with those who have inherited Islam is that they say that they are Malikites, but they don't follow what he did, they don't do things the way he did. They just follow the practices they inherited, without taking their time to read. That way it gets all wrong, and that is how my father argues in our discussions, referring to what my grandfather used to do.

One such discussion took place on the Arafat-day of *Zi-Hajj* and concerned the correct performance of *salah*. Umar and his father were in the car on their way back from the communal prayer in the Moroccan mosque, when Umar's father complained that the imam was mistaken in performing a three-time *takbir*[240] after the prayer. This should, according to Umar's father, only be performed on the three days of the *id-al-adha* celebration and not on Arafat-day. Umar objected to this, and argued that performing the three-time *takbir* should in fact also be done on Arafat-day. His father supported his own argument by referring to *his* father, who, as he remembered it, did not perform the three-time *takbir* when he led this particular prayer. Umar, however, did not accept the practice of his grandfather as authoritative on this issue. To his great pleasure, he was able to cite a saying of the Prophet that supported his own view, thus "refuting" his father "on the basis of the sources". Umar's father was not very happy about his son's challenge to his and his own father's authority, and kept silent for the rest of the ride.

The objectification of Islam

Umar's concern with knowing <u>why</u> he should follow religious prescriptions, rather than just knowing how to, was a theme often invoked by the young Muslims I worked with. This distinction was, as in Umar's case, usually related to a set of distinctions between the parental generation/young Muslims, inheritance/individual study, cultural tradition/true Islam, and narrow-mindedness/openness. The Islamic knowledge of many in the parental generation and of those Muslims who were not educated, was seen as insufficient and as representing an unreflected inheritance of local elaborations of Islam that had become wedded to local culture, which the young generally referred to as "culture", "tradition" or "custom". Such "tradition" was opposed to "Islam"; as embodied in the Quran and the Sunna and the scholarly Islamic tradition. A distinction was further made between practising what one held to be Islam out of respect for authorities and tradition, and practices that were based one's own knowledge and reflection. In order to be a practising Muslim, in the sense that young

[240] *Takbir*: praise, glorification, the declaration or expression *Allahu Akbar* (God is Most Great). The latter is a much used part of *salah.*

Muslims understood it, it was not sufficient to follow Islamic practices on the basis of the know-how that was transmitted from one generation to the next. Rather, each individual was responsible for acquiring as much knowledge about Islam as possible, in the sense of being able to articulate the religion as a coherent system of practices and beliefs; in order to secure the correct form of a given practice, to defend Islam, to do *dawa,* and to "apply" Islam in different areas of social life. Such knowledge was seen as vital not least to the effort to delineate Islam, as a universal and timeless truth, from its local cultural expressions. The young Muslims also generally deplored that the knowledge that had been transmitted to them from their parents did not give any answer to "why" Islamic practices should be followed, and what being a Muslim "really meant".

This approach to knowledge would seem to fit well with the claim by some authors to a pervasive process throughout the Muslim world, which consists in a modern "objectification of the religious imagination". In fact, Umar's complaint that he only knew how and not why he should follow religious prescriptions is virtually identical to the complaint of an Omani rural schoolteacher, quoted in Eickelman (1990: 121) who observes that "People here do not know Islam; they pray and sacrifice, but they do not know why". With respect to contemporary "Muslim Politics", Eickelman and Piscatori (1996) stress the emergence of a reflexive re-appropriation of religious tradition in the consciousness of many Muslims throughout the world. "Objectification", they write, "is the process by which basic questions come to the fore in the consciousness of large numbers of believers: "What is my religion?", "Why is it important to my life", and "How do my beliefs guide my conduct?" These "explicit, widely shared, and objective questions" are "modern queries that increasingly shape the discourse and practice of Muslims in all social classes" (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996: 38). As a consequence of such objectification, they argue, practices that were previously embedded in a whole matrix of custom, ritual and religious symbols and observed somewhat unreflectively, have become part a self-contained system (Islam) that Muslims can describe, characterize and distinguish from other belief systems, and are now increasingly the focus of conscious deliberation and debate.

Eickelman and Piscatori stress three different processes as central to the modern objectification of Islam. The first one is the spread of mass education and mass communication in the modern world which, they argue, "change the style and scale of possible discourse" (Eickelman and Piscatori 1996: 39): they involve people on a mass scale in debate about Muslim tradition, they enable a broader dissemination of ideas, and as they make people increasingly aware of other Muslim and non-Muslim traditions, they encourage

debate over meaning. As for the second process Eickelman and Piscatori (1996: 42) refer to an increasing tendency to see religious beliefs and practices as systems (*minhaj*) to be distinguished from non-religious ones.[241] Thirdly, they stress a reconfiguration of the "symbolic production of Muslim politics" as resulting from the two first processes.

Whereas Eickelman and Piscatori locate the increasing objectification of Islam in the late twentieth century, one could no doubt extend the genealogical roots of this process, as Salvatore (1997) does with reference to Cantwell Smith (1964). Here, the twentieth century development is situated within long-range historical processes of objectification and reification that transformed the Quranic *deen* into the named entity called "Islam". Salvatore notably stresses how this objectification has been embedded in transcultural dynamics. As Asad (1986; 1993) has argued, debates over meaning that necessarily involve some kind of "objectification" are intrinsic to the Islamic discursive tradition, and are as such not a new phenomena. It is thus, as Eickelman and Piscatori also rightly note, the "style and scale of possible discourse" and its insertion into particular socio-political configurations, that characterizes the contemporary situation, not the objectification and reflection upon, Islam and Muslim identity as such. What Eickelman and Piscatori do not elaborate, however, is the extent to which such objectification in our times also reflects a process of secularisation, in which Islam is necessarily acknowledge to be "one among many" comparable systems of beliefs and practices, as suggested by Roy (2004).

My point is not to establish a sharp distinction between a reflexive modern religious imaginary and a non-reflexive enactment of tradition, but to draw attention to the ways in which contemporary processes of objectification shape the discourse and practice of young Muslims.[242] I will attempt to situate these processes within the more concrete context of the everyday life of young Muslims in Oslo, by paying attention to the practical conditions under which questions of an "objectifying" kind come to the fore, and how they relate to the "kinds" of knowledges that are transmitted in different contexts and the knowledge that people need or are required to possess within them. The mode and extent of "objectification" with respect to Islam and religious practices is dependant on the way in which individuals and groups are positioned with respect to particular discourses, and how these discourses require or enable certain forms of self-consciousness in particular contexts and with respect to particular issues.

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[241] Although not necessarily as monolithic or uniform entities.

[242] There are different opinions on whether self-reflexivity is a particular modern phenomenon, or whether it is a universal human attribute (see e.g. Cohen 1994; Jenkins 1996). The way I understand reflexivity here, is in line with Foucault. It suggests a particular form of relationship to oneself whose form fundamentally depends on the practices of subjectivation through which the individual is produced (Mahmood 2005: 32).

The analysis will add an important dimension to Eickelman and Piscatori's rather generalized discussion of objectification in looking into how the "modern queries" of young Muslims in Oslo are importantly energized by the constant need to handle one's "difference" in relation to the non-Muslim majority society and to other Muslims who represent a diversity of Islamic traditions. Whereas "objectification" may thus be seen as a pervasive process that transforms the religious imaginaries and practices of Muslims throughout the world, this process must be seen as mediated by social relationships and institutions in particular socio-historical contexts.

Coming to know Islam: the family, the mosque and the school

Despite the importance of mass education and mass mediation to the distribution of Islamic knowledge in contemporary societies, the extended family and the mosque in many respects remain the most important sites for transmission of Muslim traditions in the Norwegian context. The learning that takes place in the extended family is dominated by the acquisition of "practical knowledge" through imitation and repetition. Children learn to be Muslims by participating in praying, fasting, reading the Quran, and the celebration of festivities, and by imitating and repeating the ritual performances of grown-ups, whether it is the five daily prayers, the ritual ablutions, or wearing the hijab.[243] Corrections of behaviour, praise and sanctions that are legitimized by reference to religious identity and "Islam" (you do not eat pork because you are a Muslim, or because it is prohibited in "our religion") are central to the acquisition of such "practical knowledge". "Learning Islam", in this sense, is thus a part of everyday life, acquired as a form of *embodied praxis* (cf. Østberg 2001).

Although mainly a "practical" knowledge, this process of learning is not simply a passive reproduction of religious practices, devoid of self-reflexivity. As Mahmood (2005) argues, any pedagogical process involved in the transmission of skilled practices, requires a certain amount of self-reflection to be installed in the practitioner. With respect to modest clothing, for instance, young girls will learn how to cover their bodies from the corrections, praises, and sanctions administered by their surroundings (as seen in the case of Latifa and Abid in the preceding chapter). This simultaneously encourages a certain level of consciousness regarding why it is important, what it signifies and how it makes some people different from others. In

[243] This point was most forcefully made clear to me during fieldwork in Morocco, when my then two and a half year old daughter Selma imitated the movements of the prayers that the family members of our "host family" performed one by one or communally. Selma would get out a small rug and bend down with her forehead to the ground to the great amusement of the family who laughingly told me to leave Selma with them so she could grow up to be a Muslim.

some families, particularly where the parents have a higher education or a certain educational level in Islam, transmission also takes the form of more formal teaching of the "Islamic" prescriptions and proscriptions, and of "Islamic" history, thus providing a body of discursive knowledge in light of which one's own and other's Muslim practices may be assessed, and where Islam is already to a certain extent "objectified".

In the context of the extended family, the transmission of Islamic knowledge is not necessarily a linear process from one generation to the next. Older siblings are often important tutors to younger ones, and cousins, uncles, aunts or grandparents may be as important as parents. Young Muslims, like Umar, who have sought out Islamic education outside of the family, often pass this knowledge on to other family members, including their parents. Umar, for instance, did not only discuss the correct form of religious practices with his father, but also encouraged him to take more seriously the Islamic criteria pertaining to what is *haram* and *halal*, for instance by reminding him that he should not be selling alcohol in his restaurant. Others, like Rabab, made their families change their eating habits and pay more attention to what was *haram* and *halal* with respect to food, as they themselves became concerned with and learned about such issues. Fatima told me about her younger sister, who at the age of 19 suddenly became very religious. She started to pray five times a day and to read the Quran:

> And she started discussing religion with my father. They would have the weirdest discussions where she explained him things about Islam, you know. My mum said that she was going to start wearing the hijab soon if she continued like that. My mum and dad found it amusing. I mean, here they have been trying to get their children to become religious, and all of a sudden, they do it on their own.

A particular instance of such reverse generational transmission is the influence of *hijabi* girls on their mothers. Some of the girls claimed that their encouragement had made their mothers cover themselves or start wearing the hijab in a more "correct" Islamic way. Active Muslim youth also affected the religious knowledge and practices of their parents more generally, by engaging them in discussions about Islam, conveying to them what they had learned about Islam outside of the family, and asking them to reflect over the meanings and implications of their religious practices.

The Quran schools in the mosques constitute another important arena for transmitting religious traditions. Learning through imitation and repetition is central within this context, notably through audition, repetition and memorization of the Quran. Body techniques related to the physical aspects of recitation — for instance concerning how the body and the fingers move, or how to sit correctly — as well as those of the ritual performance of prayers, are

transmitted, both in the form of imitation and as formal instruction. As within families, there is great variation between different mosques when it comes to the relative importance of learning through imitation and repetition, and a more discursive pedagogy which focuses on "explaining" and "understanding" Islam, in addition to installing the capacities and abilities that are necessary for the skilled performance of religious practice. In later years, the education given in at least some mosques has moved in the direction of modern pedagogy, where explaining and understanding the Quran increasingly supplement traditional techniques of memorization (cf. Johansen 2002). Some of the young Muslims in my study are now themselves teaching Quran classes, in the mosque or on a private basis, and they tend to favour this development. The imams in Norwegian mosques increasingly tend to have a higher education in Islamic sciences, both as a consequence of the demand on the parts of mosque attendants of such scholarly knowledge, and as a consequence of Norwegian immigration-regulations which require that in order to be granted a residence permit imams of a foreign nationality should have relevant education (Vogt 2000). The mosques are also organizing an increasingly broad spectrum of Islamic educational activities for children, women and men, as well as a diversity of lectures, seminars, and conferences on Islamic issues as well as on a broader range on societal concerns such as youth-violence, forced marriages etc.

In addition to the mosque, the state school in Norway offers religious education. In his discussion of "Mass Higher Education and the Religious Imagination in Contemporary Arab Society" (1992), Eickelman argues that the establishment of "Islam" as a subject matter to be taught in state schools, related to a particular curricula, and distinguished from other subject-matters, contributed to "objectifying" Islam in the religious imagination in the Arab world. An unintended consequence of making Islam a part of the curriculum within the style of intellectual technology introduced by modern schooling was to make it a subject which must be "explained" and "understood". In Norwegian schools, Islam is taught as "a religion" among other religions in the context of a religious education which privileges Christianity as a defining part of Norwegian history and identity and as a basis for communal values. Although the Norwegian state church system has been in a process of adjustment to a pluralist, multi-religious reality, the main socializing institutions of the nation state, state kindergartens and schools,[244] still have a Christian objects clause, (a legal obligation to provide *all* pupils with "a moral and Christian education"). The compulsory religious education in state schools,

[244] About 98% of all children attend state schools

despite its “pluralist” intent and unclear confessional basis, has a main focus on Christian knowledge and limited possibilities for exemption. In this context, “Islam” is presented as a system of beliefs and observances (Muslims believe in Allah and that Mohammed was his last Prophet, their religion requires them to observe the five pillars etc), and is contrasted to other religions and non-religious systems. Religious education classes in schools contribute to “objectifying Islam” both through the standardizations required in order to teach pupils about Islam in a way that can be assessed as right/wrong, and through the ways in which Muslim students are called upon to contribute to the class-room dialogue by actualizing their identities and experiences as Muslims (Gullbekk 2004). Typically, they are incited to engage questions of the kind: “Why do you [Muslims] fast in Ramadan?” or “Why do Muslim women cover their hair?” Most of the young in my study attended school before the introduction in 1997 of the religious education called KRL. Many were exempted from what were then classes in Christianity and some were offered the alternative of education in “Life Stances” where different religious and philosophical traditions were dealt with. Their narratives from the school years often focus on how they were called upon to speak as “Muslims” about “Islam”. This importantly energizes “objectifying” questions, of the kinds discussed by Eickelman and Piscatori. In order to “represent” Islam in a way that fits the dominant institutional language of the classroom, practical knowledge must be transformed into verbal explications and specific forms of rationalization. As Roy argues with respect to the French context, immigrant Muslims in France, and even more so those of the second generation who are educated within the logic of knowledge transmission in the secular school, are confronted with the necessity to “speak their Islam” in the form of a knowledge that is homothetic to the knowledge transmitted in various contexts (such as the school and in mass media). There is thus a register of possible ways of expressing lived Islam, that if not directly imposed, is at least suggested by the dominant forms of knowledge and their ways of rationalizing a practice (Roy 2000).

The ways in which knowledge is transmitted in the context of the family, the mosque and the state school importantly interact with each other. Questions of an “objectifying” kind, demanding a different kind of knowledge than the one embodied and transmitted through ritual and daily practices, arise as a consequence of mass education in a modern scholarly system, a “modern” approach to knowledge. In the context of immigration confrontation with one’s own “difference” in various contexts and life-stages is particularly important for triggering the search for such religious knowledge. For instance, in the homes of the young Muslims, gender and sexuality were among the primary terms in which “ethnic/Muslim” identity was inscribed. With the passage from “child” to “youth”, fundamental questions

about sexuality and gender relations usually arose in particular for young women, and in particular since gender relations in Norwegian society are differently organized and understood than in most Muslim migrant families. Is it right, as my mother tells me, that Islam forbids me from having male friends or that I should help out in the house because that is a Muslim (Pakistani etc.) girl's duty? Many young women told me that gender relations were one of the first areas they started investigating, and that wondering about such issues was one central reason why they became interested in learning more about Islam.

The importance of gendered questions in young Muslims' inquiries into what it means to be a Muslim and what Islam is, is also due to the fact that "gender" has been at the centre of most representations of (ethnic and) religious difference regarding Muslims. In this respect, but also because dominant understandings of gender and sexuality in the parental generation tend to restrict their own options, young men also tend to be drawn into questions regarding gender relations in Islam. Nabil, for instance, told me that after all the focus on the oppression of Muslim women in the Norwegian media and the "affairs" concerning the hijab, forced marriages and female circumcision, he had sought out knowledge on these issues to the extent that he now knew more about women's rights in Islam than about any other issue. And lately – after 9/11 – this knowledge had been extended to the field of war, terrorism and *jihad*. Approaching such knowledge as a matter of finding out about "women's rights in Islam", "human rights in Islam" or "what Islam says about terrorism" etc., further objectifies Islam as a system of belief and practices that can be compared and contrasted e.g. to "women's rights in Christianity" (or, more frequently, in "the West"). By asking such questions and attempting to find answers, young Muslims contribute to the objectification of Islam. This objectification is reinforced by the pressures from non-Muslims to "account for" the behaviour of "Muslims", in particular in relation to particular historical events such as e.g. the Rushdie-affair, and more recently 9\11, and also by the intensification of religious "dialogue work" that they spur. The objectifying questions that young Muslims pose to Muslims' identities and practices and the areas in which they seek out more knowledge about what "Islam says" and the "why" of religious practice are thus importantly shaped not only in the micro-politics of their everyday life, but also by the shifting macro-political concerns of the wider socio-cultural contexts in which their lives are embedded.

In his *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco* Rabinow points out that objectification also occurs in the interaction between anthropologists and the people we study, and in the process of writing ethnography: "[…] the informant must first learn to explicate his own culture, to become self-conscious about it and begin to objectify his own life-world. He must then learn

to “present” it to the anthropologist, to an outsider who by definition does not understand even the most obvious thing”(1977: 152). Rabinow found that people who were in some sense marginal to their own society or group often managed this objectification more easily. This relationship between objectification and “marginality” is important with respect to immigrant youth in Europe. The process of gaining self-reflexivity and self-consciousness about certain aspects of life is an integral part of their everyday life, and the anthropologist is only one “other” in relation to which such objectification occurs. Throughout life they have been continuously challenged and questioned by the majority population and by their co-existence with other minority groups forming part of what is referred to as “the immigrant community”. Furthermore, continuous discussions in politics and the media often create a form of hyper-reflexivity among the young in that the questions that are raised about Islam and Islamic practice importantly anticipate and engage current political debates in and beyond the Norwegian context.

From person to print: new arenas of Islamic education

Virtually all the young Muslims that I worked with stressed that although they had learned about Islam at home and followed Quran classes in the mosque, they at some point felt that they had to little knowledge of Islam, a feeling that triggered a further search for Islamic knowledge. Like Umar, most stressed that this was an undertaking that largely proceeded outside of the family, whether in attending seminars in organizations like the NMU and the MSS, reading books, surfing the Internet, watching video-tapes or listening to audio-tapes. The way in which Islamic education increasingly proceeds not only within the confines of face-to-face interaction in the family and the mosque relates to broader transformation in traditional models of personal transmission of Islamic knowledge; whether e.g. between parents and their children, the teacher and his student, or the *sufi* master and his disciple. As Eickelman proposes, modernity has seen a shift from “person” towards “print” as the main media for transmitting Islamic knowledge (Eickelman 1992). The notion of “print” is somewhat imprecise, however, since oral as well as written material on Islam is increasingly accessible to larger groups of people in diverse localities through such media as books, audio-cassettes, CD-rooms, and the Internet. I stress that this should not be seen to imply that all Muslims are equally affected by such transformations. Complex power geometries regulate the ways in which people are placed differently in relations to flows of knowledge, as producers, distributors, and consumers.

One of the implications of these transformations is that young Muslims in Oslo find themselves in a situation of increasingly multiple, overlapping and competing discourses that purport to transmit the Islamic tradition. With the move from "person" to "print", and the emergence of a global infrastructure for the maintenance, reproduction and dissemination of Islam (Mandaville 2004), such discourses are increasingly disembedded from locality. The high educational level and the new technologies of communication allow young Muslims in Oslo to access both the foundational texts and the religious knowledge of the experts that is spread through conferences, books, pamphlets, audiovisuals and the Internet. Whether the author of a book is based in Lebanon, Sudan, Tunisia, Pakistan, Great Britain, USA or France, or whether a web site is hosted in any one of these or other countries, matters little. The young Muslims read books, listen to audiotapes, watch videos, go to Islamic conferences and seminars, join discussion groups on the Internet or consult religious experts on the Internet in ways that are largely oblivious of where the knowledge is produced.

An important part of this material is the genre of pedagogical and ethical literature in the form of booklets and pamphlets (such as those produced by the MSS, or those distributed at *dawa* courses and Islamic conferences). During my fieldwork, I came across everything from *Ahmadiya* leaflets on "Women in Islam" to *Sufi* pamphlets on "The path of love and life". However, the main bulk of the literature and audio-visual material that was available at conferences etc. was published and distributed by various *dawa* organizations related to Islamic revivalism. Despite the importance given by the young Muslims to the foundational texts of Islam, only a few embarked on the strenuous process of reading the Quran and the Hadith literature. Instead, they would mainly achieve familiarity with parts of the texts through abbreviated versions of popular works, or small books explaining and commenting upon the Quran and the Hadith with respect to specific practices (e.g. the hijab, marriage) or specific issues (such as terrorism, or women in Islam). A number of internationally renowned preachers and religious scholars, popular among young Muslims in different countries, proliferated in these texts and audio-visuals, for instance Zaki Badawi, Yusuf Qaradhawi, Ahmed Deedat, Abdul Hakim Quick and Yosef Islam. In addition to this more explicitly "educative" material, cassettes and the Internet were also actively used to transmit Islamic poems, *nashids,*[245] and other music with a religious message.

[245] *Nashids*; anthems; build on musical traditions as the *qawwali* from South Asia and rhythmic chanting from the Middle East, especially as practised in *Sufi* tradition. They typically involve male choruses that repeat variations on standard Islamic phrases such as *Ya Allah Allah, Allahu Akbar* and at times explicitly political messages may be added. The choruses are often accompanied by drumbeats.

The Internet represents the most radically "de-territorializing" space of transnational Islamic flows, exposing young Muslims to wider and sometimes unorthodox theological discussions. Although the "globality" of the Internet is constricted by the uneven access to this space throughout the world, all the young Muslims I came to know through the NMU and the MSS had access to the Internet and used it regularly for a number of activities, including e-mailing with friends and relatives, shopping and school work.[246] Activities related to Islam included both searching for knowledge on particular Islamic issues, making knowledge accessible to others through the construction of Islamic web pages, networking, contact with individuals and organizations, and updating on news from around the "global Muslim community". Some also consulted online *ulema* on Internet sites such as the European Council for Fatwa and Research, in order to ask for advice and opinions on a diversity of issues, although most were satisfied with consulting the questions and answers sections rather than sending in their own questions.

Although the Internet may be seen to represent a radically de-territorializing space, the Internet, understood as a particular kind of social space, nevertheless remains embedded in other social spaces (Miller and Slater 2000). The flows that reach people through the Internet, and the use people make of it, tend to follow certain regularities and paths. Such paths are created among other things through the homepages of the MSS and the NMU, with links to other mostly Islamic, but also non-Islamic, sites in Norway, other Scandinavian countries and elsewhere. Similarly, links to articles and Internet sites are regularly distributed by way of e-mail. Certain "paths" are thus established within the global cyberspace. These paths also gain regularity from the linguistic capabilities of young Muslims. English is increasingly used as a lingua franca within Islamic cyberspace, but also Arabic, which only a few of the young Muslims I worked with master on the level of reading theological literature or listening to speeches.[247] In addition "maternal languages" continue to matter in establishing paths both with regard to the production, distribution and consumption of Islamic knowledge.

Paths are also created by the warnings against Islamic groupings that are spoken of as "sects" and "innovations". A variety of such groups are very active on the Internet, and sometimes it is difficult to find out who, where and by whom the knowledge one has access to

[246] There seemed to be little gender difference in the use of the Internet, but boys tended to be more active in putting up their own Islamic homepages and in posting opinions in Muslim e-mail discussion groups than girls.
[247] Whereas Norwegian Muslims tend to orient themselves towards English speaking literature and preachers on the Internet and elsewhere, young Muslims in France are generally less comfortable with the English language and rely more importantly on French literature and speakers (Jacobsen 1999). Some internationally recognized Muslim scholars and intellectuals have a command of several European languages, and move across these linguistic boundaries.

has been produced. In order to "control" knowledge, warnings have been distributed by way of e-mail that some Internet sites are hosted by Christian and Jewish groups whose primary goal is to hurt Islam by spreading mis-information. After 9/11 there were also warnings that pages had been taken over by anti-Islamic forces and were used to track down sympathizers of Al-Qaeda (cf. Halldén 2003). There is also a general mistrust towards the information given on Muslims and Islam in non-Muslim Western media, as exemplified by the critique of Western media coverage of the Taliban in Afghanistan voiced by Abid in an earlier chapter.

The pattern of acquisition of Islamic knowledge that emerges in this context may be characterized as a form of *restricted bricolage*, in that elements from otherwise distinct (but by no means static or homogeneous) Islamic discourses are put together in the efforts of individuals to gain more knowledge of Islam. The religious education received from the parents and in local mosques at an early age remains an important background for the quest for knowledge that some young Muslims undertake in adolescence and it continues to guide religious practice. However, due to the increasing availability of a diversity of Islamic discourses, a process may be seen in which the individual is increasingly called upon to reflect on her practices in light of the knowledge she has acquired through reading, surfing the Internet and participating in conferences and *darses* and seminars in the NMU and the MSS and other Islamic organizations. It should be noted that this use of the term bricolage is far from the one intended by Levi-Strauss (1966) when he spoke about how the "bricoleur" makes use of "whatever is at hand" without being subject to a discipline or commitment to a particular way of doing things. Rather, the young Muslims are committed to learning about Islam, and becoming better Muslims through so doing, but they do so by putting together knowledge acquired in a variety of different social contexts and springing from different Islamic traditions of interpretation.

The restricted bricolage of Islamic knowledge and practices is not always a product of conscious individual reflection, however. More importantly, different Islamic traditions are mixed through the coming together of young Muslims from a variety of backgrounds who, through an educational process that is partly undertaken individually, partly in groups like the NMU and the MSS, learn from each other what Islam "is" and "says" about different issues. Interestingly, the origins of the different elements in this restricted bricolage of knowledge often remain implicit and not thematized or even reflected upon in terms of where they are drawn from. As a result of globalizing processes that are producing heterogeneous Muslim localities and deterritorializing knowledge, young Muslims thus increasingly combine,

whether reflexively or un-reflexively, elements from different Islamic traditions in their daily practice as Muslims.

The spread of mass education and mass communication implies that increasingly more of young Muslims' religious education takes place outside of the family and the mosque. They are thereby involved in a range of debates about Muslim tradition that energizes questions about what it entails to be a Muslim and the meaning of different Muslim practices. Their approach to the Islamic tradition thus appears to be more "reflexive" and "individualized" than "traditional" approaches, a distinction that young Muslims usually map on to a distinction between the parental generation and themselves, and between those who are educated and not educated. The increased focus on an objectifying kind of knowledge is apparent in young Muslims' complaints that the Islamic education they got at home only taught them "how" to do things, but not "why". Furthermore, it is apparent in their critique of pedagogical practices of the Quran schools in the mosques, which they characterize as a mere repetition of Arabic words that people do not understand. I would argue that this critique reflects not only an increased reflexivity towards the Islamic tradition, but also a particular modern understanding of knowledge. The self-reflexive approach to Islamic knowledge rests on "[The] modern idea that a practitioner cannot know how to live religiously without being able to articulate that knowledge" (Asad 1993: 36). In this understanding, living as a good Muslim requires the ability of individuals to distinguish the Islamic from the un-Islamic, to evaluate different claims to truth, and to reflect upon what it means to be a Muslim and what the implications of different religious practices are (the why). Obedience to religious prescriptions must therefore be preceded by the acquisition of "correct" Islamic knowledge, which requires an active individual quest. While individuals are increasingly made responsible for relating actively to overlapping discourses and debates on Islam in the formation of their religious identities and practices, one might also argue that the fixing of "Islam" in textbooks, instruction manuals and the like, and their globalized reach by way of new communication technologies, work to establish Islamic standards that come to be conceived of as "true Islam". Eickelman and Piscatori (1996) also stress the importance of such edifying literature as both leading to and demonstrating a systematization of Islamic belief and practice as distinct from other religious beliefs and practices.

The normativization of Islam

Young Muslims, as exemplified in the interview with Umar quoted above, criticize their parents and those who are "uneducated" for "superstition", "veneration" and for basing their religious practice on cultural tradition rather than on knowledge of Islam. It is worth asking whether such criticism reflects a "normativization" of Islam. In the anthropology of Islam, and the anthropology of religion more broadly, a number of dualistic categorizations, such as that of "Great Tradition" versus "Little Tradition" (Marriot 1955; Redfield 1955), "philosophical religion" versus "practical religion", (Leach 1968), normative/orthodox versus popular, elite versus folk-religion, and high versus low have been developed (Saler 2000). In line with these efforts, Ahlberg (1990) distinguishes between "normative" and "popular" Islam in her discussion of South-Asian Muslim religiosity in Norway. She suggests that there is at present a resurgence of normative Islam, and sees this resurgence as threatening the flourishing of "popular Islam", and as representing a strengthening of religious obligations, that increase conformity.

The distinctions that Ahlberg relies on in her discussion have proven to be problematic in a number of ways.[248] What I would like to call to attention here is the general objection that such dichotomizations tend to take for granted the power relations inherent in the very process of defining the normative and orthodox (Asad 1986; Bringa 1995; Eickelman and Piscatori 1996). The reference to some exegetic traditions as "normative" easily turns into: "[...] a statement about the distribution of power within society rather than a description of on-the-ground behaviour and organization" (Johnson 1980 cited in Bringa 1995: 229). In contrast to presumptions of orthodox or normative Islam as a specific set of doctrines represented by elites and religious experts, Asad suggests that "orthodoxy is not a mere body of opinion but a distinctive relationship – a relationship of power. Wherever Muslims have the power to regulate, uphold, require or adjust *correct* practices, and to condemn, exclude, undermine or replace *incorrect* ones, there is the domain of orthodoxy" (Asad 1986: 15).

Based on this critique, I suggest that we speak of the critique young Muslims raise towards the religious practices of "un-educated" Muslims as process of "normativization" rather than

[248] As Vogt (2000) has pointed out, the normative/popular dichotomy also tends to overfocus on assumed systematic differences between popular Islam and normative Islam as relating to differences between educated/uneducated, sharia/Sufism, middle class/popular classes, cities/countryside, universalist/ethnicist. Vogt argues that in the Norwegian context the Muslim landscape is much more complex than the frequent use of such a dichotomy to speak about the pluralism of Islam in Norway suggests, in that such differences cross-cut and interact in different ways with regard to different exegetic traditions that are usually branded "popular" or "normative".

as a “resurgence of normative Islam”. The term “normativization” is not meant to indicate a specific set of doctrines “at the heart of Islam”. Rather, it refers to attempts at securing “orthodoxy” by condemning, excluding, undermining, or replacing knowledges and practices conceived to be “incorrect” (Asad 1993: 15). Young Muslims’ critique of the practices of the parent generation as “cultural” rather than truly Islamic, presupposes that there is a “correct” form of Islamic knowledge and practice – an Islamic orthodoxy. This does not mean, however, that they embrace a set of fixed doctrines that we can call “normative” or “orthodox” Islam. Rather they are involved in attempts to define correct knowledge and practice, as they argument and debate about the orthodoxy of current practices. This implies that they seek to (re)order the knowledges that govern the “correct” form of Islamic practices, as against other claims to know what the correct Islamic knowledge and practice is. The enormous amount of Islamic knowledge made available to people through new communication technologies, and notably the Internet, makes the process of establishing “Islamic truth” more contentious and thus energizes arguments and debates about the orthodoxy of current practices.

Young Muslims engage in precisely such attempts, through an engagement with the founding texts of Islam. Such processes are located within complex fields of power where young Muslims confront other actors who are differently positioned with respect to e.g. the nation-state, ethnicity, gender, class and generation. An engagement with the founding texts of Islam is thus not limited to scholarly commentaries alone, but embedded in the practices of Muslim youth who in various ways comment upon, strive to interpret, or invoke the authority of such texts. Hierarchies of e.g. gender and generation influence the ways in which the foundational texts acquire their specific meaning in different practical contexts, such as in disputes between youth and their parents, husbands and wives. What comes to be accepted as “true Islam” depends not only on “knowledge” of “religious doctrines”, but also on the ability to authorize different claims, and the practical context of power relations in which such knowledge is asserted.

In this particular context, it should be noted that efforts to establish correct knowledge and practice is intimately bound up with issues of representation and identity politics, as discussed in chapter four. Young Muslims “represent” the knowledges and practices of the parental generation as “cultural”, “traditional” or “un-Islamic”, partly as an effort to change what they see to be the dominant understandings of Islam in the public debate in Norway. By seeking to establish a hierarchy between different ways of knowing, forms of knowledge, and thereby different “knowers”, internal differences between “categories” of Muslims are produced and

expressively articulated in terms of traditional versus modern, superstitious versus rational, inherited versus self-reflexive, constrained versus chosen, collective versus individual, and parental versus second generation. In so doing young Muslims both reinforce and challenge the dominant discourse on Islam and Muslims in the Norwegian context. They tend to reinforce the construction of "most Muslims" as illiterate, backwards, and traditional, while constructing themselves as modern, educated and progressive. But at the same time, they challenge the dominant discourse by claiming that more knowledge about Islam, rather than an abandonment of the Islamic tradition, is a solution to problems that are associated with precisely such marginalized categories of people: the illiterate, traditional and rural. Acquiring knowledge is thus a precondition both for individual growth, for realizing Islamic life in society, and for "representing" Islam in a different way. Practices perceived as problematic and un-Islamic such as the oppression of women (including the much talked about forced marriages and female circumcision), the *zaat* (ancestry/caste) system in South-Asia, the institution of *pirs* (saints, spiritual masters), and *marabout* (holy man) idolization, are expected to disappear as people become educated, both through a general higher education as well as through Islamic education. In continuity, it is expected that prejudices and stereotypes against Muslims, that are generally assumed to be partly a result of Muslims' own lack of knowledge of Islam, will disappear as Muslims become educated and learn how to represent Islam and live according to Islamic standards.

Normativization and the gender of knowledge

It has been argued that because what is referred to as "normative Islam" privileges a form of knowledge that is traditionally the domain of men, the increasing dominance of "normative Islam", will lead to the marginalization of Muslim women (e.g. Ahlberg 1990). Muslim men have traditionally had easier access to education than women, and the possibility of acquiring scholarly Islamic knowledge by participating in the mosques and other learning centres. The *ulema,* imams and *khatibs* (preachers of sermons) are almost exclusively men in both Sunni and Shia tradition. As a consequence, women have to a large extent been subjected to men in matters of religious authority, even though women in some regions have played influential roles, especially within *Sufi* movements (cf. Eickelman and Piscatori 1996). With respect to Muslims in Norway, Nora Ahlberg argued that because of this male dominance of the scholarly tradition, "normative Islam" was inimical to women. She argued that mosques in

Oslo associated with "normative Islam", and more particularly the ICC,[249] did not see women as equal to men, and that they excluded women from activities in the mosques.

Attempts at securing an orthodoxy based on the Quran, the Hadith, and the scholarly Islamic tradition, entail that some of the knowledges that are traditionally passed on between mothers and daughters concerning e.g. saints' cults and healing practices, are conceived of as "superstition" and "folk-religiosity" rather than knowledge. One might speculate that the "privatization" of religious socialization in the context of migration gives a new importance to the role women play in transmitting the Islamic tradition, bringing about a partial "feminization" of religious socialization. Such a feminization may be central to young Muslims' perception of the Islam of the parents as marked by superstition and irrationality, attributes that are often glued to female religiosity. In many societies, women were the privileged bearers of non-institutionalized Islamic knowledges that gave voice to marginalized groups, who were denied access to, and largely remained outside, the controls of scholarly Islamic institutions. The attempts of young Muslims to establish orthodoxy based on a scholarly approach to the Quran and the Hadith may thus discontinue the passing on of such traditions.

However, Islamic revitalization and "normativization" has also entailed a new focus on the role of mothers as the educators of coming generations of Muslims. It is thus argued that women need to have a proper Islamic education in order to attend to the Islamic nurturing of children. This need to provide a proper Islamic education for women, in their capacity as mothers, was often stressed by the young Muslims I worked with. They stressed that Islamic identity is maintained in the family, and that this is particularly important in modern times when religion is increasingly ousted from the public sphere. The mother is seen as the core of the family, and is given a particularly important role in preserving Muslim identity and securing the Islamic education of children. Contrary to the view that a focus on the normativity of the Islamic texts and the scholarly tradition leads to the marginalization of women, mass education and mass media also contribute to giving women more equal opportunities with men when it comes to acquiring religious knowledge. As a consequence, women are now finding new roles within the production, distribution and consumption of Islamic knowledge. Women's access to the Islamic sources and the scholarly Islamic tradition

[249] Islamic Cultural Centre is the second largest Pakistani mosque, and often seen to represent "normative Islam" as opposed to the larger "folk-religious" mosque *Jamaat-e-Ahl-e-Sunnat*. ICC is affiliated to the Pakistani Jamaat-i-Islami, and was set up in Norway in 1974. It presents itself as a non-national mosque, but nevertheless consists mainly of Pakistanis.

creates a basis for debating and contesting social and cultural practices and for proposing alternative Islamic truths notably in the area of gender relations (Jacobsen 2004). Muslim women have also become "new" intellectuals and activists in contemporary Islamic movements[250], as they have in the context of the NMU and the MSS were young women hold important positions. As mentioned in chapter three, women quite exceptionally in a comparative perspective, give *darses* in mixed congregations, as invited speakers or as members of the organization. They are also active in producing and transmitting knowledge in the Islamic magazines published by the organizations. In some other Islamic organizations Norwegian female converts play a particularly important role in the production and dissemination of Islamic knowledge through university studies, lecturing activity and publishing (cf. Otterbeck 2000 on the role of female converts in Sweden). These are also frequently used as lecturers by the NMU and the MSS. Despite this, men continue to dominate the production and dissemination of scholarly Islamic knowledge in public spaces. At a macro-level, this is even more so, in that the lectures and sermons whether given at Islamic conferences or distributed audio-visually by various *dawa* organizations, are almost exclusively male. The discussions above nevertheless points towards an important emerging reshaping of gender relations in the reproduction of the Islamic discursive tradition.

"Normativization" then, does not simply imply that we see a shift from "popular" to "normative" Islam. Neither does it necessarily imply a marginalization of women. Rather, it implies that young Muslims engage in debates about what the correct form of Islamic knowledges and practices should be. This "normativization" should be partly understood in relation to the objectifying processes discussed above, where young Muslims are confronted with increasingly multiple Muslim discourses and ways of living as a Muslim. It should also be seen as related to the way in which a secular environment encourages a distinction between different religious beliefs and practices as "systems" or "religions" that may be compared to each other (such comparison is e.g. central to the dialogue-work that some of the young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS engage in), that define the identities of groups (e.g. as exemplified in the discussion of the politics of identity), and between "the religious" and "the secular" (by the young Muslims articulated as a distinction between "cultural tradition" and "religion"). In the next sections, I will focus on the ways in which young Muslims invoke the authority of "Islam" and the Quran in commenting upon and criticizing prevailing

[250] An example is the Norwegian convert Anne Sofie Roald whose book on *Women in Islam: The Western Experience* (2001) received international attention and has been read by some of the young Muslims in my study.

understandings of what Islam is, and of Muslim practices. I discuss to what extent such efforts may be seen to reflect an "individualization" of the relationship of young Muslims to the Islamic tradition, and how such an individualization relates to broader changes in religious authority.

Individualization and authority

Young Muslim voices 'speaking Islam'

Something that never ceased to surprise me during fieldwork was the assertiveness with which the young spoke about Islam. They would be quick to dismiss others as ignorant, and others' viewpoints as based on faulty or insufficient knowledge of Islam. Faced with the opinions of others on what Islam says and Muslim practice entails, they often wanted to "check for themselves". This usually implied trying to find out whether a certain idea or practice had its origin in the Quran and the Sunna, or whether it was a matter of "superstition", "innovation", or "culture". In this respect, they tended to see the Quran and Hadith as "transparent", in the sense that "Islam" could be directly derived from the Holy texts. When speaking to me as a researcher about particular Islamic practices, however, many would stress that they were not sure that this was what Islam really says, and that I should ask an Islamic scholar to assure I got the correct information on a particular issue. At other times they would stress that what they said about Islam was just a personal opinion, and that others may see things differently. The assertiveness with respect to "what Islam says" was thus contextual and dependant on the subject at hand as well as on the situation in which the assertion was put forward.

An interesting case in this respect is a feature article written by a young Muslim woman of Pakistani origin in one of the major newspapers in Norway. At the time I came to know her a few years after the article was published, she had become a member of the MSS. The article deals with "emancipation" as a contested issue in the relationship between youth with a Pakistani family background and their parents, and discusses the discrepant views that parents and youth have of emancipation as respectively "moral corruption" and "getting an education and participating actively in social life". Referring to a TV-programme, in which one girl related that she had not been allowed to meet her fiancé until they were married, but only to see his picture, she writes:

> […] This custom is practiced to a large extent by Pakistanis. But it should be underlined that this is a custom that has become a part of life in their societies, and that does not originate in the Quran as many people believe. It also occurs that young girls are married against their will. This does not belong in Islam either. In the Quran it says that one should be allowed to see each other before marriage, and possibly also learn to know each other if one so wishes. And not least, the most important of all is that no one should be married against their will, both should give their consent.

The author relates such practices to a lack of knowledge of Islam:

> […] More or less all Pakistanis from the countryside have minimal knowledge of Islam, at least as seen from their low or lacking education. The little they know that is actually correct is often equivalent to the average knowledge Norwegians have of Islam (those who have a certain clue). They learn to read the Quran in Arabic - thousands of words they do not understand. Furthermore, many are illiterate and cannot read the Urdu translation either but are obliged to blindly trust the "learned". Some customs and traditions they have therefore do not belong in Islam. In the Quran, each and every man and woman's right to education is emphasized. They should be equal in nearly all areas of life. It should be added, however, that in Islam it is seen as a necessity and matter of course that some tasks are accommodated for women and others for men. But as mentioned, all should have the same opportunities. Therefore great weight is given [in Islam] to equality between men and women.

The example above illustrates the way in which young women assert their opinions of what "Islam says", in order to better the condition of women in their surroundings. The author challenges Pakistani parents and accuses them of insufficient knowledge both of the social life of youth in Norway and of Islam. The hindrance to gender equality among Muslims is here identified as the ignorance of uneducated people from the countryside. Knowledge about Islam thus becomes an asset for claiming certain rights e.g. concerning marriage. The example also illustrates how such personal assertions of what "Islam says" are enunciated within established discourses. The writer's claims to gender equality are based on opposing Islam to cultural traditions, practices based on knowledge to those based on ignorance, and on references to the Quran as the authoritative source of Muslim practice. References to the Quran are made in order to authorize the author's embracement of gender equality; women's right to education, their rights in entering into marriages, and more generally their rights to be given the same opportunities as men. This strategy of using Islamic resources as means for empowerment has been dealt with in several other studies of Muslims in Europe (see e.g. Amir-Moazami and Salvatore 2003; Fadil 2005; Göle 1993; Khosrokhavar 1997).

Roy (2000) has suggested that the assertiveness of young Muslims when it comes to who can "*parler, énoncer le vrai, dire ce qu'est l'islam*" is related to a wider process of "individualization" in contemporary European Islam. The main factor underlying this process,

according to Roy, is the loss of Islam's social plausibility, resulting in a heightened need of the individual to reflect on his religion. This individualization does not necessarily bring forth a "critical discourse", however. In order to explain how the content of the discourse of young Muslims may be orthodox or what he refers to as "fundamentalist" and at the same time a part of an individualization-process, Roy introduces a distinction between "the enunciation" (*énonciation*) and "its content" (*énoncé*). Whereas the former signals the "act" of making a statement, the second signals the elements that discourse is made of. According to Roy, individualization is expressed in the way that Islam is theorized e.g. as a factor in individual development and rupture with "tradition". Furthermore, the mode of enunciation of those who speak (I who speak to you tell you what Islam is), and its "*point d'imputation*" (I'm addressing you to give a response to a concrete problem in your relation to society), rather than in the *énoncé*, indicates an ongoing process of individualization in young Muslims' relationship to Islam (Roy 2000). Due to processes of individualization, the answer to questions like "What is Islam?" and "What does it mean to be a Muslim?" increasingly has to be individual, not so much in terms of elaborating new theoretical answers, but in terms of self-appropriation of the answers (Roy 2004: 38)

Roy's distinction between the "*énonciation*" and the "*énoncé*" is instructive. However, it does not sufficiently explore why young Muslims utter what Roy refers to as "orthodox" or "fundamentalist" statements. The argument that young Muslims' capacity to "speak Islam" is an affirmation of individuality (apprehension of self as producer) and subjectivity (the capacity to speak Islam for oneself) also needs some qualification, at least when applied to the young Muslims I worked with in Norway. Although young Muslims increasingly theorize their own Islamic engagement as an individual project, their capacity to "speak Islam" remains enabled and restrained by the rules and regulations of the Islamic discursive tradition and the social relationships in which they are embedded (cf. Dassetto 2000). There is a range of already existing assertions, practices and institutions that constitute a field of possibility for what may be said and accepted as true. This raises important questions about the kinds of rules, regulations and capacities that enable certain people to "speak Islam" in particular contexts? In this respect, I will investigate below the question of how young Muslims tie their utterances and claims to "speak Islam" to authorizing discourses in the Islamic tradition.

The argument that the assertiveness of young Muslims reflects a generational change also needs some qualification. In his study of Turkish Muslim migrant workers to Germany, Schiffauer (1990; 2002) has argued that the new understandings of Islam, to be found among young Muslims, are not entirely disconnected from the transformations that can be observed

among the immigrant generation. This immigrant generation, Schiffauer points out, had already realized a conscious (re)appropriation of the Islamic tradition, and this trend was to become ever more important in the following generations. Another position is voiced by Dassetto (2000), who argues that seeing the assertiveness of young Muslims when it comes to who can "speak Islam" as a generational change, omits the fact that also in the older generations in Muslim countries one similarly encounters interlocutors who articulate their proper view of Islam. Similarly, Amir-Moazami and Salvatore (2003) stress the need to see developments among young Muslims in relative continuity with the reformist discourses as they were developed in the late nineteenth century in the Islamic world. Here, one should note that Islamic education and the duty to do *dawa* and encourage others to do what is good and right is increasingly theorized as an individual duty, and that the need for a continual interpretation of the Islamic sources (rather than reliance on tradition) is repeatedly invoked (cf. Mahmood 2005).

Among the young Muslims I worked with in Norway, the assertiveness with which they spoke about Islam, and the mode of enunciation varied considerably from person to person. They had different competences and capacities, according to e.g. age, gender, education and socialization more generally. In speaking to the younger ones, and also to some of those who were less active in the organizations, the assertiveness regarding what "Islam says" was more variable. The point of enunciation would just as often be "my father says that Islam is" or "a friend of mine says that Islam is", as "I tell you what Islam is". This variation was also present among the parents. In some families the capacity to speak with assertiveness as to what was Islam and not, was cultivated through discussions of social life and religion that were features of everyday life. In these families, much of the same critique that young Muslims voiced towards the parental generation and their traditional and un-reflexive way of living Islam was voiced towards other Muslims who they characterized as lacking knowledge of Islam.

The discussion between Umar and his father that was quoted in the introduction to this chapter is also instructive in this respect. Umar and his father frequently engaged in such exchanges, and were both able to articulate and defend their views of what was correct Islamic practice. However, the ways in which they sought to authorize such claims differed significantly, as Umar put more weight on the individual's right and duty to compare different opinions whereas his father regarded the tradition he had been brought up in as authoritative. We also saw that the ability to assert a personal voice was embedded in asymmetrical social relationships, where Umar would sometimes "shut up" in deference to his father, although his

"scholarly knowledge" might exceed that of his father on the issue being disputed. This respect for generational hierarchies and parental authority was widespread among the young, and in many cases meant accepting the authority of parents and other elders, by avoiding confronting it with a "personal voice". Generational relationships were often discussed in particular in the context of the NMU, and here the importance of respecting one's parents was repeatedly asserted as an ideal that should only be circumvented in cases where parents hindered their children from living according to Islam. In other situations, gender and generation would intersect to regulate the possibility to speak Islam. For instance, Alesha was scolded by her father when she wrote an article in the local newspaper where she criticized the Pakistani community for gossiping. Alesha was tired of being gossiped about whenever she was seen speaking to some of her many male friends, and criticized it by referring to the disapproval of such behaviour in Islam. The young woman's father worried about the anger that could be directed at his family for criticizing "their own" in such a manner, and was only partly reassured by the many positive reactions Alesha got from young women her age after the critique was published.

Furthermore, the capability to "speak Islam" also depends on the development of certain discursive capacities that young Muslims develop in debating with their parents, their classmates, their teachers, their Quran teachers and through the media. The NMU and the MSS are important in this respect, not only as spaces where young Muslims "speak Islam", but also as spaces in which the discursive capacities that allow one to do so are developed, for instance in the *dawa*-programs, in listening to *darses*, and in discussing with others. As we will see in the next chapter, the way in which Islam is theorized as a factor in individual development and ruptures with "tradition" (as in Umar's case) is in itself based on narrative models of an exemplary return to Islam provided to the young e.g. in literature, seminars. The ability to "speak Islam" in any given context is related to the social identities of the speakers, and to the discursive capabilities that different people had developed, and the ways in which they were able to authorize their statements. The individual's relationship to Islam thus remains firmly situated within social relationships and structures of authority, even when people, like Umar, stress that they must "choose" to follow the direction they "recognize themselves in", or that they have pursued a "solitary" search for Islamic knowledge.

The contestation and re-assertion of authority

Being capable of "authoring" one's proper understanding of Islam does not necessarily imply that one's viewpoints are authorized by others, or that a person "speaks Islam" with authority. When young Muslims talk about and debate Islam, with their parents, their classmates, or Muslim friends, they must rely on some kind of "authorization" of their viewpoints. Practices and utterances gain their authority not *sui generis,* but by their relation to authorizing discourses of a more general order (Asad 1993). Changes in the production and distribution of knowledge between specialists and non-specialists, young and old, men and women influence relations of authority and power within the Muslim community in important ways. "The Islamic sources" and religious knowledge have been made accessible to new and larger groups, including many women and youth.[251] These changes have led writers like Eickelman and Piscatori (1996: 111) to argue that mass education opens the way to "democratized" access to religious texts and overcome restrictions as to who is "authorized" to interpret them. Although I agree with Eickelman and Piscatori that such restrictions are importantly challenged, I will argue that the consequences are nevertheless ambivalent, as they simultaneously energize efforts to re-assert restrictions on interpretation. The result is a complex process of contestation over authority that should be assessed in terms of transformations and continuities in social identities, power and institutions.

The dispute between Umar and his father is again instructive. The literal issue of controversy – the correct way of performing *salah* – may seem trivial at first. Considering that ways of praying are important in distinguishing different Muslim groups (e.g. Shia from Sunni, different *madhabs*[252], or traditionalists from Islamists) it appears to be less so, however. In discussing the controversy with me, Umar himself pointed out several issues on which he and his father differed. Umar, like most young Muslims in the MSS and the NMU, is critical of what they refer to as "inherited" Islam. "Inherited Islam" is seen as less "true" and "authentic" than the Islam that is acquired through a personal "return to Islam". A central characteristic of "inherited Islam", is the reliance on "tradition" and the fact that certain persons are seen as the "mediators" between the individual and the Islamic revelation. Young

[251] More books are now published in, or translated into English. This increases the accessibility of the religious knowledge for youth in the second generation who do not master literary Arabic or have sufficient reading and writing skills in their mother tongues. Books written in the mother tongue still seem to be an important source of Islamic knowledge for at least some of the members of this generation though. The translation and publication of Islamic Literature in Norwegian is still in its very beginning. An example of this is the translation of Syed Abu-Ala' Maududi's Introduction to the Quran, by one of the members of the MSS, and accessible from their Internet pages.

[252] In *fiqh madhab* indicates one of the (four major) schools of law.

Muslims thus sometimes criticize the parental generation for "personification" and "association" – the veneration of religious leaders and "holy men" – who are considered infallible and at times invested with supernatural powers.

This "personification", as it is often called by the young themselves, is contrasted to a more critical apprehension of Islamic knowledge (that Umar locates in the early history of the Islamic tradition) that gives room for individual reflection. Instead of unquestioningly following the opinions of one religious leader, in the way he imagines his father does, Umar's approach to Islam involves "comparing different opinions", and "choosing the one that he recognizes himself in". Whereas Umar's father invokes the authority of tradition and religious men, Umar – using the strategy of citation – "returns to the Quran and the Sunna" in order to authorize his own view. Whereas to Umar's father, authority resides in his father's way of practicing Maliki rites, Umar sees the law-schools as different, but equally valuable positions that may be combined so as to achieve more flexible solutions.[253] This should not be abused by individuals as a means to "make life easier on themselves", Umar stresses however. One may follow one of the law-schools with regard to a particular issue (e.g. prayer), and freely combine it with the opinion of another law-school with regard to another particular issue (e.g. fasting). The combination of different law-schools, he asserts however, should not interfere with the internal consistency of a given practice. It should be noted that Umar's conscious way of relating to the different opinions of the law-schools, is not shared by all the young Muslims I worked with. With respect to most religious practice, e.g. such as the prayer, they continue to practice in the way it has been institutionalized in particular traditions, as conforming to different law-schools. However, because of the coming together of Muslims in organizations like the NMU and the MSS, the young Muslims increasingly draw on different schools in forming an opinion of what is correct Islamic practice, what is *halal* and *haram* etc. The extent to which this mixture is reflected upon and basis for individual religious practice varies greatly e.g. with respect to the familiarity of young Muslims to the scholarly Islamic tradition.

The positions of Umar and his father towards the authority of different law-schools and traditions of interpretation are also reflected in the social aspect of their religious practices. Whereas Umar's father relates more or less exclusively to a Moroccan mosque in which most

[253] In Islamic jurisprudence, this is known as the principle of *talfiq* (Ar. Literally "concoction", "fabrication", "piecing together") and refers to the piecing together of views from different Schools of law to formulate a legal principle or rule. The principle was employed and developed notably by Muhammed Abduh (1849-1905), and became central to the Islamic reform movements of the 20th century.

people belong to the same "school" as he does, Umar moves between different mosques and religious organizations, articulating different interpretations and technical understandings of Islamic rituals. He does not see this pluralism in terms of which of them is right/wrong, but in terms of a legitimate plurality of opinions within the Islamic tradition, in which it is up to him, as an individual, to choose which authority to follow.

In the above example, local mosques and imams are of limited importance in authorizing practices as "true Islam". Neither Umar, nor his father, regard the practices of the imam in their local mosque in Oslo as authoritative. This contrasts with the Norwegian majority discourse on Islam, where great weight is generally given to the importance of imams as Islamic authorities. General assumptions in the public discourse in Norway see the question of Islamic authority primarily in terms of "authoritarianism" on the part of fathers and (local) imams. As several researchers have stressed, the importance and influence of imams is frequently both transformed and overestimated in the diaspora (e.g. Cesari 2000; Saint-Blancat 1997). Originally, the word imam simply refers to the one who leads the prayer, a function that can be performed by any grown Muslim man. However, the appointed imam of a mosque often accumulates functions that, in Muslim countries, are part of a more sophisticated religious apparatus, including the imam (prayer leader) the *alim* (learned person) and the *mufti* (responsible for juridical opinions). In the immigrant context, imams may be expected to fulfil all of these functions, even though some of them do not have sufficient religious education to bear the title of *alim* or *mufti*.

The imams in Norway do not only lead the Friday prayer but also give the Friday speech, assure Quran education for children, and visit families and preside at funerals and marriages. In addition, they are expected to represent the Muslim population in the Norwegian media. This accumulation of functions of the imam is stimulated by the Norwegian government's need to point out representatives of the Muslim community who can function as "dialogue partners". Lately it has furthermore been suggested that the imams should have a central role in social work among Muslims: combating arranged marriages, female circumcision, as well as gang violence and drug problems among youth of immigrant background. While the government has tended to overestimate the importance and influence of imams, the authority of organizing committees and executive boards of mosques and larger Islamic organizations has tended to be underestimated. As was repeatedly pointed out to me, the directing committee of a mosque is often more important than the imam in terms of determining the

activities and religio-ideological profile of the mosque, and the "authority" that an imam may claim depends on his ability to operate within these frames.[254]

The young in general seemed to respect the imams in the mosque they frequented, but the extent to which they regarded them as Islamic authorities varied considerably. In any case, the imam was just one among several possible authorities that include both scholars and lay-people, locally and globally. His practices and utterances no less than that of young Muslims gained authorization in themselves, but by the way in which he was able to relate them to authorizing discourses of a more general order. The suspicion that many imams were not properly educated, that they had insufficient knowledge of Norwegian society, that they were "speaking culture" rather than Islam, made their authority as interpreters of the Islamic texts and transmitters of the Islamic tradition volatile. Some imams were also seen as transmitting an "un-reflected" knowledge of Islam, in that they simply proclaimed what was *haram* and *halal* instead of inciting their listeners to reflect upon the meaning and importance of Islamic practices.[255] In seeking to educate themselves concerning a particular Islamic practice, young Muslims would more frequently call a friend or discuss with some of the "respected" people of the organizations, or search out the views of some religious scholar abroad or on the Internet (e.g. the European Council for Fatwa and Research).

In public and political discourse, the practice of bringing religious leaders to Norway from Muslim countries is often commented as a hindrance to the modernization and Europeanization of Islam. In 2003 Erna Solberg, the Conservative government minister in charge of immigration and integration at the time, declared that there was no other option than to "modernize Islam in Europe".[256] A central vehicle for this "modernization" was to restrict the influence of imams "who have no understanding of what it is like to be a Muslim in a country where they are a minority". She asserted that "we" must "make demands" as to who are to function as imams. A technique that Solberg suggested using in this respect was the restriction of labour permits. In addition, she demanded that imams should get more education, and that such education should be acquired in Europe rather than in Muslim countries. Similar suggestions have been put forward several times, and most recently by the

[254] To the extent that young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS seek influence through the mosques, it is not by becoming imams – a position that is usually not regarded as very attractive – but through engaging themselves in the organizational life and administrative organs of the mosques. Thus, when young Muslims in the *Jamaat-e-Ahl-e-Sunnat* mosques in Oslo called for changes in 2002, what they reclaimed was a more democratic structure of the board that would also allow more young people to participate (cf. chapter 2).

[255] To most, the imam was not a figure to which they turned if they were having personal problems, and rarely if they had inquiries about personal or other issues that related to Islam.

[256] *Dagladet* 04. 11.2003: "Solberg utfordrer norske muslimer" ("Solberg challenges Norwegian Muslims")

Labour Party in the aftermath of the killing of the Dutch film-maker Theo van Gogh in 2004, when Norwegian Muslim representatives were required to publicly denounce such acts. The establishment of an imam-training program in Norway has also been suggested by several politicians with a Muslim background, and has been embraced by the Islamic Council of Norway.[257] Such suggestions are not least a consequence of the image of imam as generally traditionalist and out-of-touch with Norwegian realities that has been produced through a number of "scandals" in the last two decades. The concern with the education of "imams", rather then religious scholars, also reflects the widespread assumption in Norway that authority in religious matters is invested in the position of the imam, and the reshaping of the imam-role as an equivalent to priest in the Lutheran tradition. Debates over religious authority and interpretation, thus intimately link questions of governance, power and knowledge in that the government attempts to "reshape" and "modernize" the Islamic tradition in Norway by means of certain educational programmes and legal regulations.

The young Muslims I worked with shared the concern with the "traditionalist" influence from the imams. They were concerned with the need for imams as well as "religious scholars" or "spiritual leaders" who are familiar with what it means to live as a Muslim in a European minority context, and thereby have a greater capacity for conveying a more correct picture of Islam to non-Muslim Norwegians. Because of this, they were generally positive to the idea of educating religious scholars and "spiritual leaders" within the cadre of the Norwegian college and university system. However, there was a certain discrepancy between how the government and young Muslims envisaged such an education. The government seemed to be primarily concerned with "furthering integration" by conveying to imams the language and assumed common "values" of Norwegian society (such as knowledge of what it means to live in a feminist society, an example used by the minister).[258] In contrast, religiously active young Muslims were more concerned with assuring the capability of religious leaders to understand the challenges that arise in the everyday life of a young Norwegian Muslim, and their ability to provide Islamically correct solutions to such challenges that are based not on "inherited

257 Such programs exist, in different versions, in several European countries by now, some run mainly by private Islamic associations, others in more direct cooperation with the governments. In September 2005 the Norwegian Government launched an optional leader-training programme for Muslim religious leaders in Norway in cooperation with Faith Regen UK. The programme aims at "consciousness-raising and training of Muslim religious leaders, so as to enable them to attend to their role as counsellors and tutors in a good way in the Norwegian society". Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, Presse release Nr.: 215/2005 (23.09.2005) "Opplæringsprogram for muslimske religiøse ledere".

258 This was also suggested by the Prime Minister of the Christian Democrat Party in 2002, who said that if we are to get a positive integration it is important that the imams learn better the values we build on in our society. (Dagbladet 07.02.2002).

tradition" but on knowledge of "true Islam". The debates about educating imams are thus not only about education as a means of acquiring certain skills that are necessary for performing the role of imam in Norway, but also about instilling particular attitudes in imams. Whether these attitudes should be premised on the assumed common "values" of Norwegian society or on the values that are assumed to inhere in the Islamic tradition, and how these sets of values relate to each other, remains a matter of contestation.

Questions of authority are articulated and debated in young Muslims' relations to parents and imams, and the relationships they establish with them as "authorities" are manifold. Such questions are also importantly actualized in the context of the MSS and the NMU. The (informal) discussions in the NMU and the MSS take place within social relationships that are not formally hierarchized. Each and everyone is entitled to have an opinion on the basis of the multitude of Islamic viewpoints and authorities (transmitted e.g. by parents, imams, muftis, the Internet, and books) that they have access to. This does not prevent the distinction of some as more "knowledgeable" than others. The ability to make references to the Quran and the Hadith is the most important foundation for the contextual construction of authority in discussions and debates. Verses from the Quran and hadiths are cited to legitimize different positions, often without any discussion of the possibility of different interpretations of the verses. Discussions are usually definitively "won" by the person who can cite something from the Quran or the Hadith that pertains to the question that is being discussed. Being capable of citing the sources yields respect, among women as well as men.

Although citation as argumentation is a fundamental aspect of relations of authority, it is not in itself sufficient to authorize a particular view. Since young Muslims are not theologians or religious experts, they have – to a large extent – to rely on the opinions of the learned, of those having gained authorization. As most do not have any considerable first-hand knowledge of the primary sources, references to the Quran or the Hadith usually rely on secondary sources such as Islamic Internet sites, (popular) Islamic books and articles, or local authority figures such as leader figures in the NMU and the MSS, imams or parents. The secondary sources may or may not be acknowledged as the source of the knowledge (saying: It says in the Quran that…. obviously gives more authority that saying: I read on the Internet that it says in the Quran that). Certain scholars, especially contemporary *ulema,* charismatic leaders and intellectuals who operate in transnational spaces such as Yosef Qaradhawi, Jamal

Badawi,[259] and Hamza Yusuf,[260] are more effective in terms of authorizing interpretations and viewpoints than others. Factors such as dedication to the work of the organizations, independent studies of Islam, outspokenness, and personal social networks also play an important role in constructing authority within the organizations.

Interpreting Islam

One of the developments that have been pointed out in the context of contemporary Islam is that as larger groups of people outside the religious establishment, including youth and women are able to engage the founding texts directly, they are also enabled to overcome restrictions as to who is "authorized" to interpret them. Debates on "interpretation" and its authority regularly occur in the context of the NMU and the MSS, in *darses*, face-to-face discussions, the magazines, the mailing-lists and diverse discussion fora on the Internet. Whereas many young Muslims do assert their own interpretations on the basis of how they themselves understand the founding texts, there is still much ambivalence with respect to whether such efforts are legitimate, and about the kinds of, and amount of knowledge, that is necessary in order to interpret the Islamic texts. Who is authorized to interpret the Quran, and how does one gain such authorization? What kind of knowledge does one need to interpret and what authorizes an interpretation? Can anyone gain authorization simply by acquiring knowledge, or must authorization be secured by particular social locations in terms of e.g. gender, generation, kinship, or education in order to be effective?

In order to unpack some of the issues involved, let me first introduce a general distinction between what seems to be two prevalent epistemological approaches to the question of interpretation of the Islamic sources that emerge through the ways in which young Muslims debate Islam. One such approach is found in the view that disagreement does not rest on different interpretations of the same text, but rather the notion that one protagonist possess an incomplete knowledge of otherwise unambiguous rules that may be literally read from the

[259] Jamal Badawi is the author of several popular works on Islam, and enjoys great popularity as a lecturer in Canada, the USA and elsewhere. He is a professor of Religious Studies, and has his education from Egypt and the USA. He also made a television series on Islam, shown in many local TV stations in Canada and the USA and in other countries as well. Audio and video copies of these programmes have been widely used in many countries.

[260] Hamza Yusuf is an American convert and a popular lecturer among Muslims in the West. After becoming a Muslim in 1977 he studied for ten years in the U. A. E., Saudi Arabia, as well as North and West Africa, and received teaching licenses in various Islamic subjects from several well-known scholars in various countries. Hamza Yusuf also holds degrees in Religious Studies and Health Care. He travels extensively giving talks on Islam. He also founded the Zaytuna Institute which is dedicated to the revival of traditional study methods and the sciences of Islam.

sources. On the basis of such a perspective, young Muslims could sometimes cite an *aya* from the Quran or the Hadith, and present is as objective evidence of what "Islam says". This position is similar to the observations made by Launay on Islam in the Dyula Muslim community in West Africa, of which he notes that, "Disagreement never implied the logical, possibility of an alternate (if misguided) "reading" of the same texts, but rather the notion that one party to the dispute (one's opponent) possessed an incomplete knowledge of otherwise unambiguous rules" (Launay 1992: 12).

On the other hand, we find what we might call a "hermeneutic" approach; the idea that differences in time and place give rise to a variety of interpretations of Islamic practices and social issues (Roald 2001). Some of the young emphasized the mobility of interpretation in the Islamic tradition and its ability to adapt to changing social circumstances. Asheeda, for instance, stated that, "Personally I believe that much of the tradition that the *ulema* follow today will be re-interpreted to a certain extent in the future. It is only a matter of time". Others, like Seloua, were more sceptical of what they saw as a tendency of "adapting Islam to culture" instead of "adapting culture to Islam":

> Re-interpretation should not move us away from, but closer to, revelation. In our society, people are miles away from the sources of Islam and from the life that the Prophet lived and recommended. I support a re-interpretation that helps us discriminate between right and wrong and enables us to get closer to the initial revelation.

These epistemological positions were not fixed, however, as the young tended to move back and forth: at times vehemently contesting and historicizing interpretations and defending an individual *ijtihad* (the exercise of independent judgement in interpretation)[261], at other times stating assertively that "this is Islam" - without allowing for differences in interpretation, or urging their teachers to tell them what Islam really says, rather than what different people think it says. It was also common to distinguish between what was seen as an unchanging "core" of Islam that was not open for re-interpretation and areas in which re-interpretation were legitimate if not required.

A discussion on predestination between three NMU-members after one Sunday meeting raised some interesting questions in this respect. Mohammed said that as he understood things, Allah has left a certain room for people to make their own choices, and that people were thus themselves responsible for changing their own situation, rather than just waiting for

[261] *Ijtihad* was used by earlier Muslim scholars to refer to independent reasoning on matters about which they were not in agreement. With the nineteenth-century reformist reformulations of the Islamic tradition, *ijtihad* was made to mean the general exercise of free reason, or independent opinion, directed against *taqlid* (the unreflective reproduction of tradition) (Asad 2003: 219-221).

destiny to come through. In support of this view, he referred to some *ayas* from the Quran, and he underscored that although God knows what has been and what will be, our choices are not pre-determined. Aaqil replied that in his opinion, he and Mohammed did not have any credibility in talking about this matter. It would require much more knowledge of Islamic history, of philosophy and of the scholars than they possessed. He was also sceptical of Mohammed's way of citing the Quran in a way that, as it were, consisted in "pulling out some *aya* from the Quran and believe that you found the answer". Mohammed retorted that he was not at all trying to undermine the scholars and their Islamic knowledge, but that he was aware that different interpretations exist, and that precisely because of this, it is very important "to be clear as to what and who one (self) chooses to believe in". Khalam intervened at this point, agreeing with Aaqil that Quran verses should not be pulled out of their context. He praised Mohammed for reading and trying to understand the Quran and to think for himself, but warned that one easily comes to the wrong conclusions, especially on topics as complicated as this one. Aaqil added that Mohammed should start his inquiries by getting hold of relevant literature, rather than by trying to read the Quran and interpret it for himself.

In the discussion between Mohammed, Aaqil and Khalam, there was an agreement that the meaning of concepts such as "choice" and "predetermination", as used in the Quran, was not self-evident. What they disagreed about was whether individuals had the right to interpret the texts for themselves, or whether such interpretation should be left to those who had "sufficient knowledge". The question of course remains what "sufficient knowledge" would be. When young Muslims refer to someone as a "scholar" or "learned" it is to a broad and imprecise category of Islamic authorities, which includes the so-called *ulema* as well as modern-style "preachers" and "intellectuals".

Who has sufficient knowledge of Islam to interpret, and what is a "learned" and a "scholar"? An article in the Norwegian newspaper *Dagbladet* (05.02.2002) referring to the views of the Norwegian convert Anne Sofie Roald, who has a doctorate in religious science, on the matter of marriage and Islam, was subject to debate in this respect. Roald was quoted as saying that "If Muslim women want to marry Christian men, it is their own business. There can be other interpretations of the Quran and the practices of the Prophet than the traditional view". Whereas the newspaper presented her as "among Europe's prominent Islamic scholars" and at the forefront of a rapidly developing movement of reinterpretation of the Quran, some young Muslims objected that she did not have sufficient Islamic education to merit the title scholar. Others pointed to the fact that she was a "Western woman", and asserted that her interpretations were inevitably based in Western culture and thought, and

contextualized her ideas about the need for *ijtihad* as part of "the West" and its patronizing attempts at telling Muslim women how to live their lives. Others, however, stressed that Islam is a universal religion and Allah the God of mankind, and that Roald's cultural identity as a Westerner did not undermine her right to interpret Islam. On the contrary, they argued, converts to Islam might have a clearer sight as they were not raised within any particular Muslim cultural tradition and could therefore approach the sources in a culturally less biased way.

As the above example illustrates, the "breaking out" of interpretation from the domain of religious specialists has energized important debates about who is authorized to interpret the Islamic sources. In response to the critique of established authorities and the engagement of non-experts in theological debates, there are by now many warnings against what is seen as a selective and idiosyncratic appropriation of the Islamic texts by non-experts. Efforts are thus made to re-assert correct procedures for producing authorized interpretations.[262] With regard to Muslim youth in Europe, a particular concern has been that marginalized youth should be attracted to de-contextualized and populist interpretations of Islam, or should make their own radical and "extremist" interpretations in response to contexts of heightened conflict between e.g. majority and minority in the immigrant context, or between "Islam" and "the West", as perpetuated by the media. The potential negative consequences of young Muslims' loss of respect for Islam's scholars and philosophers, or their disembedment from the "ethnic group" in terms of religious learning, is a fear that is invoked by parents, community leaders, politicians, some researchers (e.g. Cesari 2000) and sometimes young Muslims themselves.

The fragmentation and individualization of religious authority also poses important challenges when it comes to efforts from non-Muslims to define Islamic truth. The contemporary democratization of access to Islamic knowledge means that not only Muslims, but also non-Muslims increasingly engage in debates about what Islam is and should be, and about what the Islamic sources "really say". In Norway, non-Muslim politicians and activists have on several occasions used quotations from the Quran (usually about war, the status of the "infidels", or about women) to legitimize their negative apprehension of Islam, to argue for a more restrictive immigration policy, or against the possibility of Muslims becoming integrated in Norwegian society. As a means to counter the development of such non-contextual and "unauthorized" use of the Islamic sources, the director of *The Islamic Foundation* in Norway, Basim Ghozlan, posted a guide to proper interpretation of the Quran

[262] (See for instance Malik 2001).

in the Islamic tradition on the Homepages of "Islam. no". In order to make a proper interpretation of the Quran, he writes, one must have an intimate knowledge of the Arabic language and the Quran as a whole, and knowledge of the context of revelation of a specific Sura. Furthermore, specific verses should always be seen in relation to other verses in the Quran that speak about the same issue, and in relation to the relevant Hadith literature, "Doing *ijtihad* (make an effort to explain the text and advance new meanings and interpretations) is of course permitted if one has the academic and religious level required to do so, but in any case, one must nevertheless first know what and perhaps why others have said what they say", Ghozlan concludes. To Ghozlan, making an effort to explain the texts is not an activity limited to traditional scholars, but it is nevertheless limited in requiring certain forms of scholarly knowledge of the Islamic tradition. His intervention exemplifies the various current efforts that are made to re-instate certain restrictions as to who is authorized to interpret Islam.

Feminist interventions

Questions concerning the relationship between men and women were central to many of the young, especially, but not exclusively women, in their (critical) engagement with Islamic knowledges and practices. The young Muslims in my study converged upon the idea that there was an essential and God-given difference between men and women. Many, however, worried that this principle of gender complementarity had in many contexts been corrupted into an unjust gender hierarchy that had no basis in Islam. Some identified their own critique of gender injustice with "feminism", but this was quite uncommon. In general, the young associated the term "feminism" with a paternalistic attitude towards Muslim women that constructed them as passive victims of patriarchal relations and traditions. Their critique of gender injustice among Muslims, and of "male bias" in interpretations of Islam nonetheless bore some important resemblances to Muslim academic feminists critique, although these latter were generally not known to the young Muslims. Often, concerns with the "representation" of Muslim women were intimately linked to questions of interpretation. As Sadiqa told me:

> Since high school, I've always heard that Muslim women are oppressed, especially those who wear the scarf. Men seem to be in control, they have the power. I heard it so many times that in the end I believed it myself. But after researching the issue myself and asking several Muslim girls who have read and studied Islam, I found out that this was all wrong. Islam gives women a lot of freedom. It's just that men try to twist the message and interpret it in their own ways.

Sadiqa relates "what she always heard" to the picture of Muslim women given in the media, for instance in the recurring debates on "arranged marriages". She also heard from other Muslims, whom she characterizes as not knowing so much about their religion, that Muslim women were supposed to "stay in the kitchen", while men should be in charge. In her own family, she stresses, it was not like this. In order to change this picture of Muslim women, Sadiqa stresses that Muslim women need to "advance" in society and get more knowledge of the freedom their religion really gives them. In the above quote, Sadiqa also hints towards how issues of "interpretation" play a role in this process. Several of the young women complained like Sadiqa that men interpreted the Quran so as to serve their own interests. Like many Muslim feminists, they based their critique of gender injustice on a "return to the Quran and the Sunna". Recovering Islamic truth, and separating the "cultural" from the "Islamic" was a common point of departure in order to further women's rights. Sarah, a young woman of Turkish origin, was perhaps the one who went furthest in this critique, and other women often commented on her opinion regarding gender relations and Islam as a sign of her having become too Norwegian. To Sarah, feminist critique is a prospect for recovering the truth of the Quran:

> Men have been good at those things in Islam that are to their advantage. They have for a long time managed to conceal the rights women have in Islam, because it would unfortunately be very dangerous for men if these rights were brought to the fore. It has been like that throughout history. After the death of the Prophet, and after all those who knew the Prophet were dead – or the first khalifs were also pretty good at preserving women's rights – but under the Abbasides they started concealing it and turned towards the cultural rather than the Islamic. And subsequently it followed Islam throughout its history. There have always been small feminists like me, but they never got so far, you know. But I will get far… [laughing].

In such critiques of tradition, there are seeds of a feminist epistemology, which acknowledges the gendered bias of interpretation. Such a re-reading of the Sources from a concern with redressing gender bias was also mentioned by several others, but usually then with reference to some contemporary scholar or Muslim intellectual such as for instance Jamal Badawi's "Gender Equity in Islam" (Badawi 1995). One example mentioned to me several times was the gender-biased translation and interpretation of the term that the Quran uses for the "virgins" that will be the companions of believers in Paradise. In some translations, this is rendered as a promise of virgin women. But, according to other interpretations, the word that is used in the original Arabic text means "partner" rather than woman. This latter interpretation was used by the young Muslims I worked with to confirm the inherent gender equity in Islam that male biased translations had concealed throughout history.

Although young women were generally more concerned with "women's rights", several young men also attested to the view that Muslim men have tended to interpret the religion in ways that benefit themselves. Several were also concerned that they may themselves be promoting interpretations to their own benefit (cf. Jacobsen 2004). Nabil, for instance, a young man of Pakistani descent, was of the understanding that an essential and God-endowed gender difference made it more "natural" for his wife to take leave from work to stay home with their future children. In reflecting upon his own opinion in this respect, he nevertheless wondered whether this understanding might be biased by his gender. He questioned his own motives in this respect. Was he motivated by the fact that such a gendered division of work better accommodated his personal aspirations for the future? Was this the reason why he chose to believe that Islam had prescribed such a gender arrangement when it came to work? Another example is when Rasheed, also of Pakistani descent, questioned his own motives for invoking the Quran to criticize his wife's manner of dressing. Was the real reason, as he had come to suspect, his own jealousy rather than a concern with a strict conformity to Islam?

The view that being a good Muslim implies acting in the spirit of the general ethical, and fundamentally egalitarian, vision of the Quran, rather than a literal application of the rules of the Quran, was also present. Rasheed was one of those who articulated this point most clearly:

> What I am saying is that according to what we Muslims teach, the life of the Prophet was the ideal life and we should strive as hard as possible to live as He did. That is the basic premise. Then the question arises: How did He live? Yes, he was a revolutionary person. He was radical in terms of the age in which he lived. And when it comes to women, he actually gave them rights that were then unthinkable. And then I think: If we are to be like Him, what does that mean? Does it mean that we should follow the rights that He introduced at the time? Are we like Him then? Or are we like Him if we, in relation to our own time, are radical and revolutionary? I think that being like Him is being radical and revolutionary in terms of your own time in according rights not only to women, but also to weak groups in general. Then you are like the Prophet. At the time of the Prophet, according women the right to educate and work outside the house was radical. Today radical affirmative action in view of increasing the number of women in higher positions would be appropriate. So in a way I believe that radical affirmative action would be in the spirit of the Prophet.

Just like Muslim feminists such as Hassan and Mernissi (see e.g. Hassan 1991a; 1991b; 1993; Mernissi 1987; 1991a; 1991b; 1992; 1996), Rasheed emphasizes the radical and egalitarian message in Islam and its positive potential as a continual basis for changes in hierarchical and oppressive relations. In this interpretation, to strive to follow the exemplary model of the Prophet Muhammad entails following the "spirit" of this model, rather than just following the rights and duties that Muhammad introduced at the time. Islam is thus a dynamic tradition that

has a "radical" and "revolutionary" potential to better the condition of "weak groups" also in contemporary societies.

Debating Islam and gender

In a group-discussion following a seminar in the NMU, the question arose of whether it was legitimate, within the context of an Islamic state, to "force" people to act according to Islam. The general opinion was that trying to "force" people would do no good, and that each and everyone had to arrive at their own conclusion as to whether they would follow Islam or not. Latifa, who was at the time 13 years old, denounced all physical coercion by confidently asserting that "hitting is not even allowed in Islam". This statement was based on her general apprehension of Islam as an ethically good and just religion that would not allow such a "bad thing" as physical coercion. She continued by listing several good reasons why physical coercion is neither acceptable nor effective, arguing among other things that it tends to make people more rebellious. A young man, Jamal, who was around five years senior to Latifa, intervened at this point. He asserted that "Islam says" that under certain conditions parents are allowed to hit their children and men their wives to make them act according to Islam. Latifa was at first reluctant to accept this as "what Islam says", but after a moment of hesitation she gave in and concluded, "Well, if it is Islam, I suppose it is not possible to argue against it".

Latifa's invocation of a general ethical injunction in Islam towards freedom from physical coercion was one often made by the young Muslims, notably with reference to the Quranic saying "There is no coercion in religion".[263] In this context this ethical injunction was put aside by Jamal's reference to what "Islam says" on the matter, but without the issue of different interpretations coming to the fore. Had Latifa been familiar with alternative interpretations e.g. of the *aya* concerning men's guardianship over women, she could have argued that the Quran did not allow men to "hit" women, but only to mark conjugal

[263] Quran 2: 256, "No compulsion is there in religion. Rectitude has become clear from error. So whosoever disbelieves in idols and believes in God, has laid hold of the most firm handle, unbreaking; God is All-hearing, All-knowing" This *aya* is often invoked the right to individual choice and against compulsion. One such area is that of marriage; where it has been used to argue that if a Muslim woman wishes to e.g. marry a non-Muslim she is free to do so. Recently, this "individualist" use was criticised by a member of MSS who argued that the verse refers to the choice of religion or faith and not to how Muslims should practice their religion. To support this argument he refers to the Koran 49: 14 "The Bedouins say: 'We believe' Say: 'You believe not but you only say, We have surrendered (in Islam), for Faith has not yet entered your hearts. But if you obey Allah and His Messenger (SAW), He will not decrease anything in reward for your deeds. Verily, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful". On the basis of this verse he argues that Muslims cannot, as some have claimed, marry a non-Muslim – even if this should be their preferred choice, as this would be the same as "saying you believe" but not letting faith enter your heart. The case is nevertheless different from Latifa's invocation of the *aya*, in that she contests physical coercion particularly.

disagreement by striking the wife lightly on her hand with a "toothpick".[264] Jamal being five years her senior and apparently more familiar than her with respect to what it "says in the Quran" and what "Islam says", she rested her case.

In this case, no specific references were made either to the Quran or the Hadith or to different interpretations in the Islamic scholarly tradition. Rather, the issue was debated in terms of what "Islam" "allows" and "says". Jamal's ability to authorize his argument was thus based on his assumed knowledge of Islam, as related to his status as the oldest in the group and the appointed workshop leader. The reason why Latifa and the other girls present accepted his argument as "what Islam says" was apparently that they assumed Islam to be a truth that "says" certain things, and that Jamal was more knowledgeable than they were on the matter. Although Latifa rested her case, there was some reluctance in the way she did it. She not only affirmed that if "this is Islam it has to be right", but alluded to the rules and regulations of a particular discursive formation, that made it impossible to argue counter to what "Islam says".

Although age and position may be important in authorizing interpretations, they do not automatically entail that one's interpretations are authorized. In a workshop in the Islamic Conference in Oslo in 1999, a girl from the MSS asked the learned male workshop leader, of Saudi-Arabian origin, whether a girl could take of her hijab in the presence of her fiancée. He replied that a boy could rightly claim to see the girl's hair before they got married, so that he would get a realistic picture of what she looked like. The *alim* supported his argument not by

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[264] The multiple interpretations that exist of the relevant *aya* 4: 34 open a wide terrain for debate. According to Yusufali, "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next) refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance): For Allah is Most High, Great (above you all)". According to Pickthall, "Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah hath guarded. As for those from whom ye fear rebellion, admonish them, and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Lo! Allah is ever High, Exalted, Great". In Shakir's translation, "Men are the maintainers of women because Allah has made some of them to excel others and because they spend out of their property; the good women are therefore obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded; and (as to) those on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the sleeping-places and beat them; then if they obey you, do not seek a way against them; surely Allah is High, Great". Pickthall uses the word scourge which means to whip severely, to lash, to punish with severity etc. Yusufali, on the other hand, is of a different opinion and interprets the Arabic text to mean "beat them lightly" and only as a "last" resort. Muslim feminists and some other scholars have interpreted the sources as allowing a symbolic marker of disagreement. In a TV-debate, Lena Larsen from the Norwegian Islamic Council suggested the view that men can hit their wives on their hand with a toothpick to mark a strong disagreement. While the Norwegian word "tannpirker" which means toothpick is used in this context, scholars usually refer to the *miswak*, a small natural toothbrush that according to Sunna, the Prophet Muhammad used for hygienic purposes.

reference to the Quran or the Hadith, but by recounting the story of a friend of his who had been engaged to a girl for some time. When seeing her without the hijab, however, he discovered that she looked completely different from what he had imagined, and subsequently broke the engagement. In the aftermath of this incidence, several girls expressed their disagreement and frustration with the answer the *alim* had given. As one of them said to me, "We expected him to tell us what Islam says, and not his own opinions". The authority of the *alim* was thus contested because of his failure to base his claim in a discourse that the girls accepted as authoritative, which shows that his position as an *alim* alone was not sufficient to establish such authority.

The answer given by the *alim* and the frustrated response from the girls also illustrate ambivalence with respect to interpretations of the hijab and its functions. The young women often invoked the ability of the hijab to neutralize gender and sexuality. Such a neutralization allowed not only the perseverance of chastity and social order, but, often more importantly, it allowed women to appear, be treated and judged as individuals, rather than by gender-specific standards of beauty and attractiveness (although such standards where important to the ways in which they used the hijab and otherwise dressed). The hijab was in this respect contrasted to the "Western" tendency to make women into sexual objects, and the harassment and degradation of women that emanated from such objectification. Wearing the hijab caused "respect" from men, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, protected them from the sexual harassment they saw their peers and colleagues experience, and allowed them to appear and be judged as "a person", a "human being" with unique qualities and universal worth, rather than being judged in terms of gendered and sexualized categories. In relation to marriage in particular, this ideal was often voiced regarding the issue that a person's Islamic virtues should be decisive in the choice of partner, rather than their looks.[265] By focusing on men's rights to see a girl's hair before marriage, the *alim* was seen by the young women to undermine women's right to be judged as individuals on the basis of "who they were", rather than "what they looked like".

A pluralization of available interpretations may give young Muslims and women a larger space for manoeuvring and for opposing the dominant understandings in their surroundings, but it may also lead to a situation where interpretation is pitted against interpretation in such a manner that positioning of people with regard to for instance gender, generation, and class

[265] Although an unusual case, the appropriation of such ideals into practice is illustrated in the case of one young man, who preferred to get to know his fiancée by exchanging long letters by e-mail, but without seeing her picture, so that her looks would not interfere with his decision of whether to marry her or not.

continues to structure the power to make such interpretations socially effective. A young girl might argue her right to decide for herself whom to marry, basing her argument on a particular interpretation of the Quran. Whether and to what extent this interpretation will gain effectiveness in changing established marriage practices is quite another matter. It depends not only on whether the girl manages to authorize her interpretation vis-à-vis her parents', but also on the practical and institutional circumstances that enable certain options and disenable others. In other words, interpretations of Islam are always situated within particular social relationships and structures and the effectiveness they acquire in social life depends on a number of factors.

Exemplary models and authority in marriage

The way in which contestations over gender are played out in daily life, is well illustrated by the example of Sarah and Usman, and the arguments about the division of labour in the household that arose within their marriage. When Sarah met Usman through some friends, she was still a student. Shortly thereafter, they married. Sarah continued her studies and Usman provided for the family, which quickly grew to include a baby girl. According to Sarah, Usman was "tight" and did not fulfil his responsibilities as a provider. She had to ask her brothers for money to make things go round, a fact she effectively hid from her husband so as not to hurt his pride. Providing for the family was Usman's responsibility as a husband, and not hers. Although she planned an active career, she felt that what she earned was hers to spend and that she had no obligation to include it into the household spending. Such a division of responsibilities was "according to Islam", she explained to me.

Usman, on the other hand, complained that Sarah was not fulfilling her duties as a wife. She did not cook and clean properly and she spent too much time outside of the home. Sarah's duty was not only to execute domestic work properly, but also to be more or less permanently available within the home. Usman was also concerned that she should be carefully observing the rules of hijab. When inside the house, he often worried that she might be seen through the windows without being properly dressed. Sarah's response was that Usman did not appreciate her work in the house and that he should share more of the household chores. As she was preoccupied with her studies and cared for the baby at the same time, she thought this to be fair. She also deplored his prolonged absences from home, and felt controlled by his constant comments on her clothing practices.

Sarah understood Usman's behaviour as impious, and as result of him following the cultural traditions he had been brought up with, rather than Islam. In order to change relationships within her marriage she thus wanted her husband to learn more about Islam and to become more pious. On this basis, Sarah once took her husband to a meeting with a Turkish scholar who spoke about women's rights in Islam. When the *alim* said that he had never asked one single thing of his wife, Sarah laughingly told me, her husband broke out in such a sweat that he had to take off his glasses to wipe his face. When they returned, Sarah asked (in the cunning and feigned innocent way she now imitates): so, what do you think? Her husband dismissed the whole matter by saying that he did not know on what basis the *alim* spoke. "My husband was sooo good at making his own interpretations", Sarah ironically concludes.

There are several things worth noting here. The first is that in order to change her husband and their marital relationship, Sarah appealed to a tradition of Islamic authority. The reason why such a procedure could be considered effective is that Usman shared with Sarah a commitment to the authority of Islam. Since both Sarah and Usman were active Muslims, the argument that an issue was "counter to Islam" or that it would be "more Islamic" to do things otherwise, were effective ways of supporting claims. Certain shared orientations thus structured the way they argued about their respective rights and duties within the marriage. Sarah and Usman both agreed that it was a man's duty to provide for the family, and that it was a woman's primary responsibility to take care of an infant. What they disagreed about was the implication of such a divinely ordered gender system with respect to the performance of practical tasks within the household, and with respect to relations of authority between the spouses.

Sarah's way of interpreting the arguments between herself and husband in terms of a distinction between cultural traditions mistaken for Islam and "true Islam" is widespread. It is a way of arguing that actualizes competing narratives about the Islamic tradition, about interpretation and authority. References to the exemplary practice of the Prophet Mohammed are central here. Contests over the power to define and authorize narratives about the Prophet thus become important to gender projects. In spelling out how she would wish her husband to behave, Sarah referred to the Hadith tradition and its accounts of how the Prophet Mohammed mended his own socks, cooked his own food, and played happily with his children. He never laid any burden of housework upon his wives. Similarly, she referred to narratives of the lives of the wives of the Prophet to show how women, in the lifetime of the Prophet, were actively involved in all aspects of social life and communal affairs. In taking her husband to a meeting

with an *alim*, Sarah sought to authorize her arguments about what Islam says about marital relations. However, this attempt at authorization was unsuccessful in so far as Usman refused to accept the *alim*'s authority. While sharing with her husband the view that men and women have different rights and duties within a marriage, their views of to what extent this complementarity should be organized as a hierarchical or as an egalitarian relationship, differed. Whereas Usman stresses the Islamic principle of men being in charge of the family, Sarah accords more weight to the Islamic principle of consultation.[266] According to Usman, then, the man must be the head of the household, since no institution can function effectively without a leader. Sarah, like many young Muslims' her age, embraces the ideal of a "companionate marriage" and emphasizes the importance of discussion and agreement, or consultation, between husband and wife. A similar notion of consultation is invoked by several of the young Muslims I worked with, to underpin the view that the respective roles of men and women in family life are to a certain extent negotiable and that they should be determined by the spouses together. These negotiations, however, are framed in a dual gender system, where some gender differences are seen as both natural and normative from an Islamic point of view. The implications of such fundamental gender differences for social arrangements, however, are subject to contestation.

It is worth posing the question of to what extent these contestations around issues of gender and authority should be read as a form of resistance to male domination. In analyzing an argument between a married couple in her book on the Egyptian piety movement, Mahmood (2005) argues that the main protagonist Abir's use of religious arguments to change her husband, is not captured by terms such as obedience versus rebellion, compliance versus resistance or submission versus subversion. Instead, she focuses on Abir's wish to live piously, and how this required the practices of a range of Islamic virtues and the creation of optimal conditions under which they could be realized. She also points to the paradox that Abir's ability to break from the norms of what it meant to be a dutiful wife were predicated on her learning to perfect a tradition that accorded her subordinate status to her husband. In a similar vein, one might argue that to the extent that the young Muslims in my study challenged and broke with existing gender regimes, it was not by placing themselves outside

[266] This discussion must be contextualized in terms of wider theological debates surrounding the concepts of *qiwama* (in charge of/responsible of) that is used in the Quran (4: 34) to characterize the relationship between men and women, and how it relates to the concept of *shura* (consultation). In the past, *shura* has primarily tended to be employed on a political level, but in later years, however, it has been expanded by some to include the idea of consultation at a family level (Roald 2001). See Roald (2001) for a further discussion of different theological elaborations of *qiwama* and *shura.*

the Islamic discursive tradition, but by displacing themselves within it and invoking its authority. However, in the case of Sarah and many other young Muslims, their invocation of the authority of the Islamic tradition should not only be understood in terms of their efforts to live piously. Their opposition was not only to those who disenabled them to live religiously, but to the control that parents, husbands and brothers were able to exert over their actions. However, as will be discussed in the next chapter, this resistance was not to authority as such, and did not presuppose a sovereign and autonomous agent.

The examples that have been discussed above have also thematized the way in which a fragmentation and pluralization of authority structures and the individualization of young Muslims' relationship to Islamic authority produces ambivalent effects when it comes to young Muslims' use of religious arguments to legitimate and contest existing gender regimes. In so far as alternative interpretations and narratives about the exemplary history of Islam are invoked to challenge the understandings of husbands, parents, imams, and scholars, or citations of the Quran and the Hadith are used to de-authorize their understandings of particular practices, important spaces of contestation are opened. At the same time, however, the outcome of such contestations continues to depend on how people are positioned within socio-economic structures and on the practical and institutional circumstances that limit the social effectiveness of such contestations. Transformations in gender relations, e.g. within the organization of domestic and extra-domestic work as in the case of Sarah and Usman, depend on a variety of conditions of possibility, including notably access to the labour market, transnational marriage practices, access to social benefits, and child care facilities. Furthermore, although the aim of the Norwegian welfare state is to promote gender equality among minority as well as majority couples (Gressgård and Jacobsen 2003), the application of public welfare measures within a genderized labour market tends to reproduce women's position as primary caretakers and men as the main providers (Danielsen 2002; Skilbrei 2003; Vike 2001).[267] This effects the gendering of work in Muslim minority families as well as non-Muslim majority families. Whereas young Muslims' are certainly influenced by ideas about gender equality in Norwegian society, the impact from dominant Norwegian constructions of gender difference in which mothers are assumed to be better caregivers than fathers (Danielsen 2002), contributes to leaving this area of gendered labour division unchallenged.

[267] For instance, the relatively low rates granted parents who stay at home with babies make it difficult for men – who generally earn more than women – to make use of these welfare arrangements since the family is dependent upon their higher wage. In addition to a single maternity payment (engangsstønad) and 9 months paid maternity and paternity leave (fødselspermisjon), there is a cash benefit for parents who stay at home with children under three years of age (kontantstøtte). There is also a special transition benefit to single-income providers.

Thus, change occurs through processes of interpretation and reinterpretation, processes intimately connected with changes in structural conditions and practice. As "agents", young Muslims are empowered and constrained not only by the ability to authorize particular practices as "true Islam", but also by the way in which gendered practices are shaped by wider cultural and socio-economic relationships in Norwegian society.

Knowledge and belief

One important aspect of the quest for knowledge among the young Muslims I worked with was the assumption that acquiring a deeper Islamic knowledge provided a fundamental basis for *iman*. *Iman,* which is usually rendered in English as faith, literally means "to know", "to believe", and "to be convinced beyond the least shadow of doubt". *Iman*, thus, is firm belief arising out of knowledge and conviction. It should be noted that no sharp line is drawn between religious knowledge and knowledge of social life and natural objects in this respect.[268] Acquiring knowledge is seen as a religious obligation, that - rather than presupposing *iman* – is conducive to religious belief. Gaining knowledge of Islam, social life and natural objects, and strengthening one's *iman,* are two faces of the same coin. In *Tankevekkende* (1997: 6), Abdi Rahman Dahir Osman cites the Quran 35: 28, "It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah". He interprets this as meaning that a knowledgeable and reasonable person has a better possibility to have faith in the existence of Allah through his understanding of nature. In continuity with this apprehension of knowledge as conducive to faith, many young Muslims stressed how they had come to "love their religion" more as they acquired more knowledge of Islam, a feeling that made it easier for them to practice the sometimes difficult religious commands, such as getting up for the Morning Prayer or wearing the hijab.

But, as I have argued above, knowledge of Islam is increasingly subjected to reflexive questions about what it means to be a Muslim, about why a certain practice should be followed, and to different interpretations of what Islam says and a fragmentation of authority

[268] This conception of belief contrasts with Geertz' attempt at a universal definition of religion in which he asserts that "The basic axiom underlying what we may perhaps call 'the religious perspective' is everywhere the same: he who would know must first believe" (1973: 110). As Asad argues, Geertz' definition seems to be based on a particular modern and Christian understanding of religion in which a sharp line is drawn between religious knowledge and knowledge of social life and natural objects (Asad 1993: 47). In a context where knowledge is rooted either in an a-Christian everyday life or in an a-religious science, belief is not regarded as the conclusion to a knowledge process, but as its precondition. This conceptualization of belief as a precondition for knowledge is reversed in the religious perspective of the young Muslims I worked with.

structures where the individual is increasingly responsible for a reflexive allegiance to Islamic authorities. Given these changes in the approach to religious knowledge and authority, how can a "firm belief arising out of knowledge and conviction" be secured? In the following I will address this question by looking into the ways in which young Muslims speak about *iman*, knowledge and doubt, and point to some discursive regulations that limit the scope of reflexivity and doubt in a way that makes them appear as what the young Muslims refer to as "within religion". In this respect it may be useful to distinguish between the mode and the content of faith. When young Muslims spoke about having a strong or a weak *iman* they did not refer primarily to doubts concerning the basic Islamic articles of faith.[269] Rather, it concerned the "degree" of conviction and firmness of belief, and the way such conviction and firmness was translated into practice.

Among the youth many spoke about how they experienced *iman* as rather unstable, as being strong or weak in different phases in life. The strength of *iman* was intimately linked to knowledge. This concern is well expressed by Rabab, "Here in Norway we Muslims are challenged to the extent that it is impossible not to have doubts about one's own faith, at least for those Muslims who do not have enough knowledge of Islam". Having "enough knowledge" is thus set forth as a way of avoiding doubt in dealing with challenges from the non-Muslim Norwegian surroundings. The distinction between "true Islam" and the practices of "Muslims who do not have enough knowledge of Islam" serves as a frame for interpreting one's own doubt. Farida, like many others speaks about how she used to find certain things in Islam problematic, until she learned, by acquiring more knowledge of "true Islam", that these were in fact not Islamic but cultural traditions. When she spoke to me about the uneasiness she once felt towards some aspects of Islam, regarding for instance the position of women, she interpreted her own criticism as a lack of knowledge, "I do not see anything negative in Islam itself. But I do see a lot of negative things in Muslims. I did initially find some negative sides to Islam, but that was before I found the answers to the questions I thought were negative". Similarly, Alesha spoke about the relationship between doubt and knowledge. When I asked her if there were things in Islam that she had difficulties accepting she said that

[269] These are outlined in the following way in a Hadith (Sahih Al-Bukhari 1.47) narrated by Abu Huraira, "One day while the Prophet was sitting in the company of some people, (the angel) Gabriel came and asked, "What is faith?" Allah's Apostle (PBUH) replied, "Faith is to believe in Allah, His angels, (the) meeting with Him, His Apostles, and to believe in Resurrection". Then he further asked, "What is Islam?" Allah's Apostle replied, "To worship Allah Alone and none else, to offer prayers perfectly to pay the compulsory charity (*Zakat*) and to observe fasts during the month of Ramadan". Then he further asked, "What is Ihsan (perfection)?" Allah's Apostle replied, "To worship Allah as if you see Him, and if you cannot achieve this state of devotion then you must consider that He is looking at you".

she did not have enough knowledge, and that to find out whether something was true or not she had to investigate it on her own, "I just think that I haven't investigated this yet, but when I do I will find the answers I'm looking for".

Education and knowledge are thus central to cultivating the disposition towards *iman*. This stress on knowledge is reinforced by the many biographical narratives in the pedagogical Islamic literature that underscore how the acquisition of more Islamic knowledge reinforced people's faith. In particular conversion stories often attest that a person having studied the Quran and Islam for some reason, finished by saying the *shahada* after having discovered the truth of Islam. Whereas knowledge was thus importantly seen as a prerequisite for *iman*, the young often spoke about the limits of human knowledge and understanding. In a discussion I had with Janaan about *iman* and the question of doubt she underlined the importance of seeking answers to her questions in the Quran:

> No, I have no doubt. Because when I believe in something, I kind of really do, you know. If I have questions, then – everything is sort of in the Quran – and then it is important that I go and look for answers there. But, I mean, questions like: Where does God come from?, for instance, that's a question we Muslims say that ordinary human beings cannot answer, and therefore it is important that we do not start thinking about it. It you start thinking about it, you kind of move in the wrong direction….why this and why that. If there are questions that are difficult to find answers to, we should just leave it at that.

She went on to explain that, "There are laws given by God, and we Muslims have to follow them whether we understand them or not. Sometimes it is difficult to understand why things are the way they are, but in time, as we get more knowledge and life-experience we will probably understand that it is right". To Janaan, *iman* thus also includes a virtue of faithfulness toward God, an unquestioning habit of obedience that God requires of those faithful to him. *Iman* is thus a disposition of knowledge and obedience that must be cultivated within social relationships with others who are virtuous and faithful (Asad 2003).

This understanding of *iman* as a disposition of obedience might seem paradoxical when considering, as was done earlier in the chapter, that obeying without questioning is precisely what young Muslims criticize "traditional Muslims" who have "inherited Islam" of doing. This apparent paradox is resolved by the way in which the relationship between knowledge, *iman* and truth is regulated. One such regulation is the distinction, as seen, between "true Islam" and the practices of actual Muslims who "lack knowledge of Islam". In the case of young Muslims, criticism is conceived in such a way that it is directed towards the practices of Muslims who have insufficient knowledge of Islam, rather than towards (an objectified "authentic") Islam, which is constructed as ultimate truth, knowledge of which is the basis for

iman. Criticism of Muslim practices is thus conceptualized as an Islamic critique against un-Islamic practices. Furthermore, the relationship between knowledge, *iman* and truth is regulated by the way in which firmness and conviction of belief is seen to depend on knowledge, and conversely doubt is seen to arise from a lack of knowledge and the limited capability of human beings to understand and answer certain questions about ultimate existence. Doubt and criticism thus energize an effort to educate oneself in order to acquire more knowledge of Islam, but because of the limits to human beings' capacity of knowledge, this must also imply continually striving towards increasing one's knowledge. "Unquestioning obedience" is necessary only at the limits of an individual's or the collective capacities of human kind to understand. I am not suggesting that these procedures of control make it impossible for young Muslims to criticize Muslim practices. It is not questioning in itself, but the limits as to which questions can be posed, the positions from where they are posed, and the horizons within which answers can be found, that are regulated.

The signs of God: Islam and science

In *Islam Observed* Geertz (1968) argues that the growth of modern science has made almost all religious beliefs harder, if not virtually impossible, to maintain. A characteristic of modern societies is that modern Western science has defined itself in terms of a historical rift with religion as a system of knowledge (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 17). In classical modernization and secularization theories a main hypothesis was therefore that scientific worldviews and rationality would gradually replace religious worldviews. The many religious revivals of our times, however, have served to question such a unilinear view of the history of knowledge, and challenge the very opposition between rationality and irrationality, religion and science in modern Western science (Hervieu-Léger 2000). In *Genealogies of Religion* Asad (1993) argues that a conceptual shift in the category of religion has indeed occurred in the West, where religion is no longer a knowledge-producing activity but a repository of beliefs. One should note that the removal of religion as a system of knowledge from the public space of discussion (Asad 1993) does not mean that it is not capable of producing knowledge in other areas, however.

How do young Muslims approach the competing knowledge claims of the Islamic tradition and modern Western science? Has Islam become a "repository of belief" that contrasts with scientific knowledge? In his comparison of Islam in Morocco and Indonesia, Geertz identifies two different strategies that have been embraced by those he refers to as the "scripturalists"

(broadly understood as those Muslims who are influenced by a scholastic, legalistic and doctrinal Islam). The scripturalists, he holds, have felt the tension between the progressive secularization of thought in the modern world and the essentials of the religious perspective most keenly and have made the most rigorous response to it. The first response consists in an absolute separation of religious matters from scientific ones. The second response consists in the attempt to show that the scriptures, especially the Quran, anticipate and are fully consonant with the spirit and findings of modern sciences.

This latter response as outlined by Geertz well captures what has come to be known as the "new Islamic scientism", in which the relation between the knowledge of the Quran and the knowledge of modern sciences is at issue. Within the broad range of literature representing this "new Islamic scientism", a main genre is the one that finds evidence of scientific truth in the Quran's treatment of issues such as the Big Bang theory of the origin of the universe, the expansion of the universe, the development of the embryo, the origin of sperm, and the health effects of certain foods. Such findings are often used as arguments to underpin the ultimate truth of the Quran. The accurate descriptions that the Quran provides of natural phenomena, despite it being revealed at a time when the modern sciences had not yet established what we now take to be scientific facts, allegedly proves that it must be a divine revelation. This epistemological position is sometimes dubbed Bucaillism, after the French convert and Professor of medicine Bucaille, who in his hugely influential book *The Bible, The Quran and Science* (Bucaille 1978) argued that progress in the natural sciences proves Islam's position as the true religion and the Quran as a divine revelation. The new Islamic scientism is directed both towards non-Muslims, as a means of proving the correctness of Islam and its fundament, the Quran, and towards Muslims, as a means of reinforcing faith. The works of Bucaille and others like Harun Yahya[270] are distributed throughout the world, and promoted worldwide as particularly suitable in *Dawa* work.

[270] Harun Yahya, which is the pen-name of Adnan Oktar, is formed from the names "Harun" (Aaron) and "Yahya" (John), two of the recognized Prophets in Islam. Harun Yahya's list of Turkish publications includes about 180 titles. His work has been translated into several languages including Arabic, Spanish, Russian, Serbo-Croat, Urdu, Malay and German. His Internet pages are available in as many languages. The refutation of evolutionary theory and Darwinism, as well as the defence of Islam against the challenges of materialism and Christianity is the main concern of his writings. Harun Yahya's project in some sense seems to be in continuation with the Turkish-Kemalist project of modernization that was largely built on a positivist view of science, and where modernization, progress and science went hand in hand, but without Islam being a part of this project. In a Turkish context, the newness of Yahya's project is thus the way in which he connects Islam to a positivist view of science. According to Riexinger (2002), his international reputation is due to extensive use of the Internet, and he may accordingly be considered as one of the first Islamic intellectuals to base his career on this mode of communication technology. Internet is also how the young Muslims in Norway came to know about Yahya and other theorists of the new Islamic scientism. Yahya's books and films are also distributed in Norway by Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd. located in *Masjid Bilal*.

As has been noted by the European Muslim intellectual Tariq Ramadan, there is nothing new to a complementary view of Islam and science. Throughout history, the Islamic tradition has been engaging, incorporating and rejecting other traditions of knowledge. Islam does not oppose experience or reasoning to faith, according to Ramadan. On the contrary, the entire creation is seen as a universe of signs, a testimony, of God and His qualities (Ramadan 1994: 61-62). Scientific knowledge brings a Muslim closer to God. As Ramadan writes, "La raison est invitée à réveler' dans les choses les signes de la création et toute nouvelle découverte scientifique nous raprocche de Dieu: elle est, pour ainsi dire, une preuve" (Ramadan 1994: 66). In a historical perspective, the "newness" of the "new Islamic scientism" thus pertains more to the newness (and progressive secularization) of modern science, rather than to the view that scientific and religious knowledge are complementary forms of knowledge.

I have already noted that the young Muslims I worked with are usually critical of the "superstition" and "irrationality" of some Muslims, and in particular that of women and those categorized as illiterate, rural, and of the immigrant generation. They stress the fact that Islam is an imminently logical and reasonable religion, which does not oppose experience or reasoning to *iman*. A human being who grew up in total isolation from other human beings, I was told, would become a Muslim from reading the signs of nature and from his natural inclination (*fitra*[271]) towards submission to Allah. *Iman* is not opposed to reason, but on the contrary a natural capacity of reasonable human beings. The young Muslims I worked with often talked about natural phenomena as signs of God's Greatness and Might, and saw such contemplation as important to *iman*. Looking at beautiful scenery, or watching a wildlife-programme on TV, often elicited exclamations like *Al-Hamdulillah*, and statements about the greatness of Islam were often introduced by expressions like "When I look around me...". Furthermore, the reasonableness, explained in terms of modern sciences, of Islamic practices was often fronted as a rationale for following them: abstaining from alcohol and pork, eating *halal*[272] and performing the five daily prayers was not only an act of obedience to God or of expressing one's Muslim identity, but a way of achieving a more healthy body and a more healthy society. Religious observance thus gained its "rationality" quite independently from its anchorage in tradition, and was partly transformed into a question of knowing what is "good for me".

[271] The capacity of accepting Islam as the right faith. The notion of *fitra* will be discussed in the next chapter.
[272] Eating *halal*-meat, for example, is explained as having its *raison d'etre* in the positive health effects in the fact that the blood transports toxics out of the animal's body when its throat is cut.

The relationship between modern scientific knowledge and Islamic knowledge is frequently thematized in *darses* and seminars in the NMU and the MSS,[273] as well as in their publications. Two ways of reasoning are frequent. On the one hand side, scientific findings are seen to confirm depictions of natural phenomena in the Quran, thus attesting to its divine truth. On the other hand, it is argued that scientific findings may help to understand the actual meaning of the normative texts. In a *dars* in the NMU, for instance, Aydin explained that although we might not understand everything in the Quran, we should follow its guiding lines while simultaneously striving for more knowledge. Upon closer study we will discover the accordance between the knowledge of the Quran and the modern sciences. As an example Aydin cites a story from the Islamic tradition in which a man is cleansed of his sins in cold water. Aydin did not understand why the water should be cold rather than warm, until he read a scientific study on the cleansing effects of cold water on the body on a later occasion.

However, binding Islamic knowledge to modern science and legitimating the truth of the former by reference to the latter may prove to be what Hjärpe has called "an apologetic trap" (Hjärpe 1999; Otterbeck 2000). This is because the knowledge of men is thus easily turned into a measure for the truth of the Islamic sources. On the MSS mailing list a medical student cautioned against the epistemological implications of insisting on a fundamental accordance between the knowledge of the Quran and of the modern sciences. The cautions were made in response to a newspaper article that had previously been posted as a news link on the MSS-list. The article addresses the discovery of a group of scientists at the University of Wales Institute in Cardiff of the healing effects of honey, including its effectiveness against resistant microbes.[274] The link is accompanied by the text, "wow, they found out NOW, yes!!! We knew it 1400 years ago! :)". The answer from the medical student reads as follows:

> Salam dear friends! I'm strictly against "proving that the Quran is right" on the basis of recently acquired scientific knowledge as the brother does in his mail. I will explain why. Science is highly unsure and unstable and changes from day to day, yes even from minute to minute. What is today considered a scientific truth may tomorrow be rejected as pure nonsense. Furthermore, science is "human knowledge". By that I mean that it is created

[273] In spring 1999, Maurice Bucaille's book was read and discussed during the literature seminars of the MSS, and a movie based on *The Book of Signs* was screened in 2004. On the Homepages of the US-based distributer, Sound Vision, the film is referred to as one of the best documentaries ever made on Islam and science, "This incredible video shows how the Quran is indeed the Book of Signs: a Book that, over 1400 years ago, when it was first revealed to the Prophet Mohammed (peace and blessings be upon him), accurately described many, many natural phenomena, before any precise equipment or technology existed. This indicates one thing very clearly: that the Quran, the Book of Signs, is also the Book of God". In autumn 2003, a movie called "Miracles of the Quran", made by Harun Yahya (see above) was screened. One of the young women of Turkish origin that I worked with was for a while very interested in Harun Yahya's work, and managed to speak to him and some of those who work for him during a trip to Turkey.

[274] "Honning dreper versting-bakterier", (www.nettavisen.no 19. 11. 2002).

by humans for humans. Humans are as we know fallible and often make big mistakes. Not least within research and science.

The Quran is the word of Allah. The Quran is knowledge/science created by Allah. The knowledge of the Quran is eternal and for all times. It is perfect and infallible. Consequently it goes without saying that proving something Eternal, Perfect, Infallible, and Divine (the Quran) by reference to something unsure, unstable and transitory (science) is impossible.

The brother writes: "Oh, they found out NOW, right!!! We knew 1400 years ago! :-)" I ask you, brother: What if tomorrow there is a scientific report of high quality arguing that honey is exceptionally dangerous and that in no way kills microbes. What would you answer then? That "the Quran was wrong 1400 years ago! :-(?" Unlikely. But you will undoubtedly have a problem explaining yourself. Let us therefore abstain from such presentation of evidence on the validity of the Quran. In our belief is implicit that Allah's word is the inerrant truth. We do not need science created by humans to strengthen our belief!

Contrary to the hypothesis in classical modernization and secularization theories, according to which scientific worldviews and rationality would gradually replace religious worldviews, Muslims have envisaged different strategies for dealing with the relationship between Islamic knowledge and modern scientific knowledge. "The new Islamic scientism" encompasses the knowledge of modern science within the abode of Islam, and uses it to underpin the authority of the Quran. The "post-modern" critique of positivism in modern science, poses a new challenge to this way of dealing with the challenges of modern science to religious knowledge. If modern sciences are unstable, transitory and fallible in character, they cannot effectively legitimize the eternal truth of the Islamic sources. The disbelief in the infallibility and accumulation of modern scientific knowledge may thus prompt a shift from the attempt to show that the scriptures anticipate and are fully consonant with the spirit and findings of modern sciences, towards the absolute separation of religious matters from scientific ones. The truth of the Quran (as knowledge/science created by Allah) is thus re-asserted as eternal, perfect and infallible and independent of the knowledges of men. This truth is conceptualized as a matter of "belief", a belief that "does not need science created by humans" to support it.

The quest for knowledge: a reflexive adhesion to Islamic authority

In this chapter I have discussed young Muslims' quest for Islamic knowledge in terms of the changing conditions under which such knowledge is transmitted and acquired. I have argued that their quest for knowledge may in part be seen as a self-reflexive re-appropriation of the Islamic tradition that is energized by the contemporary "objectification of the religious

imagination". The conditions in which Islamic knowledge is transmitted to young Muslims brings to the fore a range of questions that require of them to reflect upon their own religious practices, to explain and rationalize them, and to choose between different interpretations and attempts at defining orthodoxy. This requires a kind of knowledge that exceeds the practical competence to live religiously that most of the young Muslims have, to a greater or lesser extent, acquired through Islamic education within the family and the Quran schools. Young Muslims thus increasingly seek to instruct themselves in the scholarly Islamic tradition through books, media and seminar-activities and through creating their own arenas for learning such as the NMU and the MSS.

Instead of seeing this objectification as a clear cut shift from the unconscious enactment of tradition to an individualized critical reflection upon tradition, I have sought to understand how particular modes of self-reflection are created in different arenas where Islam is taught and debated. In particular, I have stressed the importance of the confrontation with one's own difference (in relation to non-Muslims as well as to different Muslim traditions) and the widening of the field of religious discussion in which young Muslims increasingly engage. The modern conditions of mass education and mass mediation have made young Muslims more familiar with Islamic texts and doctrinal reasoning, and they engage in debate about theological and doctrinal issues that were once the provenance of male religious scholars. In continuity, I have investigated the relationship young Muslims establish to authorized forms of Islamic discourse and the religious authorities who maintain, produce and circulate Islamic knowledge. In engaging scholarship on the individualization of Islam in Europe, I have argued that the current conditions under which Islam is transmitted has enabled a growing number of people to engage in theological debate, to assert their own interpretations of what "Islam says", and to bear forth critical interventions towards particular practices that throughout history have come to be seen by groups of people as "Islam". I have situated such critical interventions in their practical context, and shown how they relate to the efforts of young Muslims to contest hierarchies of gender and generation. In some cases, Islamic knowledge and the familiarity with different opinions in the Islamic scholarly tradition is thus mobilized in daily life as an aspect of the interaction and negotiations between the young and their parents, women and men etc. It is thus important to assess how interpretations of Islamic texts and norms are conditioned by other practices, institutions, and social conditions.

While the individual is made responsible for acquiring knowledge of Islam, of reflecting upon religious prescriptions and practices, and of relating critically to multiple authorities that speak in the name of Islam, there is also a strong discourse of religious obligation. The

authority of Islam as a system of meaning and norms largely remains undisputed. The relationship of young Muslims to Islamic knowledge and authorities are implicated in broader contemporary struggles to establish Islamic orthodoxies. It is thus not individualized in the sense of being disembedded from authorizing discourses and Islamic authorities. Rather, references to authoritative Islamic sources provide the foundation on which opposing viewpoints are articulated. In continuity with the Islamic revivalist tradition, young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS privilege the authority of Islamic texts over the authority of traditions and established practices. But at the same time, while aspiring reflexivity, critique and empowerment, young Muslims aspire to remain within "Islam". Young Muslims' quest for knowledge brings them into contact with a variety of Islamic discourses, from which their knowledge of "Islam" must be put together, and in relation to which they must increasingly reflect on whom to listen to and to respect as authoritative. Within this field of Islamic discourse, some voices come to be respected as more authoritative in defining what Islam "really is" than others. As a consequence, we see a paradoxical development in which Islam is both increasingly "individualized" and "normativized", as it enters debates and social confrontations about the nature of "true Islam".

Young Muslims' quest for Islamic knowledge thus proceeds in a situation where the boundaries of what "Islam" is, of defining and authorizing its truth, are continually subject to debate and contestation, both in relation to the great variation of Islamic discourses and in relation to other systems of knowledge and truth, such as modern sciences. Although one may observe an institutional deregulation and fragmentation of authority structures (of the family, the mosque, the imam, the *ulema* etc.) the result is not an autonomous appropriation of the Islamic tradition in terms of a "bricolage" of "individual beliefs and practices", but a complex and structured process of contestation in which authorities are simultaneously challenged and re-asserted, resisted and subjected to. In this respect, the chapter has sought to show that young Muslims subjection to religious authority does not necessarily hinder debate and deliberation. Rather the authoritative religious discourses they relate to promote particular notions of reflexivity, criticism, individuality, self-determination, which are central to argumentation and public deliberation. Transformations in the social organization and transmission of knowledge, and the increased importance of modern communication technologies, may thus be said to have both deliberative and disciplinary effects (cf. chapter one). They are both individualizing and "normativizing". While this chapter has mainly been concerned with dimensions relating to the social organization of knowledge and relationships of authority, the next chapter focus on an equally important dimension of young Muslims'

quest for knowledge; the importance of Islamic knowledge in the process of ethical self-formation. As will be the subject of the next chapter, the Islamic knowledge acquired through different educational activities forms the basis for work on the Self; of realizing a pious everyday life.

Chapter six

Becoming Muslim: working on the Self

This chapter expands the focus on knowledge, "objectification" and authority from the previous chapter by paying attention to the ways in which subjectivities are formed in the educational processes related to the search for knowledge of "true Islam". The main questions to be explored are how people come to conceive of, and act upon themselves on the basis of such truths. In this sense, being a Muslim is not achieved once and for all, but always a process of becoming. I suggest viewing "becoming a Muslim" as a process of "subjectification", in a Foucauldian sense.[275] Focusing on subjectification implies that I am concerned with exploring the "way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject".[276] In the analysis of subjectification, Foucault is concerned with the techniques through which the person initiates an active self-formation. Such "techniques of self" are "procedures suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to determine their identity, maintain it, or transform it in terms of a certain number of ends, through relations of self-mastery or self-knowledge" (Foucault 1997: 87). I am proposing this as a point of departure for raising a particular set of questions, and not as a "theoretical framework" for understanding subjectivity.[277] In this chapter I will look at some aspects of young Muslims' religious identities and practices through the lens offered by the question Foucault raises about subjectification. What kinds of conscience and self-knowledge are constructed in the process of turning oneself into a Muslim subject? What, according to the young Muslims, should one do with oneself? What work should be carried out on the self, and to what ends does such work aspire?

In order to grasp such processes, an important ethnographic point of departure is young Muslims' narratives of "becoming Muslim". "Becoming Muslim" is of course a variegated process, both with respect to e.g. individual life histories, social context, and the multiplicity and internal heterogeneity of knowledges and discourses upon which it rests. As will become

[275] This is a suggestion that has been made and thoughtfully elaborated in continuity with Asad's perspective, and notably by Mahmood (2005) in her study of the politics of piety in Egypt, and also by Christiansen (1999) in her study of Islamist women in Morocco.

[276] Such an understanding of subjectivity is meant to bring out the double meaning of the French "asujetissement", as stressed by Foucault in *The subject and power*. Foucault stresses this double meaning of the term subject as constituted by a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to: "There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to somone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge" (Foucault 1982: 781).

[277] Foucault himself stresses that his inquiries about the subject represents neither a theory nor a methodology (Foucault 1982).

clear, however, there are certain key elements around which such narratives are structured. I discuss these key elements as a model of a "return to Islam", a model that may be understood as part of a transnational Islamic "ideoscape" (Appadurai 1996).[278] "Narratives of return" recount a personal process of Islamization in which Islam gains a new meaning as a framework for understanding oneself in the world, and as a normative template for action. As all narratives, such narratives are "constructions" in the sense that they "must be created out of the welter of occurrences and relationships that characterize most lives" (Olwig 2001: 14). They are woven together of interpretations and judgements of personal experiences and social events into reflexive accounts of self-identity. But although they are personal accounts, they are also "cultural constructions", since they tend to follow certain established conventions (that make them e.g. credible and socially acceptable), and that signal certain values and norms in light of which the narrator constructs herself as a (moral) subject.

Narratives of becoming Muslim are, as I see it, not "mere narratives" – they are to be considered as a means through which particular **s**ubjectivities are produced. Identifying oneself as a Muslim who is "returning to Islam", implies some changes in how an individual perceives her life, its trajectory and goals. Narratives of returning to Islam may thus in themselves be seen as a technique of the self, that allows the production of self-knowledge and provides a means for constructing oneself as a particular kind of moral subject. As a process of subject formation, "becoming Muslim" involves engaging a set of techniques of the Self as instruments for personal as well as social reform. The process of "becoming Muslim" implies an increasing concern with Islamic rituals such as the ritual prayer and the hijab, and a reorientation of everyday-life in terms of what is considered allowed, forbidden and recommended in Islam. Instead of regarding these changes merely as "symbols" of Muslim identity, or as practices mobilized in identity politics, as suggested in an earlier chapter, I will explore the extent to which such practices may also be understood as a "work on the Self". "Practicing" or "applying" Islam thus goes beyond religious rituals as "symbolic acts", and functions as a way of transforming oneself into as a moral being. In this context, I thus focus on religious practices and rituals as techniques of the Self, aimed at shaping a particular kind of subjects.

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[278] The transnational circulation of this "ideoscape", produces, along with similarities in structural conditions, important discursive convergences in locations as different as Indonesia (Brenner 1996), Morocco (Christiansen 1999) France (Cesari 1997; Jacobsen 1999) and Norway (Jacobsen 2002). Narratives of "Islamic reversion", including narratives of veiling, circulate in the media, notably in popular Islamic publications (Abu-Lughod 1995), on e-mail lists and popular Islamic internet sites and are also found in the publications of young Muslims in Norway and elsewhere.

In particular, I want to explore how such a work on the self is shaped by the processes of individualization discussed in the previous chapter, and in particular in the value that "choice" and "reflexivity" has come to take on in contemporary secular societies in general, and Norway more specifically, as related to the ideal of authenticity that was discussed in chapter four. The discussions among young Muslims on what being a Muslim entails in terms of religious practice, the proper motives and intentions that should underlie such practice, and the effects that such practice is seen to have on the kind of self one is, reflect ambivalences both in the goals that young Muslims aspire to realize through their work on the Self, and the way in which they relate to the norms and authority of the Islamic discursive tradition. In this respect there is an ambivalence between "choice" as a means for turning oneself into a good Muslim, and "choice" as a value that in itself signifies a form of self-realization, a way of "being oneself". As the discussion will show, a series of tensions emerge when attention is paid to the ways in which young Muslims engage in religious practices, and the ways in which they theorize this engagement, in terms of the relationship between "inner conviction" and "outer behaviour", between different motives and intentions, and between "authenticity" and "inauthenticity" in religious practice.

Who are you? Muslim by Nature: returning to Islam

In *Explore* nr.1 January 1999, the front page poses the question "Who are you?" And continues, "This is a thought that often haunts us. But where do we stand?" The picture shows four young men of different origins. One of them wears a t-shirt with a slogan suggesting an answer to the question: "Muslim by Nature".[279] The T-shirts are imported to Norway from the UK, and sold by the NMU in Oslo. The slogan "Muslim by nature" suggests an answer to questions that young Muslims in Oslo increasingly pose themselves about who they are and what it means to be a Muslim. It suggests that "knowing who you are", is dependent on knowing what a human being is in terms of its place within Allah's creation. In the same number of *Explore*, an article called "Do not forget who you are!" elaborates on the questions posed on the front page, and the answer suggested by the slogan "Muslim by Nature":

> The human being is God's most beautiful creation, but it is up to us to remember who we are and our value. We can achieve a higher status than the angles, who obey and remember Him incessantly, and we can sink below animals in our action and way of

[279] "Muslim by Nature" is a clothing collection for women and men.

> living. This is possible because Allah has given us free will and reason, and He has given us guidance on what is right (1999: 5).

In the MSS magazine what it means to be "Muslim by nature" is further elaborated in an article on the issue of "reversion". Here, references are made to the hadith cited in *Sahih Muslim*, according to which every child is born according to the *fitra.*[280] *Fitra* is explained as "the capacity of accepting Islam as the right faith". It is explained that the responsibility for developing this capacity is incumbent upon parents, and that if children's education is insufficient many may remain nominal Muslims, although mainly by cultural heritage rather than by religious conviction. According to this model, accepting Islam as the right faith involves a "reversion" in the sense of "finding back to one's true nature". The preference for *reversion,*[281] rather than *con*version, to designate the act of "becoming Muslim" expresses the idea of Islam as *deen-al-fitra.* Based on the Islamic ontology embodied in *fitra*, becoming Muslim is in some sense coming back to one's true nature. "Reversion" is thus used both to indicate the act of submitting to Allah for the first time, and to the process by which someone already Muslim in a nominal or cultural sense "reverts" to a more authentic way of being, thus more fully realizing her human potential through Islam.[282] The natural disposition towards accepting Islam as a true faith must be developed and perfected through religious knowledge and practice. In this respect, the capacity to accept Islam as the right faith should be developed and perfected through following Allah's guidance on what is right.

Although the young Muslims I worked with rarely discussed such abstract notions as *fitra*, the above mentioned hadith was often paraphrased in conversations.[283] Similarly, the concept of "reversion" was but rarely used, but other expressions signalling a change from a "nominal" or "cultural" way of being Muslim were rife, such as, "I'm coming back to Islam", "I had an Islamic breakthrough", "I started caring more about Islam", "I realized what Islam really means", and I "started practicing Islam". These expressions signal a variety of points of reorientation that will be discussed below. I am speaking here of "reversion to Islam" as a

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[280] Murata and Chittick cite this Hadith in the following version (though without exact references): "Every child is born according to *fitra*. Then its parents make it into a Christian, a Jew or a Zoroastrian" (1994: 138). See e.g. the Encyclopaedia of Islam for a discussion of different theological understandings of *fitra*. See also Naguib (1995) who discusses the Islamic self-conception as a *deen-al-fitra* and its centrality in Islamic ethics in the context of religious dialogue in Norway.

[281] In French "reversion" is talked about as the act of "rentrer dans l'islam". Rentrer signifies: to get back, to go back, to return. In Norway a Norwegianized form of the English term revert is sometimes used: "revertere".

[282] The "return to Islam" may be understood as a form of what Martin van Bruinessen (2003) terms "internal conversions". As van Bruinessen notes, such "internal conversions" have so far been little researched.

[283] The Hadith was paraphrased by several of the young Muslims in discussions they had with their co-religionists and me. According to Yaminah, for instance, "We Muslims know that all people are born Muslims. But through their parents, they become Christian, Jews etc.", or *Iman* who states that: "[…] all humans are born Muslim. That some become Christian, Jews etc. is because their parents convert them to another religion".

narrative model, which links individual self-conceptions and experiences to a broader theological and ethical framework. The point is thus to look at how the "return to Islam" both shapes and expresses particular experiences and moral sensibilities.

Contemporary Islamic discourse is characterized by a preponderance of personal testimony, of narratives of individual experience and individual relationships to Islam over time.[284] Such "narratives of reversion" provide a discursive framework for understanding one's personal life history as a movement "back to" Islam, and thus for interpreting one's experiences as a continuous subject with a past, present and future. The trajectory of the subject forms an analogy to the history of the Islamic community (*the umma*) which has, after the time of the Sahaaba (companions of the Prophet), moved away from Islam, and should now, just as the individual person, "return" (re-submit) to Islam. The "return" articulates a simultaneous concern with personal and social transformation and with realizing an authentic Muslim selfhood as well as an authentic Islamic society.[285] This transformation operates through a return to the authentic knowledge of Islam, as unmediated by cultural tradition and as embodied in the Quran and the Hadith.

The ways in which young Muslims speak about their return to Islam, rather than simply mirroring an individual life course, reflect a particular narrative construction of the Self. In this sense, the narratives in themselves can be thought of as techniques of the Self, through which the Self is disclosed as knowledge about it is produced. Narratives of the "return to Islam" produce a self-knowledge through ordering and systematizing the individual life-course according to a particular model of striving towards religious perfection. This self-knowledge also sorts out identity-questions related to "who I am" and "who I should strive to be". The narratives also produce knowledge of the self as an agent of personal development, individual decisions and conscience.

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[284] There are numerous narratives, confessions and repentances of this kind available in the pedagogic Islamic literature, on the Internet etc. The above cited interview in *Tankevekkende* is an example of this kind of narrative; where a Norwegian "revert" reflects upon the process by which he found back to his Muslim nature, the questions about the meaning of life and death that he posed himself in this process, the search he undertook in different religious traditions, his dissatisfaction with the answers provided in the Bible, his studies of Arab and the Quran, and the satisfaction that being a Muslim now gives him. Other examples are the articles "Choosing Islam" (*Ung Muslim* Spring 2002, 3 (1) and "Iman's story: From Norwegian to Muslim – A True Story" (*Ung Muslim* Autumn 1 (1). It is probable that the narratives of those who were previously "nominal" or "cultural" Muslims are influenced by conversion narratives of previous non-Muslims.

[285] The narrative of "return" may be said to rest on a particular temporality in which "the past is the accomplished future and the future is the past reasserted" (Al-Azmeh 1996: 89). The modern, evolutionist, Western master narrative of a global transition from tradition to modernity in which the West is up front and Islam needs to catch up, is challenged by this alternative narrative that asserts an "ideal" past (authentic Islam, authentic human nature) to be realized in the future.

Noor's return to Islam

At the time when I first met her, Noor lived in a flat in Grünerløkka with her parents, her younger brother and two younger sisters. Noor was an active member of the NMU. She also taught classes at the private Muslim primary school. Throughout her years of Islamic activism she had participated at a variety of Islamic conferences and summer camps in different countries and had a wide network of relations to "brothers" and "sisters" both nationally and internationally. Noor comes from a religiously observant family, and as a child she was introduced into a range of religious practices such as prayer and fasting. At a certain point in her life, these religious practices came to take on a new meaning as a "choice" she made on the basis of a process of knowledge acquisition that made her realize more clearly what "Islam said":

> It was in 8th grade that I realized what Islam was really about. My parents pray, and when I grew up they were always making sure that I pray and fast. The five pillars were the most central to them. It was not that we didn't know what Islam was. But I never understood it in the way that I did in 8th grade. Before that, during the Iraq war when I was in 6th grade, I knew that we should stick to the right people – it was kind of like "don't come near me", you know. My class was split in two. Some Norwegian boys were on my side and then some girls because one of the fathers was from Iraq. It was like we hade "teams", and I was always the one to stand up and speak my mind, even if I didn't have any Islamic knowledge. Then in 7th and 8th grade it became gradually clearer to me what Islam said. 'Cause if you don't have any knowledge, you just go on fighting and that's not how we should act. I didn't have much knowledge, but there was something sound in what I had to say, so people mainly respected it. Since I didn't have much knowledge I used to ask a friend: what does Islam say about this and that? Especially when I started wearing the hijab and people would ask me, "Why did you start wearing the hijab?" "Are you better than your Pakistani friend who does not wear it?" And I answered, "No, it's just a choice that I have made, and it means a lot to me".

The questions that she was confronted with from the surroundings were important in energizing this process, Noor accounts:

> All the time I was made responsible for what Muslims do. They would say, "Yes Noor, this or that happened, what do you think of it?" So I always needed to have the answers ready. I had to be prepared to answer questions from teachers and fellow pupils. And this gave me very much in return. It strengthened me. Because I went searching [for the answers].

While these reflections were made in the context of a discussion in the NMU where the main topic was young Muslims' experience of "otherness" and how it conditioned the way in which they related to their religion, she would in other settings stress more the importance of close persons in her social network, and how she learned about Islam and the importance of wearing a hijab from her older sister and a groups of "religious" women who were her friends.

Noor made it a project to acquire more knowledge of Islam. She participated actively in the NMU and the MSS, listening to *darses*, going to conferences and seminars, reading books, watching videos and surfing the Internet. The acquisition of such knowledge enabled her to "apply Islam" in her everyday life in a new way. Although her parents used to make sure that she pray and fast, Noor's religious practice changed significantly in this process. They were both expanded to include new areas of ritual and social obligations, and they were "assumed" in a new and more conscientious manner. Initially, she started paying more attention to clothing and conduct. Dressing properly meant wearing a hijab, little or no make up, and clothes that did not reveal too much of her body shape. Praying became more central to her life, as she now attempted to get each of the five daily prayers done at the right time, rather than "catching up" the ones she had missed in the evening or skipping them when escaping parental control. To be more flexible she would sometimes carry a prayer rug in her handbag, finding a place to pray at the *Mosalla* at the university campus, in some nearby mosque, in the home of people she was visiting, or in a quiet corner of a restaurant. Prayers were important not just as religious duty; she would often point out to me, but also in terms of creating a balance in her life. At times she would do extra prayers, and fast on recommended days. Noor increasingly tried to let her whole life be guided by Islamic principles and the distinction between what was *halal* and *haram* was central to determining whether things were "Islamically correct" or not. Certain cafés and restaurants were not to be visited, and certain foods as well as alcohol and all kinds of drugs should be avoided. Although she listened to a lot of different music, Noor would often put on a tape with some kind of Islamic music, one of her favourites being Yosef Islam.

Noor would often talk about the beauty of her religion. After conferences and seminars we attended together, she would comment on the beauty of the message and of the voice and ways of speaking and reciting of the speaker. Noor exemplifies well the saying that "*iman* goes up and down like in a fun fair".[286] In periods she would be "filled" with religious engagement expressed in abundant praising to God (*mashallah, subhanallah*), exclamations of the Greatness of God (*Allahu Akbar*) as well as in her eagerness to conform to every Islamic proscription and prescription. She would also strive to "purify" her intention so as to act not to her own advantage or to fulfil her own desires, but so as to submit to the will of Allah. Occasionally she would reproach a fellow "sister" or "brother" who in her view did not

[286] This is an expression used by the Swedish-Pakistani Pyar Durrani, a member of the working committee of the Muslim youth of Sweden, in a speech he gave at the International Muslim Youth Conference in Stockholm in 1999.

practice their religion in a proper manner and therefore needed to be reminded of doing what is right. An event that was much talked about afterwards, was when she chastised the Muslim salesman at 7-eleven for selling hot-dogs that were not *halal*. In other periods, she saw her *iman* as being less strong in that she failed to "work with herself" in order to live "according to Islam".

Becoming Muslim: continuities and ruptures

Narratives of "return to Islam" recount a personal process of Islamization that involves changes in religious identity and practice. The narratives reflect the model of Self that was described above, in that they narrate the relationship to Islam over time as a "process" that involves personal growth or transformation and an increasing "consciousness" in relation to Islamic practice.[287] The young Muslims in a variety of ways affirmed that "you're never a perfect Muslim, you always have to strive", "Becoming a good Muslim is a process that everyone is capable of if they want to", "A good Muslim is someone who understands the essence of reflecting upon life, and who uses this to improve herself, and who seeks the guidance of Allah to follow the straight path". Or, in Alesha's words, "I have a lot of negative sides. Since I know that Allah does not approve of these, I'm willing to try to change. Being a good Muslims is therefore a process I have to go through and to do this I must improve on myself through reflecting upon who I am and who I want to become". "Returning to Islam" implies a search for Islamic knowledge and a reorientation of practices in accordance with the religious criteria of right and wrong, clean and unclean, allowed and forbidden. In the constitution and sustenance of this change, practices such as clothing, rituals, body-posture, and patterns of consumption, the use of time and public space and social relations are important. Of particular importance is the performance of the five daily prayers, eating *halal*, dressing within Islamic norms, and modest conduct in relation to persons of the other sex. In the following I will explore some aspects of how this work on the Self is performed. What are the "techniques" that allow individuals to work on themselves to reflect on who they are, and to regulate their bodies, their thoughts and their conduct?

The way in which young Muslims account for their individual religious trajectories within the narrative structure of the "return to Islam", points to the ways in which such trajectories

[287] Metcalf notes a similar emphasis on personal transformation with regard to South Asian Islam. She interprets this as part of a larger trend toward self-conscious, scripturally based reform, characteristic not only of South Asian Muslims but of Muslims in general in modern times (Metcalf 1984: 18).

are shaped in and through particular social relationships and contexts. Seeking answers to fundamental existential questions and meeting with others who are practicing Islam as a way of life are usually central events in the return. The process of return is often contextualized in terms of an existential wondering about "who one is" and "about the great questions of life" and then finding the answers to these questions through explorations into Islam. Such reflections are often related to important events in personal biographies, such as moving, getting new friends, going through the "confusions" of puberty, or the death of someone close. They may also be related to the challenges involved in managing an identity that is being subject to racism, discrimination and/or mis-recognition of some kind, or to a political awareness of injustice and the need for social change such as war, gender discrimination, or racism. Often, several of these aspects are woven together in narratives of becoming Muslim. As we saw in Ibrahim's account in the above chapter, of what he refers to as his "religious breakthrough", he underlined that it was an inner voice, related to a growing concern with the contemporary situation of Muslims around the world that summoned him to take his religion more seriously. Noor, on the other hand, relates the shift in her relationship to religion more to the experience of being continuously called upon to answer questions about Islam by her surroundings.

Many narratives focus on "continuity", and see the religious trajectory as a "natural development" that goes along with "growing up" to be a more "serious" and "responsible" person. In this respect, working to become a good Muslim implies "taking on" practices and subjecting to norms that have been passed on in the Muslim socialization and education they achieved at home or in the mosque. Noor for instance, had learned how to perform the prayer by her parents, and occasionally did it under their supervision, but it was not until a certain point that she started to practice it regularly; to become serious about it and take responsibility for it herself. Similarly, Janaan, who we will meet below, wore her hijab at a very young age because her parents and environments expected her to do so, only to take it off and start wearing it again "in a new way" when she was older.

Sometimes narratives focus on the process of "coming back to Islam". In this respect they involve the notion of a "rupture" of some kind, e.g. with previous lifestyles, or previous social networks. This rupture was sometimes conceptualized as a rupture with what they saw as a previous "Norwegian lifestyle", a qualifier that remained highly contextual when used in this way, but usually included such things as smoking, going out to discotheques, experimenting with alcohol and amorous relationships. When constructed on such terms, "Norwegian lifestyle" is imagined as an opposite to, and threat to, Islamic practice. The construction of the

"return" as a "rupture" with previous lifestyles is gendered. Men more frequently stressed that "coming back to Islam" implied a rupture with a non-Islamic lifestyle regarding alcohol, partying, dating and sexual relations. Although women also referred to the challenges posed by the centrality of such lifestyle aspects among their peers, they very rarely admitted to engaging in such lifestyles themselves. Only one young woman told me that previous to her "return" she had "tried it all", but that she had realized that this way of life did not make her happy. It appeared that she had been hanging out with a "youth gang", and "trying it all" included smoking, some petty theft, and bullying.

In this respect I found a rather striking difference between the Muslims I worked with in France and in Norway. The young Muslims I worked with in France were of a second and third generation and had grown up in an environment characterized by a fast-working integration in which Islam and cultural traditions were only laboriously transmitted across generations (Jacobsen 1999). When young people started "practising" Islam, it was thus sometimes in discontinuity with the values and practices of their parents and social environment. This was so not least because the Muslim organizations in the suburbs of Marseilles attracted a number of "marginalized" youngsters, whose previous lifestyle was well outside the norms of the cultural traditions of the ethnic community and Islam. As Kepel (1987; 1994) notes, the emergence of religiously active young Muslims in France, was a "new" emergence in the middle of the 1980s, and seemed to "turn" a previous pronounced process of secularization, in which young primarily mobilized within what has been termed "le movement des beurs"[288] into a process of re-Islamization.

In contrast, and because of the more recent history of Muslim immigration in Norway, the young Muslims in Norway were second and in some cases first generation immigrants. The young in Norway remained more importantly attached to the mosques and organizations associated with their ethnic communities, and had virtually all undergone some kind of religious training within them. Whereas in particular the NMU had as an ambition to offer an alternative to Muslim youth who had "lost their identity" and who lived in a "normless environment", they nevertheless mostly attracted "well adjusted" youngsters from religious families. The degree of "rupture" should however not be exaggerated for the case of France either, since it does not seem to correspond to the lives of the majority of young Muslims (Roy 2000).

[288] Beurs means Arabs in *verlan*, which is the inversion of syllables found especially in slang and youth language in French suburbs. Les *beurs* is used as a general term for so-called second-generation immigrants of North-African origin in France.

Gendering the return: hijab stories

Whereas the rupture with a "Norwegian lifestyle" is more central to the narratives of young men, "hijab stories" are central to the narratives of many young women. Such clothing stories bring out the gendered aspect of the return to Islam, as well as its conceptualization as a process and *prise-de-conscience,* and the way in which it may be seen to represent a "work on the Self". The hijab is seen by most as prescribed by Islam, and thus as something one should assume in the process of "becoming Muslim".[289] Young Muslim women relate to this obligation in different ways. There are different ways of understanding what the obligation implies, and different ways of obeying, negotiating or resisting it. However, most of the young women present their own decision to wear the hijab as an individual choice that was made on the basis of reflections and consciousness about who they were and wanted to be.[290] What I want to focus on here is the ambivalence between the stress on the hijab as a religious duty, and the understanding of the correct performance of this duty as dependant on an "individual choice" that each woman must make for herself.

Janaan came to Norway from the Turkish countryside at the age of eight with her migrant parents. When she first arrived, she was already wearing a headgear, since that was the common practice for girls her age in the mainly agriculturalist and pastoralist village where her family comes from. Encouraged by her parents who praised her for being a "good girl", Janaan continued covering her hair during the first year in Norwegian primary school. But after a year, she gradually started omitting it when playing at school. After a while, she stopped wearing a headscarf altogether. As she explains this in retrospect, the fact that she was the only "foreigner" in her class made her want to be a "normal girl". When she started

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[289] Usually three different verses in the Koran are mentioned in the literature on the subject of the hijab: 33/59: "O Prophet, say to thy wives or thy daughters and the believing women, that they draw their veils close to them; so it is likelier they will be known, and not hurt. God is all-Forgiving, all-Compassionate". 24/31: "Say to the believers, that they cast down their eyes and guard their private parts; that is purer for them. God is aware of the things they work. And say to the believing women that they cast down their eyes and guard their private parts, and reveal not their adornment save such as it is outward; and let them cast their veils over their bosoms, and not reveal their adornment save to their husbands', or their fathers, or their husbands' fathers, or their sons, or their husbands' sons, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or what their right hands own, or such men as attend them, not having sexual desire, or children who have not yet attained knowledge of women's private parts; nor let them stamp their feet, so that their hidden ornament may be known. And turn all together to God, O you believers; haply so you will prosper" and 24/59: "Such women as are past of child-bearing and have no hope of marriage – there is no fault in them that they put off their clothes, so be it that they flaunt no ornament; but to abstain is better for them; and God is all-Hearing, all-Knowing". In addition there are several *Hadiths* on the issue.

[290] In order to avoid misunderstandings, let me stress that the decision about wearing the hijab is of course not taken in a social vacuum. All choices are embedded in social and cultural processes related to socially and culturally constituted values and views of person and society, that imply varying degrees of both possibilities and limitations for persons in their daily lives. For a further discussion of the importance of choice, see chapter seven.

wearing the hijab again at the age of 17, it was in relation to a process of reflecting upon "who she was", that was prompted by her first visit "back home" in seven years. Janaan had expected to be "at home" in Turkey, but instead she was perceived to be "Norwegian", just as in Norway she is perceived to be "Turkish" or "an immigrant". Janaan relates her decision about wearing the hijab to this realization of being neither-nor, and to a re-configuration in her sense of "who she is". To Janaan, the hijab thus comes to symbolize "who she is", in an explicit dialogue with the identities that she is ascribed in different contexts:

> I suppose I must be somewhere in between Turkish and Norwegian. But I mean, you actually need to know who you are. I want to think for myself, so I started reading books about Islam, and then I started reflecting on what is behind all these laws and rules in Islam, what are the foundations, and where does it all come from. After reading a lot I decided to start wearing a hijab. I want to express myself as I am. I don't want to be ashamed of being a Muslim. Now I know why I am a Muslim. Now I know who I am. Now I have a thread in my life.

For Janaan, wearing a hijab is intimately related to a wish to express "who she is". The realization of "who I am" is conceptualized as emerging out of a reflexive process in dialogue with others. The decision to wear the hijab is part of her coming to terms with who she really is; a Muslim. But Janaan also inscribes her account of why she started to wear the hijab into a wider narrative of "return to Islam", where elements of "growing up", changes in way of life, and the acquisition of knowledge are central elements:

> When I was younger I was ignorant. Religion was far away from me. I was something completely other than what being a Muslim entails. But you grow out of it. You start thinking. I do not really regret anything, but I wish that I had someone to guide me in that period when I was a "tough girl". I don't really know how to explain to you what happened. It seems like a lifetime since. In secondary high I started getting to know my own religion. And I decided to wear a veil. In a sense I felt that I was ready. Or maybe I didn't actually feel ready, I just did it. It was something that came from inside of me. It comes from faith, from Allah. In a way it is indescribable, I cannot explain it really. When I started wearing the veil, I was a grown up. I was responsible for my own education. I was afraid that my friends might react negatively to the veil. But if our Creator closes one door He opens a new one to you. So in secondary high I came into another group of friends where I could be myself with the veil. It was a very good environment for me. We were all different, but we decided to stick together. There was no pressure from anyone to wear the veil, but I had the support of other girls who wore it, and they answered all my questions. When you get answers to all your questions you become convinced. This conviction gave me peace of mind. I felt that my soul was truly pure. And now I don't have a bad conscience anymore. I found my true self. After sleeping for a hundred years, you all of a sudden wake up and find your true self. […] I had to learn the prayer all over again. My father could have taught me, but you know there are certain differences between men and women. And my mum doesn't care about religion. Her only concern is that I should be a "good woman", helping her in the house,

> doing the dishes and things. My parents have not learned to read the Quran, their practice is very traditional. So I borrowed a lot of books from the library and from friends; started investigating. And I started asking people, but he or she needs to be very strong and know a lot from the Quran. I don't ask everybody. And I started reading books, the Quran of course. The mosques have some books and information on Islam, my father has some Turkish books at home, and at the Internet there is a lot of interesting information. […]My religion is not just a part of me. It concerns all of my life. So it is not just something I have to do - no one can force me to do it. Even if my parents had been of the strict kind, no one could force me to give my soul away. It is I, no others. […] I do not have enough knowledge of my religion yet. There is so much to learn and I only just started. After secondary high I want to go to Morocco or Turkey to study the Quran at a higher level. When you learn to read the Quran in Arabic it influences you so much. But I want to come back to Norway, because it is in Norway that I can practice my religion freely. In Turkey I have to respect a lot of traditions and culture. And I don't want that. Here in Norway people are free to do what they like. You can get dead drunk or you can go sleep in the mosque, no one will stop you – they might laugh at you, but they can't do anything to stop you. […] I think it is very important to teach others about Islam, whether they are Muslims or not. I try to help younger girls around me. I tell them about women and their rights, that Allah gives a woman who is a believer the same value and dignity as a male believer. There are no differences between women and men in front of Allah. We are all his creatures. Of course there are certain differences, but the main principle is equality. And that is one of the reasons why I chose Islam. That it gave women more rights.

Like many other young women, Janaan focuses on the hijab as her own decision, a choice, based on "faith" and on how she was feeling "inside". Janaan explicitly stresses that her parents were not of the strict kind, and that her father wanted her to wait with the hijab until she got older. This focus may partly be explained by the awareness of how the hijab is perceived in the majority discourse, as something imposed by parents or the surroundings. It thus serves to challenge stereotype constructions of Muslim women as victims of a patriarchal religion and dominated by their male relatives. This is reinforced by the way in which Janaan focuses on the value and rights given to women as one of the reasons why she "chose Islam". Claiming to have chosen the hijab is thus a way in which women claim a status as subjects responsible for their own lives, and may be read as a form of resistance to the dominant constructions of Muslim women that see them as lacking in autonomous agency.

As a constitutive element in the wider return to Islam, the hijab may be seen as a part of growing up, or as related to some kind of existential questioning or *prise-de-conscience* of one's true Self. In this respect, the hijab is also spoken of in terms of personal growth, and as a process of learning and maturing. As we saw above, Janaan stresses that when she started wearing the veil, she was a grown up, and was responsible for her own education. It was part of a process of education, a quest for knowledge that took place outside of the family. She

also brings up the issue of being "ready" or not to wear the hijab. Wearing a hijab is seen as a great personal responsibility, and to many this meant that one had to be "ready" to assume this responsibility before starting to wear. Hayat, who does not wear the hijab "yet", as she says, told me that:

> You need to have the faith, and you need to practice the other things Islam tells you to do. And then – when you are ready to wear the hijab – when you're ready to meet the consequences – then you can start wearing it.

Being ready to meet the consequences involves both an "internal" and an "external" element. The "internal" element involves, as Hayat mentions, that you have "the faith" to live as "Islam tells you to". But the hijab also entails being ready to meet the consequences of visibly representing the collective identity of the (imagined) community of Muslims. This relates to potential practical consequences of racist and discriminatory structures that serve to exclude *hijabi* women e.g. from certain parts of the labour or housing market, but also to the responsibility to display exemplary behaviour as a publicly visible representative of the Islamic community. As previously mentioned, the wish to rectify negative representations of Islam entails an encouragement, and particularly so for women, to assume the plight of being a representative for the Muslim community and Islam, as others will read your acts in such a manner. Wearing the hijab thus implies a readiness to stand up for a much disliked and persecuted community. Women refusing to unveil appear, through these symbolic means, as brave and courageous defenders of Islam. The awareness that her dress makes her a symbol of her religion may hence also function as a reminder not to do things that would bring her or her religion into disrepute.

Starting to wear the hijab is also associated with developing a good character, with becoming (or continuing to be) a person who is modest, honest, trustworthy, respectable and reliable. To Janaan, the hijab "symbolizes" a set of qualities that she sees as expressing her "personality" and "character":

> Primarily, it symbolizes my religion. Secondly, and this was important to me when I chose to wear the hijab, in Islam, women are precious, and that is why we cover. But the significance of hijab is also that you don't lie, that you are an honest person, trusting, and that you bestow such values upon yourself. What the hijab symbolizes then, is very much in accordance with my personality and character.

Although wearing a hijab is seen to require a certain level of faith and Islamic practice in other areas, it is simultaneously seen as something which helps one acquire the virtues that are central to being a good Muslim. This is so in so far as the hijab works as a physical reminder to behave in certain ways. As several girls pointed out to me; wearing the hijab made it more

difficult to e.g. smoke in public, to frequent *haram* places where alcohol is served, to pick a fight with someone, or to date, because this would contrast with the meaning both they themselves, and others who would see them, attributed to wearing the hijab. The hijab thus makes it easier to realize other virtues that are deemed central to being a good Muslim. Whereas e.g. to abstain from alcohol and avoid dating are virtuous "abstinences" that the hijab helps one to realize, the virtue of modesty is more intimately bound up with the practice of wearing the hijab itself. If wearing a hijab is sufficient in terms of guaranteeing modesty is contested, however. Is a girl who wears a hijab together with tight jeans and make-up really being modest? And is modesty virtuous if it is just a concession to social norms and pressure and not an act of piety? Such and similar questions are often addressed by the young, and I will return to these below.

Whereas "choice" and self-determination were central to most young women's narratives of the hijab, they experienced incitements and disencouragement to wear the hijab in different social contexts. Depending on a variety of issues such as national background, social status, adherence to different Islamic traditions etc., the ways in which the hijab was encouraged or not in the family context varied. Some had mothers or sisters who wore it. Others were the only ones in their family. Some had parents who took it for granted that their children should wear a hijab. Others had parents who strongly advised them not to wear a hijab; e.g. since they presumed it would make it harder for them to get married or find work, or because they associated the hijab with a strict or fundamentalist interpretation of Islam they opposed. Although I did not systematically investigate the different usages of the hijab, it was obvious that such factors as ethnicity and family background were important to by whom and how the hijab was worn. For instance, relatively few of the girls of Pakistani origin wore a hijab, whereas it was more frequent among those with a Middle Eastern background.

In the context of the religious youth and student organizations and the other educational arenas such as e.g. mosques, and international Islamic conferences where the young Muslims in my study participated, the hijab was quite consistently encouraged. Although in both the NMU and the MSS about half of the girls did not wear a hijab regularly, and the organizations stressed that it was not necessary to wear one to participate in their activities, women were in different ways incited to wear a hijab. In *darses* and lectures, stress would typically be put on the importance and virtues of wearing a hijab. It would be contrasted to the devaluation and over-sexualization of women in Western societies, and to a general condition of moral normlessness. Modesty and covering was also encouraged through corrections, as when women would adjust someone else's hijab if their hair had come loose. Girls were also, rather

paradoxically when considering the importance of the hijab as a means of "covering" a woman's beauty, incited to wear a hijab through compliments and commendation. It was not uncommon that someone who put on a hijab for the first time were told that it suited her well, that it made her look good.

One occasion illustrating well how the virtue of modesty and importance of hijab is communicated in the organizations was an outing arranged by the NMU. Younger and older members and their friends, siblings and relatives, some visiting foreign students, and a couple of adult Norwegian converts met up for a picnic. It was a hot summer day, and some of the girls and women had taken off their hijabs as we were walking on a trail through the woods towards the beach. Every time someone approached there was a thrill and someone would warn the others: a man is coming. After a while, one of the grown up women sat down to speak seriously to those who had taken of their hijab, "Those of you who wear the hijab are not really allowed to take it of here, because you may be seen". She added in an equally grave tone that "but you yourselves have to take the responsibility and choose for yourselves". The woman thus "commanded the good", but left the responsibility for conforming to this norm up to the girls. It is also significant in this respect that the girls who did not usually wear a hijab were not commended in the same way as those who wore it. While the woman emphasizes the importance of individual choice and the right of individual girls to exercise this choice, she simultaneously understands this choice not as a matter of following individual desires, but as something one should exercise in following a prescribed path to becoming a better Muslim.

The cases that have been discussed above, illustrate the centrality of the hijab in women's "return to Islam" as a transformation of Muslim identity from the "inherited" to the "individually assumed". The construction of the hijab as a symbol of a chosen commitment to Islam is supported by the distinction between tradition and "true Islam". Making women wear a hijab against their personal will, or wearing it by habit rather than as an expression of who one is, is *tradition* and not "true Islam". This individualized understanding of the hijab focuses not primarily on the importance of the hijab in upholding social order (in preventing sexual promiscuity and thereby *fitna*), or in signalling belonging to a particular ethnic community or cultural tradition, but on the personal relationship between the individual Muslim and Allah. This view is stressed in some of the young women's argument that the hijab "is of no use" (i.e. it does not entail religious reward and does not have an effect on the person as a moral being) if the girl does not herself make the decision to wear it. However, while the hijab as a virtuous practice is theorized as an act of submission for which the individual is ultimately responsible herself, the hijab as a practice is shaped and promoted

within diverse pedagogical settings, from the family to the Muslim organizations. While the organizations encourage young Muslims to be "responsible" for themselves, and to make their own choices, they are simultaneously "disciplining spaces" that prescribe to individuals particular forms of self-knowledge (my body may elicit desire from men if I do not cover it) ways of relating to themselves (I should take responsibility for avoiding this myself), and models for self-mastery (in order to take such responsibility I should wear a hijab).

On identity, exteriority and interiority

The analysis above suggests that the hijab is both understood as a duty and simultaneously as something that each individual is responsible for. In this respect reflections occur in particular on the relationship between an "inside" and an "outside", or the relationship between emotions and states of mind on the one hand, and acts on the other hand. This relationship has a double determination with respect to young Muslims' religious practices. On the one hand it relates to the distinction and debates in the Islamic discursive tradition on the relationship between "religious practice" and the emotions and states of mind that accompany religious practices. On the other hand it relates to the increasing focus in modernity on the idea of personal authenticity, with the expectation and demand that one's acts should express an authentic inside, of who I am and choose to be (Taylor 1992). In this latter perspective, the act has increasingly come to depend on the authentic feeling it expresses.

Let me start tugging at this complex relationship between interiority and exteriority by introducing Sarah's hijab story. As many other Muslim children, Sarah attended Quran school in her childhood. She learned to read the Quran and perform correct ablutions and the daily prayers. During Ramadan she fasted some days on and off like most children do. In ninth grade Sarah wore the hijab for a couple of months. Some classmates, who went to *halaka* (religious meetings) and had started wearing the hijab, were a major influence on this decision. After this, Sarah didn't wear the hijab until she returned to Oslo after having attended secondary school in Turkey. This time she put it on as part of a personal "return to Islam", during what she now terms her "fundamentalist" period.

For a time Sarah took a great interest in Islam and started practicing the religion in new ways. In addition to wearing the hijab, she performed the five daily prayers, started reading a lot about Islam, fasted twice a week and recited extra prayers in between the compulsory prayers. In this more intensely religious period, Sarah visited the NMU a couple of times, but the organization never quite appealed to her. About the same time she started frequenting an

informal friendship-based network of religiously active women who met in order to learn more about Islam. It was through this network that she met her husband. During their honeymoon she and her husband travelled to Mecca to perform *hajj*.

After a couple of years, however, Sarah's religious career took yet another turn. She was critical of the ways in which many active Muslims interpreted and practiced Islam, and she rarely visited the mosque where people – according to her opinion – spent too much time slandering about others. After a while she also started feeling uncomfortable wearing the hijab. As she saw it, the hijab was no longer an adequate manifestation of who she really was. Lately, she had been too lazy to perform the prayer regularly and her religious observance had decreased also with respect to other areas of life. She felt the hijab to be a sort of deception, in so far as people took her for being something that she was really not. As a consequence, Sarah tried leaving the house uncovered a couple of times, but felt naked and uncomfortable without it.

The sudden death of someone in Sarah's family prompted yet another turn in her religious career and clothing story. Sarah's religious interest was directed towards questions of life and death, heaven and hell and the writings of Said Nursi helped her through this critical phase in life. She re-started to do her five daily prayers, read more frequently in the Quran, and no longer thought about stopping to wear the hijab. In this period, Islam came to be more important to her than ever before as a guide to understanding and coping with the complexities of human existence. Three years in which Sarah continued her search for "real Islam" in a variety of directions passed before I received an SMS from her announcing that she had stopped wearing the hijab, because she needed "a break". Whereas her family was "a 100% OK with it", many of her Muslims friends were initially largely negative, and "behaved like she was no longer a Muslim" and like "missionaries" who wanted to bringer her back "on the straight path". According to Sarah herself, taking off the hijab made her no less Muslim. What the others did not seem to understand, she explained, was that; "I am trying to understand my position vis-à-vis God, and to find out whether I believe with my heart or whether it is just a part of my identity". To Sarah, the hijab was no longer felt to be an expression of "who she was", it was not an expression of her heartfelt belief in God, which had not changed, but a convention that expressed a certain Muslim identity with which she no longer identified.

Choosing not to wear the hijab anymore, was the first of a series of changes by which Sarah became increasingly preoccupied with the "inner" aspects of spiritual life, rather than with conforming to what is defined as proper Islamic conduct and that she has more and more

come to identify as “conventions” that people follow because of their Muslim identity, rather because “they believe in their hearts”. To Sarah then, people’s behaviour in public is not a reliable indicator of their religiosity, it is the belief in their heart that makes someone a good Muslim or not. One should note that Sarah does not oppose the virtues of being a good Muslim, or of modesty as such; but only the assumption that the hijab is a necessary means for expressing (and creating) these virtues. Sarah also felt that “taking a break from the hijab” would allow her more “freedom”. This included both freedom to “show more of her beauty” and freedom to speak her mind in the majority society without everything she said being interpreted in light of her hijab. These latter concerns may be understood in relation to her recent engagement in dialogue-work and local politics, where she felt the hijab to be a hindrance to full participation.

Sarah’s reflections on the hijab may also be understood in terms of the separation that is often made in the Islamic discursive tradition between the inner aspects of faith and its manifestation in behaviour. With respect to the hijab, this is frequently spoken of as an “inner” and “outer” hijab. The inner hijab relates to modesty, lowering of the eyes and being conscious not to arouse the interest of the opposite sex. To most of the young Muslims I worked with, the “outer hijab” was ideally seen to manifest the “inner hijab”. Modesty of dress both externalized and contributed to the cultivation of Islamic virtues such as decency, modesty, and honesty. The hijab was thus both an end in itself, as God required women to wear it, and a means to become a more pious Muslim. To some of the girls, however, the “inner hijab” seemed to be more crucial than “the outer”, even to the extent that they argued that as long as they had their inner hijab there was no need to externalize it by physically wearing a piece of cloth to cover their bodies.

Alesha, like Sarah, was of the opinion that the inner hijab was more crucial than the outer, but nevertheless felt ambivalent about the way she herself dressed. In a discussion with some other young women on the virtues of the hijab, she stressed how she, although not wearing the hijab, attempted to appear in a non-sexed manner, and to dress in gender-neutral clothes. She described how she differed from the other women at her workplace, who were “playing on their femininity”. In contrast, Alesha does not “make herself a woman” at the workplace, and as a consequence, she claims to be seen as “a person” and not a woman. One of the other young women, Safa, who in contrast to Alesha is wearing a hijab, objects that while Alesha might think so herself, the boys probably do not see her as “one of the boys”. Noor also recounts how the hijab gives her respect in her workplace so that the others do not touch her in improper ways. Despite the difference, one wearing a hijab, the other not, Noor’s and

Alesha's accounts of how they make themselves appear in a certain manner to others, so as to avoid sexual approaches, are very similar. In both instances, it involves a way of dressing and behaving more generally that is intended at downplaying femininity and at appearing as a "person".

Whereas Alesha defended the principle of the inner hijab in this context, she was also contemplating starting to wear one, as she had increasingly come to see it as a duty to reflect her inner hijab by an external act. It is interesting to notice how Alesha's reflections on the hijab have changed in this respect since she joined the MSS and become more concerned with being a conscientiously practising Muslim. Alesha had always been careful to cover her body properly. When going away on holidays, however, she would wear T-shirts and "dress the way she wanted to", she explained to me. Recently, however, she started seeing the gap between her own way of dressing in different contexts as arising out of a wish to satisfy others, rather than to satisfy God. If she was serious about being a good Muslim, should she then not avoid T-shirts even when no one she knew saw her? To Alesha, such questions were important as she considered whether she should start wearing a hijab – which would be against the will of her parents – or whether modesty should remain an issue that is primarily "something inside".

Janaan's, Sarah's and Alesha's reflections on why they do or do not wear the hijab bring out some of the complexities associated with religious practice. On the one hand side, the hijab is situated within the dynamics of identity-formation, related to a person's relationship to different social categories (such as being Norwegian or being Turkish). It marks the taking on of a new identity, that is neither-nor, but privileges the identity as a Muslim. The foundations of this Muslim identity are inscribed into an Islamic ontology, where the Self is conceptualized in a way that gives life a determined direction. From this point of view, the hijab is a means both of expressing and becoming a pious Self. Interpreted in terms of an interplay between different understandings of the Self, the hijab becomes a simultaneous expression of obedience and self-determination, an individual matter "between God and me" and a way of expressing "who I am" to others.

The formation of pious selves

In a *dars* in the NMU, about what Allah likes and dislikes, Aydin spoke about the importance of *al Ihsan.*[291] *Al Ihsan*, he explained, was the highest form of belief in Allah, and also one of Allah's attributes. "Doing what is good and beautiful is what Allah likes, and is the goal towards which humans should strive. For what is the purpose of Islam if it does not help us to better our character, to rise from an animal level to a human level?" To underscore his point, Aydin drew a vertical line on the blackboard, placing animals at the bottom and humans on top, and another model with steps representing different levels of perfection. The majority of Muslims today, are far away from *al Ihsan*, he confirmed. Mankind suffers under the laws of the jungle, and that is why Allah sent his Prophets. But aggression has now become a part of the everyday life of our *umma*, continued Aydin, and gave an example from his "at home" country of how a girl was badly treated and abused by her husband because she didn't have a family to protect her.[292] Aydin then reminded the listeners that it is a Muslim's duty to help others.[293] Referring to the sinister conditions under which a majority of the world's Muslims live, he invoked the lacking respect governments in Muslim countries have for their peoples. How can people realize the highest form of belief in Allah when they live in poverty, under such bad and unhygienic conditions, and lacking education? In conclusion, he suggested that a reform is needed in order to live in the atomic age.

Aydin's *dars*, like much edificatory literature, focuses on the way in which Muslims should strive towards a particular telos; a particular mode of being.[294] Becoming Muslims implies striving towards the highest form of belief in Allah, and doing what Allah likes, what is good and beautiful, is the way to work towards such improvement. How do young Muslims themselves speak about such improvement? In which ways does the telos of reaching a higher level of belief inform the ways in which they come to reflect upon their selves? And what are

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[291] The word *ihsan* derives from the word *husn,* which designates the quality of being good and beautiful; virtue, goodness, beauty, comeliness, pleasingness, harmony, symmetry, desirability (Murata and Chittick 1994). The word *husna* is used both to designate the attributes of God and the ultimate goal of human beings, the felicity they experience in the next world. The Quran also employs the word *hasanat* from the same root as *husn,* to mean a good or beautiful deed (for a discussion of *hasanat* see below) through which humans actualize *husn*. *Ihsan* is used in a variety of ways; relating to doing what is good and beautiful. Those who worship God by doing what is good and beautiful are considered the best of human beings (Murata and Chittick 1994).

[292] A young woman of Pakistani origin interrupts him at this point: "Not in Pakistan". Aydin somewhat laughingly acquiesces, and after the *dars* he jokes to me about never daring to say anything bad about Pakistan or Pakistanis, because there are always protests from those who are of Pakistani origin.

[293] At this point one of the listeners interferes to ask; "but surely not only Muslims?" Aydin replies that in principle one has the duty to help everyone, regardless of their religion, but that Muhammad spoke specifically about inner strife and struggle between Muslims who do not help each other.

[294] In Foucault's study of ethics, telos refers to the mode of being one seeks to achieve within a historically specific authoritative model (Foucault 1984a; Mahmood 2005).

the "techniques" that allow individuals to work on themselves towards such a goal, and to regulate their bodies, their thoughts and their conduct?

In a discussion between Noor and some of her Muslim friends, the issue of personal and social reform was talked about in a way that aptly illustrates some of the concerns involved. Islam was said to escape "the logic of our materialistic world", as Noor put it, "in which people always have to gain something and in which the suicide rates are alarmingly high". To Noor Islam thus solves "the problem of egoism so deeply ingrained in Western (and also Muslim, some of the other girls objected) societies". "In every person there is the ego, *nafs*. And Islam stresses upon tramping on your ego. Tramping on your ego! Always seeking Allah's protection! Always saying: Yeah Allah, control my lust, control my ego! Don't let my ego gain the upper hand!" One of the other young women, Aadila, elaborated on the point with regard to psychology and Islamic philosophy of the Self, "If you study psychology you see that human beings are made up of three things: there is ego, superego and identity. From the Islamic point of view, the combining of these three elements is called the Self. How you get it is by meditation, how you meditate is by praying. How you find the balance within yourself, the balance of human beings is right here [in the heart]. When you meditate, when you contemplate, the body, the spirit and the mind combine. Then the question of having an ego is not a problem, because it is all in unity, and instead you have the balance within yourself".[295]

Noor continues, "Even if it is mentioned in the Quran that Islam gives you a balance in life, the faith or *iman* is not stable. A human being should always be eager to work with his self, you know, with his inner consciousness, to always bear in mind Allah. To always bear in mind what he should do and what he should not do according to Islam. This gives me happiness, and I gain a lot. Not worldly things, but *inshallah* I'll gain something there [in the afterlife]. And I also gain it here. Because Islam is not that worldly life is a disaster or that if you're happy here you're going to end up in hell. Some Muslims think that, but it is so stupid, you know. […] Of course God wants us to have fun in this world - in an Islamically correct way - and *inshallah*[296] we will get the Jenna as well, if we live according to Islam. And that was the thing that really struck my head; *mashallah*[297], Islam is the best […]. Everything in Islam has a balance, and this balance is an important thing […]. Aadila nods, and adds that "I

[295] Aadila' s focus on "meditation" and "balance" between the different parts of the Self is probably inspired by a *sufi*-thinker she had recently been reading when this conversation occured.
[296] "If Allah wills it".
[297] Literally "What Allah wishes". The expression is widely used with respect to things that are considered beautiful, good and likeable.

studied a lot of things, but the most interesting thing is nature. We are part of the nature, and everything is in balance".

Sarah refers back to what Noor said about having fun in an Islamically correct way, and states that "We should live for *dunya* (this-worldly life) as if we were never going to die, and do *ibadat* for *akhira* (afterlife) as if we were dying tomorrow". "That is very difficult", Alesha intervenes. When you eat, work, or read - everything you do is supposed to reflect your *iman*. At the same time you're not supposed to be absorbed exclusively by Allah day and night. You're also supposed to go about your daily tasks in a proper way". Safa intervenes, objecting that "Islam doesn't tell you to do *salah* all day. That is not what Allah wants. It's the things you do in your everyday life, when you do it in a way that is *halal*, like going to school to get an education. That is also a form of *ibadat*, you know". Alesha agrees with this, and Safa asks her why she then finds it so problematic that her everyday acts should reflect *iman*. "It is because we are not like the Prophet", Alesha explains "we can strive to become as good as possible, to perfect ourselves – that is an eternal goal. If we don't have that goal of perfecting ourselves all the time we have nothing. But if we think that we are perfect, we are not humble". Aadila does not agree that it is so difficult, and argues that if Alesha finds it so difficult it is because she has not found the balance yet, "You have to think that you have submitted yourself; that is what Islam is. I'm working for God. That is how you do it. If you don't understand what you have been designated to do, and feel that you are working too hard, it's because…" Alesha is getting somewhat annoyed at Aadila's suggestion that she has not submitted herself and tries to explain her point of view, "What Islam wants is not always the same as what you yourself want, right, because we don't have the knowledge Allah has. Allah knows what he says, right, but I don't have the knowledge to understand it. Sometimes I can hardly believe that certain things could really be what God wants from me, but then I just have to force myself and say: no, Allah says that I should do this. That is when you achieve unity with God. Then one sort of has to kill one's ego. When you live in a certain society there are so many weird things cultivated in you and some of it you have to reject and some of it you have to accept and make a part of your being. But it is not easy to just integrate and reject things that are part of your personality, right". Aadila agrees that one's desires are not always compatible with what Allah wants, and that this is precisely why one has to kill such desires. She gives a concrete example from her own experience with relations to men; "So many times, to be honest, guys have come up to me and said: I would like to go out with you. And I have liked it; I have wanted to go out with them. But still I go: No, it's out of my principles. I can't date you. […] So you have to kill the desires".

It is not my point to draw from this conversation a general model of the Muslim self that young Muslims seek to realize or understand themselves in terms of. The discourses they draw on in this conversation are multiple, and dispersive, and the point is not to assess the extent to which they are expressions of different Islamic traditions (e.g. the extent of Sufi influence). Rather, what is interesting is precisely the fact that young Muslim women from a variety of different backgrounds verbalize their experiences of personal reform and becoming Muslim by drawing on different discursive traditions and different understandings of the Self. In this respect it is also interesting to note the analogy that Aadila draws between what she refers to as the understanding of the Self from "an Islamic point of view" in terms of its three dimensions (*ruh*, *nafs* and *aqel*[298]), the tripartite ego, superego, and self/identity, drawn from modern psychology, and the distinction between body, spirit and mind. These discourses are put together so as to underpin a fundamental notion of "balance" between the different aspects of "Self". The understanding of Self produced by the girls thus emerges as a creative combination of different religious, philosophical and psychological discourses. They nevertheless converge on the understanding that being Muslim implies that there is a certain mode of being one should seek to achieve, and that this mode of being requires an effort on the part of the individual to work with herself. However, whether this effort is seen as strenuous or less so, differs. The "techniques" that are suggested for achieving this goal are also numerous, and the young women stress different aspects: e.g. meditation, contemplation, remembering Allah, prayer, living your everyday life within the limits of what is *halal*, and trying to obtain a pure intention in your acts.

The gender of desire

Before I engage with these techniques, let me briefly address the question of how the question of "desire" relates to gender. The understanding of the desires that need to be combated and the virtues that should be cultivated through the great *jihad* are gendered, both in the sense that issues of sexuality are central in the accounts of the kinds of desires that need to be

[298] Anthropologists have described these concepts, and the way they relate to each other in somewhat different ways. In Metcalf's (ed.) *Moral Conduct and Authority* (Metcalf 1984: 10), several of the authors describe: "[…] a theory that humans possess two important faculties: '*aql*, the faculty of moral discrimination shared with the angels, on the one hand, and *nafs* the self in the sense of the will or, more typically willful principle, on the other. Both, generally speaking, are expected to coexist. Man's realization comes through cultivation of '*aql* and the consequent disciplining of the *nafs*. One seeks to refine, not destroy, the *nafs*. It is the very tension, the process of discrimination, the fact that there are choices to be made and control to be exercised, that gives man's life its value. It is this, not holy war, that is the "greater" *jihad*: unceasing effort to discriminate the boundaries set forth in the Quran and relentless self-control in eschewing excess and living within them".

controlled, and in the sense that men and women are seen as differently subject to such desires. Just like the young women quoted above, several of the young men attested to the fact that it is difficult to be a Muslim in Norway, since the gap between the Islamic ideals and the surrounding society is so wide, and there are so many temptations. Abid, for instance recounts that he chose to stop working in a store that sells trendy youth-clothes, to protect himself from the temptations and desires created in dealing with semi-naked girls who were trying on clothes. But whereas both young men and women are concerned with controlling their desires, they simultaneously tend to construct women more as the objects of sexual desire and men as the desiring subject.[299] In contrast to Abid, who had to leave his job to protect himself from his own desires, the women whose discussion about internal and external hijab I referred to above, where concerned mainly with avoiding arousing desire in their male colleagues. Among the young women it was also quite common to "feel pity" for Muslim young men, who, because of the steady increase in the age at which people marry, must "abstain" from sexual relations well into adult life. In an essay in *Ung Muslim,* a young woman writes that:

> Sometimes I think about how difficult it must be for boys at school. What are they to concentrate on? On whether hydrogen bindings are simple or double, or on the girl in front of them with tight pants, singlet and an uncovered belly? Under such circumstances it is not easy being a genuine Muslim (*Ung Muslim* nr. 1. 2000: 6).

Both women and men construct men as desiring subjects and women as the objects of sexual desire, and are thus more inclined to "understand" the difficulties that men have in abstaining from illicit sexual relations. However, this construction of desiring gendered subjects and objects is nonetheless challenged by some. In the Speaker's Corner of *Salam* (2004, nr.1: 15) a "girl with a veil" expresses an opinion that was quite common among the young women I worked with:

> I have long been wondering why girls are continually asked to cover, while you never hear anything about boy's clothing. How boys should dress is a non-issue. Girl's clothing should of course also be discussed, but it seems as if we completely forgot about the

[299] According to Mahmood (2005: 110), the juristic Islamic tradition assumes that women are the objects of sexual desire and men the desiring subjects. While women and men are both urged to discipline their sight, behaviour and thoughts, women bear the prime responsibility for "hiding their charms" so as to not arouse men's desire when in public. Mernissi argues that in the medieval canonical texts and historical interpretations of Islam this "explicit theory" of female sexuality that depicts women as passive subjects who seek pleasure in surrender and subjugation interacts with an "implicit" theory sexual dynamics which "casts woman as the hunter and the man as the passive victim" (1987 : 33). She concludes that in contrast to Western-Christian culture, in Muslim culture female sexuality is recognized as active, an acknowledgment that has threatening implications for the social order. Social order, therefore, requires the satisfaction of women's needs as well as male control of women's bodies and sexuality. This latter is because male and female, particularly in terms of sex drives, are seen as opposites; men are rational and capable of self-control and women are emotional and lacking self-control.

> boys. Boys should dress decently too.[300] Why should boys wear tight pants (which is all the fashion at the moment) and short or tight tops. Believe it or not, but girls can see too! I'm surprised by the development. We see increasingly more girls who dress decently, while boy's clothes are ever more indecent. We should do something about this immediately.

"Girl with a veil" here inscribes women as desiring subjects who can "see" and urges that men should be made equally responsible for "covering their charms". Her urge to do so might be primarily in order to prevent illicit sexuality, but from what young women said in other contexts it is reasonable to assume that she is also concerned with the issue of gender justice. Several young women pointed out to me that it was unfair that only women were prevented from going to public swimming pools, or working out in gyms where genders are mixed and Islamic norms of decent clothing are not respected. They complained, along with some men, that the Islamic principles of gender complementarity and modesty were sometimes corrupted into a double standard that worked consistently in men's favour (and particularly so in the parental generation). Sarah expressed this point succinctly in her often-repeated indignation towards men; "Do they think they have a special permit from Allah?" In particular with respect to such issues as decent clothing, gender mixed interaction, pre-marital sex and/or the use of alcohol, many young Muslims in my study argued for more gender-neutral moral standards. With respect to virginity, for instance, they would argue that from an Islamic point of view, adultery and pre-marital sex is equally punishable for men as for women. Instead of denouncing the ideal of virginity, the ideal was individualized (as mainly a matter between the individual and God and not "the business" of the community or the family) and subjected to ideals about gender-fairness and equity. Gender, thus, emerged as a site of negotiation in the production of moral and desiring selves.

Different forms of self-realization

In an article called "Finding one's true self. About immigrant youth's freedom, power and resistance", Lien (2003) argues that ideas of the moral soul (*ruh*)[301] inhibits immigrant youth who wish to "find their true self". "Finding one's true self", she argues, is central to what it

[300] "Girl with a veil" refers to the fact that in the Islamic tradition there are also injunctions for men to dress modestly. Both men and women are commanded in the Quran to "lower their gaze and be modest". It is generally understood that men are not to expose the area of their body from the navel to the knee.

[301] Inger Lise Lien bases her discussion mainly on conceptualizations of the Self in Punjab in Pakistan, and focuses on the relationship between *nafs* and *ruh* – understood as an incorporeal, transcendent and purely moral and spiritual intellect that after death ascends to God " (2003: 212). It is not my intention to dispute how these terms are understood in a Punjebi context, but rather the way in which Lien interprets them in relation to the issues of freedom, power and resistance.

means to grow up within a modern Norwegian cultural frame, and includes tearing oneself loose from one's parents, discovering one's separate identity, "possessing oneself", being responsible for one's proper behaviour, conquering the power to decide over one's everyday life and following one's own will. In contrast to this, Lien identifies ideas about the moral soul as remnants of a "traditional" and externally enforced worldview, representing the force of tradition and parental control against the individual freedom of youth and in particular girls. In Lien's interpretation, the control of *ruh* over *nafs*, amounts to a subjugation of the ego to the superego; the norms of society, codified and understood as God's will (Lien 2003: 212).[302]

There are several problems with the interpretation that Lien suggests of the prevalence of ideas about the moral soul as representing a continuity of tradition and the control of parents over children. I am not arguing that the effect of trying to discipline desire may not be analyzed in terms of its role in reinforcing structures of parental and male domination, or that it could not be experienced by some of those who "wish to find their true self", as an "inhibition". However, I want to suggest that Lien's interpretation is not generalizable, and that it rests on certain particular assumptions about self-realization. With respect to the young Muslims I worked with, Lien's interpretation is insufficiently attentive to the motivations, desires, goals and self-understandings that are involved in the young women's reflections on *jihad-bil-nafs*. Lien seems to understand "finding one's true self" as the capacity to realize one's own interests and desires against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or parental control. "Desires" are in this view naturalized as expressions of an un-mediated autonomous will, and disciplining desire thus becomes tantamount to being prevented from realizing "one's true self". Lien also constructs a dichotomy between on the one hand a "modern Norwegian cultural frame", which allows people self-realization, and, on the other hand a "traditionalist Muslim immigrant cultural frame" which subjects the individual will to the collective will and accordingly prevents people from self-realization. She sees "freedom" and the "ability to find one's true self" as central modern Norwegian values, that immigrant girls are prevented from taking part in since traditional values are presumably controlled, and enforced on girls, by the ethnic community, parents and men. The "repressive norms" of Islam and ethnicity (tradition) are thus counter-posed to the "freedom" of modernity and Norwegian society.

[302] It is interesting to note that Lien, like the girls quoted above, defines, *ruh* as superego and *nafs* as ego, in the Freudian sense, but without reflecting upon the potential transference of meaning that might thus occur.

A different interpretation of the relationship between desire and self-fulfilment is suggested by Mahmood (2003; 2005) in her analysis of Egyptian piety movements. Mahmood suggests that in order to understand the ethical practices of participants in this movement, "self-fulfilment" should be dissociated from "autonomy". The women she worked with acquired a level of self-fulfilment not by referring to "autonomy-discourses" but rather by "subjugating themselves" to religious prescriptions. Mahmood hence sees this link which is made between self-fulfilment and autonomy as something proper to a liberal-humanist vision. Based on her research with the piety movement, Mahmood suggests that the participants of this movement do not see desires as something that exist *sui generis*, but that it must be created through ethical practices. Here, focus is thus drawn not towards an opposition between self-realization and subjection, but the ways in which different modalities of subjectivation allow different forms of self-realization.

In my opinion, Mahmood's understanding of the relationship between subjectivation and self-realization better enables us to grasp what is involved when young Muslims speak about having to work with themselves, subjecting their desires and tramping on their ego. Here, the Self is seen as a site of shifting desires that do not express an autonomous will. As we saw above, the young women importantly saw desires for "un-Islamic things" as products of the "materialist" and "egoist" world they lived in.[303] Fighting materialism and egoism was linked to achieving the right balance between this-worldly concerns and other-worldly concerns. The concern with and transmitted importance of maintaining an equilibrium between reason and pleasure is central to the Islamic tradition, as expressed in the concept *wasat* that signifies the middle way between two extremes: reason and pleasure, concern for *dunya* and *akhira* (cf. Ahmed 1992a: 48; Mernissi 2001: 123). The young women acknowledge that finding such a balance is particularly difficult in a (post-modern) world, where, as Akhbar (1992: 48) has put it, many Muslims feel that "*dunya* is upsetting the balance, invading and appropriating *din*". Alesha acknowledges such an invasion in her concern with how the societies we live in produce desires and lust in people, and how it becomes a "part of your personality", and thus hard to change. As the young women also acknowledge, there are ways of changing one's

[303] The themes of materialism and egoism are not related in any straightforward manner to the "non-Muslim" and the Western, however. Young Muslims often criticize the parental generation for being too materialistic (thinking about for instance the amount of the *mahr* on marriages) and egoistic (in that they force their children to conform to social norms because they are afraid what people might say of them). This perceived materialism and egoism of the parental generation is interpreted in terms of the basic distinction between "true Islam" and culturalized forms of Islam, between "consciously practising Muslims" and those who are only Muslim in name or by tradition.

personality, of striving to be a better person, and this may also eventually become part of one's "faith" and "personality". "Tramping on your ego" is thus not tantamount to subjecting to a "collective will" that hinders one from realizing one's true self, it is rather a question of balancing *ruh* and *nafs*, *dunya* and *deen*, in a way that allows one to live as a Muslim here and now, with a concern for both immediate and future consequences.

The self that the young Muslims sought to control was thus not the kind of (liberal) autonomous and independent subject that Lien takes for granted. On the contrary, it was a self that has been led away from its authentic nature (*deen-al-fitra*), and in which socialization and the social context of materialism and egoism produced a set of un-Islamic desires that hindered one in "being oneself" in the sense of realizing one's true Muslim nature. This attests to the importance of exploring the different ways in which desire is socially constructed, and how it relates to different conceptualizations of self and self-fulfilment. Disciplining *nafs*, in the sense that the young Muslims in my study understand it, is not about being prevented from "realizing one's true self", but about realizing a self that is truly Muslim.

Like their peers, the young Muslims were concerned with issues that, as Lien suggests, are central to "growing up within a modern Norwegian cultural frame": with establishing a certain amount of independence vis-à-vis their parents, with discovering their separate identities, with being responsible for their proper behaviour, and with conquering the power to decide over their everyday lives. As we have seen, all these aspects are central to the "return to Islam" and to hijab-stories. But these stories simultaneously point to a subjection to certain truths and authorities, and towards a way of realizing oneself, of becoming a subject, within the framework of these truths and authorities. This does not imply that it is a passive subjection to the norms of the parents and the ethnic group. Rather, it is an active engagement with the Islamic tradition aimed at realizing certain virtues and ethical capacities, where the individual effort to "find one's true self" is bound by both a religious and a social structure. This engagement implies reproducing some of the values and norms represented by the parents and the "ethnic group" (e.g. regarding modesty) while opposing others (e.g. in redefining what is authentically Islamic). It also implies opposing some of the values and norms of the majority society (e.g. in peer group pressure at school and elsewhere) while re-producing others. In so far as what is "Islamically correct" is a continual subject of debate and contestation, becoming a Muslim subject is not a passive reproduction of norms and values, it is a process of subject formation that is open to re-interpretation and re-articulation.

Ibadat as techniques of the self

Now, how may this highest form of belief in Allah be realized? The "return to Islam" points towards such a process by which young Muslims seek to better their character, by e.g. acquiring knowledge of Islam, changing one's religious practice, "tramping on the ego", and working with the *niyat*. All these latter efforts may be summarized under the term *ibadat* (worship, devotional action). In its narrow sense *ibadat* refers to the domain of explicitly prescribed activities of worship, most notably "the five pillars"; *shahada*, *salah, sawm*, *zakat* and *hajj*. In a broader sense, however, that Safa makes explicit in the above quoted discussion, *ibadat* refers to all the aspects of everyday life that are *halal* and directed towards God (cf. Mahmood 2005; Murata and Chittick 1994).[304] From this perspective, Safa points to going to school as a part of *ibadat* because Islam requires that every pious Muslim should strive towards knowledge.

Among the prescribed activities of worship, the ritual prayer was considered so important by the young Muslims, that they would often distinguish between practising and non-practising (nominal) Muslims on the basis of whether they performed the *salah* or not "Before I started to practice" could mean both before I started doing the prayers regularly, or for women, before I started to wear a hijab. But being a "practicing Muslim" is not simply a question of whether you pray or not, but also about the frequency and regularity of such performances, and about the intention with which it is performed. Given this view of *salah*, it might be quite surprising that a closer look at actual practices reveals that most young Muslims perform the five daily prayers quite irregularly.[305] Some only did it from time to time, others did it every day, but many would "catch up" the prayers they had missed during the day e.g. in the evening. This less-than-ideal performance of the religious duties is usually explained with reference to practical circumstances. School and work, plus a busy social, sportive or other schedule make it difficult to perform *salah* at the fixed hours of prayer. The non-Muslim environment, where a break from school or work, or a clean place to perform the prayer may be difficult to find, complicates the matter further. In particular, waking up before

[304] According to Asad (1993: 222) Ibadat has the same root as '*abd*, which is usually rendered in English as "servant". Asad suggests that "slave" might be a better translation to stress the contrast with the figure of kinship (God as the Father) and to the figure of contract (the Covenant with God) in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The concept of "slave" stresses the ideal of obedience to Allah, and this is what *ibadat* more broadly refers to.

[305] A worshiper may add other forms of prayer towards the end of the *salah*. These may be drawn from a stock of "traditional prayers" or from prayer books (reminders, *dou'as*), or the may take the form of individual supplications (take care of my parents, my sister and my dog, stop the war in Palestine etc.). *Dou'as* are an integrated part of Muslim cultural practices; saying *bismillah* before you eat etc. When young active Muslims make use of such invocations as *mashallah*, *subhanallah*, *hamdulillah, inshallah,* it is thus both conventional and an expression of personal religiosity.

sunrise to perform *salah al-fajr* (to be performed after dawn breaks, but before sunrise) was considered to be demanding.

Nabil tells me that waking up in time for the Morning Prayer is now one of his big struggles to become a better Muslim. Like many others, his praying-practices have varied considerably over time:

> Nabil: I learnt to pray by hanging around my parents when they prayed. And then I would go to the mosque with them in Ramadan and pray. I cannot remember when I started this hobby-praying that children do. You know, we all pray now and then: on Fridays and around exams, or when we have guests. In my family we have always tried to pray together. I think this had been really important to me, because then you automatically start praying.
>
> Christine: You told me you pray five times a day now, when did you start doing that?
>
> Nabil: I think it was in eight or ninth grade that I became more conscious that I should start praying. Strangely, I was very much inspired by a non-Muslim friend of mine who was sort of a politically left-wing radical. I mean; not by his views in themselves, but by his engagement. He once said to me: You know what, if I was a Muslim I would pray five times a day – it's about principles. Actually, I started as a result of a bet with this friend. Or not really a bet, but I told my friend that I was going to start praying five times a day, and then I did it. But then I started and I quit again, and started and quit... […] You know, I think you try to be a good Muslim all the time. For instance I have this thing with myself now that I should wake up for morning-prayer. In summer it is really hard, because it is at two, three, or four in the morning, you know. Every third or fourth day I set the alarm and say to myself that now I'm going to start waking up every day. That is the biggest struggle in my life right now, to wake up for Morning Prayer. I really work hard on it. Many say that the boundary between a Muslim and a non-Muslim, the contract between you and God, is prayer. To be strong enough, or rather disciplined enough to do the prayer comes from your personal conviction. We who pray and go to the mosque have made a conscious choice. We could just as well have turned our backs on Islam. So I feel that I have made a choice, it is not a choice that has been made for me.

The on and off praying in childhood, is, just like the on and off wearing of the hijab, common in the narratives of the young Muslims. As Nabil's account makes clear, the effort to pray with regularity is central in the struggle to become a better Muslim. Praying is thus not only a duty; it involves an effort that must be made within a busy everyday life that is complete with a diversity of concerns, ideals and standards. As such the regularity by which it is performed varies with regard to life-cycle, personal and social circumstances, as well as within the frames of the religious calendar.[306] Like wearing the hijab in the story of young women, prayer is seen both as a duty and as a conscious choice that is made by the individual as an effort to become a good Muslim.

[306] During Ramadan, the collective aspect of religious practice and rituals is foregrounded, and observing *salah* usually becomes more frequent and regular.

The way in which religious practice both expresses and installs religious virtue, is central to the ways in which young Muslims speak about *salah.* According to Ibrahim, for instance, who paraphrases a saying of the Prophet, performing *salah* prevents one from doing what is wrong:

> They came to ask the Prophet: how do I know if my prayer is accepted by God? Then the Prophet answered that there is an easy way to find out, because God says in the Quran that prayers stop you from wrongdoings. So if you do bad things, you have not even prayed, what you did was just working out, aerobics. There was no meaning behind it. When the intention of your act is so good that it stops you from wrongdoings, then God has accepted your prayer. That's what it is all about. There is a reason for praying, there is a meaning behind it, and if you do not get that meaning you don't have to care about the way in which you do it. Because the meaning behind is much more important than the way in which you do it.

A similar view was expressed by Aadila earlier in the chapter, who saw prayer as a form of meditation that contributes to achieving a balance between *aql* and *nafs*, and thus to controlling desire. Prayer, like the hijab, is thus part of the great *jihad*, the struggle to discipline oneself and realize a pious Self. The way in which Ibrahim relates the effectiveness of such disciplining to the "meaning behind" the act of praying is also interesting. In this, he refers to the importance of having the right intention (*niyat*). As he understands it, having the right intention implies a "conscious" undertaking of ritual in contrasts to the "mere" performance of ritual movements as such (which is condescendingly termed aerobics). His assertion that the "meaning behind" is more important than the "way in which you do it" could be interpreted as pointing to a similar distinction as the one discussed in chapter five, between a self-reflexive way of being Muslim that includes reflections over "why" a certain act is performed, and a "traditional" way of being Muslim, based on knowledge of "how" a certain act should be performed. The insistence on the "meaning" of prayer was also brought out by a young boy in the NMU who asked Aydin, one of the leaders of the organizations, whether he could say his prayers in Norwegian, as he could not understand the meaning of the Arabic words. This was accorded, given that he should simultaneously strive to learn Arabic, so that, in the future, he could perform *salah* in the language of revelation. Aydin's answer was not based on a legalistic approach, or a theological reassessment of the sources; it was based on his knowledge of the difficulties of being a young Muslim in a non-Muslim society, and the linguistic barriers for young Muslims who do not understand Arabic in accessing and practicing the religious tradition. In allowing that the recitations made during prayer could be performed in Norwegian, Aydin confirmed that the "meaning" of prayer, was more important than its mere performance in accordance with prescribed rules and regulations. However, he

also sought to remain within an Islamic consensus, by asserting that performing the prayer in a correct manner, i.e. reciting in Arabic rather than in Norwegian, should be a goal for the young boy to strive towards in the future.

Some of the young Muslims expressed their concern with performing *salah* in a particularly conscientious manner, and not only as an automatic set of gestures. They worried about the difficulties they had in being properly concentrated, "mentally present", and in "praying from the heart", and spoke about the bad conscience they felt about this "mental absence". A variety of techniques were suggested and put to work to increase concentration, notably trying to visualize *salah* as an act of "standing before God", slowing down the movements and the recitation, reflecting over the meaning of each individual movement, reflecting over the meaning of the Arabic words spoken, and trying to "mean it from the heart". Prayer was also a moment in which the difficulties of being a practising Muslim, and the discrepancy between an ideal and actual way of life, was actualized. To some, the contradictions embodied in the "meaningfulness" and total surrender they sought in prayer, and the many ways in which they otherwise acted in discordance with Islam in their daily lives, signalled a lack of "sincerity" in their Islamic practice.

Whereas the performance of *salah* is thus made the object of self-reflection, it may also be seen to convey a particular ordering of society, and to install religious virtues, that are less subject to such reflection. This is so for instance with respect to how the collective performance of *salah* presupposes and reproduces a particular representation of gender difference. Traditionally, the separation of male and female prayer space entails that women pray behind men or in a separate room[307] and the imam in mixed congregations is always a man.[308] In such situations, "women can see and hear men, but men cannot see and hear women" (Otterbeck 2003). In the MSS and the NMU women and men usually pray together

[307] In the ICC for instance, as in many other Norwegian mosques, men and women are physically separated in all ritual as well as organizational activities. Women listen to the *khutba* of the *juma* prayer via a loudspeaker transmitting sound from the men's floor. In other mosques, women will pray behind the men.

[308] The four major law-schools agree that women cannot lead a mixed congregation in prayer, but disagree as to whether women may lead an all-female congregation. The Hanafis traditionally do not allow women to lead prayer, whereas the Shafis generally accept it (Vogt 2000). The Süleymanci movement educates female *hodsja* (*hoca*: imam) who function as preachers in all-female assemblies, and also travel as preachers internationally. According to Vogt (2000) there are six female *hodsjas* within this movement in Norway. Bosnians have a similar tradition of female *hodsjas* and *bulas* (Bringa 1995). Women have also been reported to function as imams in all-female mosques in some provinces in China. In 2005 the Indian-American Muslim feminist Dr. Amina Wadud led a mixed congregation of men and women in Friday prayers, for what the media referred to as "the first time on record in the history of Islam". Dr. Wadud's act aroused great anger amongst Muslim clerics, who rejected the possibility that Islamic jurisprudence permits women to lead men in prayer. Some referred to a Saying of the Prophet according to which Hadrat Jabir has reported the Prophet as saying: "No woman is permitted to lead a male in Prayer" (Ibn Majah). It was also argued that the act was *bida* (innovation) as it had no precedence in the practices of Mothers of the Believers.

(women behind or beside men), but the choreography of *salah* varies depending on where the prayer is performed. For communal prayers the MSS usually makes use of *Mosalla,* the prayer room at the university campus, where a curtain is drawn between men and women during *salah.* Just as in other Muslim assemblies, a man always leads the prayer in mixed congregations, while women may lead other women and children of both sexes. In general, women who lead prayers stand in the middle of the front row rather than ahead of the congregation as men usually do. Explicit reasons for this gendering of ritual space are rarely provided or discussed by the young Muslims – it seems to be accepted as a "naturally" given. In a way similar to that noted by Otterbeck (2003) in his work on Muslims in Sweden, however, there seems to be a general assumption regarding the eroticism of female bodies and voices, and their potential distraction to male religious activities. Women leading prayers in mixed congregations would break with the ideal of hijab. When I asked some of the girls about whether women could lead communal prayers, they merely giggled at the thought.[309] The way in which *salah* serves to reproduce a certain gendered ordering of society, and bodies that are differently marked by their genders, remains an unspoken premise.

Ethical formation

As we saw above, the young women did not only consider ritual practices as central to their work on the Self, they included more broadly the effort to live their lives in a way that was "Islamically correct" and "halal". Pedagogical material and presentations on Islamic law, focusing on what is *haram* and *halal*, were among the most popular sources for Islamic ethics among the young Muslims I worked with. Such material focuses on issues such as food and drink, clothes, personal hygiene, relationships between women and men, marriage and divorce, and parents and children. Acts are classified according to a distinction between obligatory (*fard*) and forbidden (*haram*), with the intermediate categories of recommended (*sunna, mandub*), indifferent/permissible (*mubah, halal*), and reprehensible (*makruh*). The placement of different acts within these categories varies in different traditions and is a matter of considerable contestation.[310] The classification of acts into such categories is a continual concern to the young Muslims I worked with, although to many such concerns are mainly

[309] Leading *salah* does not only depend on gender, however. Usually factors such as age and informal leadership based on e.g. knowledge of Islam determine who leads communal prayer. Encouraging someone to lead the communal prayer signals deference and respect.

[310] There is also a division within *fard*; *fard ain* refers to an obligation on every single Muslim, whereas *fard kifayaah* refers to an obligation on the Muslim community (*dawa* for instance has historically primarily been understood as *fard kifayyah*, but has in later times come to be considered by many as *fard ain*).

framed within a more general distinction between what is *haram* and what is *halal*. Others are more explicitly concerned with not only avoiding the forbidden, but also realizing the recommended in their daily lives. Although the life of the Prophet is seen as exemplary for what is recommended, none of the young Muslims interpreted this as implying that they should imitate his practices in a way oblivious to historical and cultural differences (e.g. they would dress in modern clothes but within the limits of what they saw as being Islamically correct).

Orienting one's life in terms of what is *haram* and *halal* is important as a way of working to become a more pious Muslim. The areas of life in which such principles are made relevant and the ways in which individuals relate to them, vary much however. With respect to food for instance, some would scrutinize all food for haram ingredients (e.g. for traces of animal fat), while others would eat all kinds of meat as long as it was not pork. Although this classification of acts is central to the Islamic discursive tradition, the socio-historical context in which Islam is practiced is important in drawing attention to particular issues. In the context of migration, for instance, the distinction between *haram* and *halal* simultaneously distinguishes Us (the Muslims) from Them (the non-Muslim majority). Piety becomes an aspect not only of personal self-formation, but also an aspect of boundary construction and maintenance. Thus, the areas where young Muslims invoke their efforts to shape themselves as pious Muslims are often discussed in contradistinction to non-Muslims who are perceived of in terms of a "Norwegian" or "Western" value-system in contrast to an Islamic one. Young Muslims thus stress how their pious aspirations prevent them from engaging in certain practices that supposedly characterize non-Muslim Norwegians and Westerners more generally, such as sex outside of marriage, drinking alcohol, eating pork and meat that is not religiously slaughtered and showing intimate parts of the body to the opposite sex. While these are of course central concerns in the Islamic legal tradition, one might nevertheless argue that in the context of young Muslims with an immigrant background, they also become markers of a difference between us and them (cf. chapter four).

According to the young Muslims, Islam "concerns everything" in life; it is important to the kind of person you are (personal) to how you relate to other beings (social) and the kind of society that we have and should have (political). In an article about "Knowledge, tolerance, intellect and progress" in the MSS magazine (*Tankevekkende* 1997: 9) Tayyab Riaz argues that in order to promote tolerance and progress among Muslims, it is necessary to develop the intellect and acquire a better knowledge of Islam:

> Knowledge must not only be seen in relation to Allah and a spiritual world, but also in relation to a practically oriented every-day life. Islam is after all a *deen* (religion) whose purpose is to influence our daily lives. If it does not influence our daily lives there is nothing wrong with Islam, but it might be time to scrutinize ourselves, and try and see if we missed an essential point somewhere.

Riaz goes on to argue that by "a practically oriented every-day life" he does not only mean praying five times a day or reading the Quran every day, it also implies "that we should be polite in the way we speak, show respect for elders, children and the opposite sex, not be aggressive either physically, mentally or verbally, not lie, not talk behind people's backs and the like. As mentioned; an intellect that has not understood the fundamentals is hardly able to identify these elements in a "practically oriented every-day life".

The ethical vision Riaz proposes centres on "the individual" and its personal ethical responsibility as the point of departure for making a better society; "It is after all the individual that society is based on. If each individual does their share to uphold a positive ethics and moral, society will automatically change". Riaz finishes with a citation of the last *khutba* of the Prophet Mohammed, which stresses the importance of reasoning and understanding in staying on the straight path; "O People, no prophet or apostle will come after me and no new faith will be born. Reason well, therefore, O people, and understand words which I convey to you. I leave behind me two things, the Quran and my Sunnah and if you follow these you will never go astray".

The ethics that emerge from this approach is thus one centred on the individual and her responsibility for her own actions. Islam does not only inform ritual practice, but should ideally inform a person's virtuous conduct in all aspects of life. Such virtuous knowledge is dependant on the acquisition of knowledge, and the application of this knowledge in everyday life. For instance, one of the things that Riaz mentions is that letting Islam inform one's "practically oriented every-day life" implies "not talking behind people's backs". *Ghiba* – speaking of someones faults in his or her absence - is strongly condemned in Islamic moral theology. Young Muslims often referred to this principle in order to critizice the social control effectuated by "slandering". The critique of "talking behind people's back" is also a forceful critique of the set of values and norms of conduct referred to in various notions of "honour" and "shame" in the "ethnic communities". Young women in particular identified the parental generations' occupation with protection the family's hononour, and their attention to what others think and say, as an unwarranted form of control over their lives. By promoting an ethics grounded in the individuals' relationship to Islam they challenged such values and norms and conduct, while simultaneoulsy retaining values and norms related to (in particular

female but also male) modesty, but bestowing the responsibility of supervising this modesty primarily upon the individual rather than upon the family or kinship group. This of course does not mean that they were able to transcend values and norms of conduct related to honour and shame, but that the relationship to norms of modesty and chastity was individualized and recast as a relationship between the individual and the Islamic values and norms.

The relationship between ritual practice and ethical practice more broadly is constructed in different ways. Above, Riaz sees ritual practice as a basis, but a basis which is in itself not enough. Sometimes, an excessive concern with the technicalities of ritual practice is also seen as getting in the way of with a more important concern; striving towards realizing Islamic ethical standards in one's own conduct in daily life and in social relationships with others as well as in international relations (e.g. human rights in Islam). On the other hand, ritual practice may also be seen as contributing to such ethical practices more broadly, e.g. in that it teaches the individuals the necessary discipline, creates a balance in life, and teaches one to fear and love God and to act out of "the right intent".

Having the right intent

When being a Muslim is understood as a process of becoming, closely tied to the achievement of Islamic knowledge and personal reform, the question of "why" one acts as one does tends to become more pertinent. I do not intend to suggest that religious practices can be explained with reference solely to people's intent. Rather, it has to be understood also in relation to such things as the embodiment of religious sentiments, the docile body, and the workings of power in the constitution of religious selves (cf. Asad 1986). What I aim at here is thus not to explain why young Muslims act as they do, but to approach some of the moral structurations that appear through the ways in which they reflect upon their own acts. The young Muslims are not content with "doing Islam", they are also preoccupied with scrutinizing their own and other's intent and the consequences that different actions entail. Am I doing it for me, for God or for my surroundings?

The question of intentions, *niyat*, is important in the Islamic tradition. In its specifically religious significance, *niyat* refers to the declaration made by the believer before the five daily prayers and a variety of other ritual and legal acts of the meaning and the purpose of the act. This enunciation of proper intent, with the qualities of purity and truth, is indispensable to correct practice. As Bowen (1993) notes with respect to Gayo in Indonesia, religious modernism's conception of subjectivity tends to make intent particularly salient. The

individual who stands before God is responsible for thoughts, attitudes and intents as well as for outer action. The young Muslims I worked with similarly saw the individual as responsible for thoughts, attitudes and intents, as well as for their acts. The way in which they spoke about intent in worship, indicated a form of conscious commitment that had to be cultivated as an aspect of *iman*. As was shown above, the intent, "meaning" and "conscious commitment" of prayer was a continuous concern. But the concern with "intentions" was not restricted to the field of prayer. It entered more broadly the discussions of young Muslims on "Islamic correctness", and what it meant to be a good Muslim. Intent was thus perceived as a property that accompanies all actions and that could render them *haram* or *halal*, valid or invalid, authentic or inauthentic (e.g. when prayer is mere aerobics).

"The right intent" is delineated through a series of criticisms of "wrong intents". Of these latter, the most frequently criticized is fear of the social consequences of one's acts, notably concern with appearing as a good Muslim or caring for one's reputation.[311] People in the parental generation and those called "cultural Muslims" are often assumed to be motivated by such concerns. For instance, they are seen to protect their daughters because they are concerned with the family's honour rather than out of "love for their religion" or a sincere wish to act in accordance with God's law. The intents of one's own acts are also scrutinized, and in particular in relation to whether one's piety is a matter of keeping up an image of oneself as a good Muslims in order to please the surroundings. In the discussion between the young women referred to above, Noor reflected upon how she had changed since she first started practising:

> When I started practising, I had to have a good image. But Islamically correct you don't do things so that people will say *mash'allah*: Oh, you're so good, Oh look at Noor, look at this. Because you don't do things in order to make people happy. This is (about) becoming a more humble (subhanallah), the proper way (subhanallah). In the years since I started practising I have changed so much. I do things and my intentions are so clear, you know, so clear that it sometimes amazes me. It becomes part of your faith after a while.

The concern with being Islamically correct thus incites Noor to scrutinize her own intentions, to reflect upon the reasons for her own practices, and to work on herself in order to make her intentions clearer. Note that a pure intention is not automatically assured by faith. Rather, it is something that has to be made purer through a conscious process, and that only gradually becomes "part of your faith". Whereas Noor saw acting with a clear intention as having

[311] Some Islamic theologians identify the act of performing deeds that may be good in themselves but which are done for the sake of this worldly life and not for the sake of Allah as *shirk*.

become part of her "faith", she simultaneously realized that a constant vigilance was needed in order to ensure that she continue to act "Islamically correct". To act "Islamically correct" thus implies not only that she should act in a particular manner, but also how such acts should be undertaken (with a correct intent and humility). In other respects, young Muslims also stressed that practices and emotions that in the beginning required a conscious effort (e.g. such as wearing the hijab) eventually became an automatic way of feeling and reacting. Janaan, for instance, told me that while in the beginning she tended to take her hijab on and off on different occasions now, "leaving the house without a hijab feels like leaving it without my pants". Such vigilance and monitoring of practice in ethical formation is in many ways akin to the one described by Mahmood (2005), as reflecting an Aristotelian understanding of moral formation, that has influenced a number of Islamic thinkers and continues to live within the temporary *dawa* movement in Egypt. Mahmood (2005: 139) pertinently points out that this may be seen as a form of conscious action that is directed at making certain kinds of behaviours unconscious, or part of a person's habitus. Acting "Islamically correct", with the right dispositions of e.g. humility and modesty can become a "part of one's faith" and embodied part of one's way of acting in the world.

Also in this respect, however, we see that the ideals of "personal authenticity" and "autonomy" come to affect the way in which young Muslims theorize "intention" and the relationship between interiority and exteriority. One example is when Taliba criticizes Abid for being motivated by what people think about him in his recent "return" to Islam. In contrast to Noor, Taliba is not concerned that this is not an "Islamically correct" intention. Rather she focuses on a person's duty to "be him or herself" and to "independent reasoning" and "open-mindedness":

> Taliba: I was talking to Abid and he is like; I went off the track for some years of my life and I went after girls, but now I'm coming back. I'm like: where are you coming back? What are you talking about? And he doesn't know what he is talking about. Only - he is only doing it because people don't like what he was doing before. It's not like he didn't like what he was doing, it's that people didn't like what he was doing. And now he is coming back.
>
> Christine: Where is he coming back?
>
> Taliba: To the religion – you know. He went just a little bit anti-religious – you know. But now he has just made it a point not to think beyond a limit – this is my limit and I'm not going to think beyond it – you know. I'm going to pray five times a day and I'm just going to do it, no matter what happens. And that's strange, I don't like that. I disagree with that. I mean – you should see things from different perspectives, how I would see it, how you would see it and how someone from across the country would see it – you know. Just like – universally look at a matter, not only through your neighbours.

Taliba thus introduces an ideal that moves beyond that of Islamic correctness to include a scrutiny of one's practices not only from an Islamic viewpoint, but from an alleged "universal" viewpoint that allows for a multiplicity of perspectives. Whereas Taliba, just as Noor, targets the concern with "what people think", this is from a perspective stressing individual authenticity rather than religious virtuosity. To Taliba, it is not the fact that Abid's motivation for "coming back to the religion" does not seem to be based on Islamically correct intents, but the fact that his change does not emerge from his own desires that is identified as a problem ("It's not like he didn't like what he was doing"). Rather than a question of a pure religious intent, Taliba thus seems to be concerned with the "personal authenticity" of Abid's way of acting. She upholds the necessity, and even duty, to assume a reflective and critical attitude towards social roles as well as religious authority.

In contrast to Taliba, Abid sees his decision to come "back to the religion" as energized by his "love for God". He focuses on the "struggle" that is involved in trying to live in a way that does not conflict with Islam. His "love for God" entails a sense of obligation to "applying Islam" in everyday life and makes Islam, as an objectified standard of right and wrong, a primary standard for how he evaluates himself as a moral person:

> Abid: I have struggled a lot. But I think the reason for my struggles are that I love my religion so much, and I get a terrible conscience when I do something that conflict with Islam. I feel a sharp pain inside of me when I act in contradiction with Islam, and this is a thing that is really bothering me. For instance, when I used to go to discotheques at night – I was really practising at that time. Before I left from home I would do my evening prayers – no one ever told me to, it was something I did it myself, and then I would get dressed up and go out with my friends and be back at four in the morning. I remember this so vividly: crossing my father in the door; he would be on his way to the Morning Prayer in the mosque, I would be coming back from town, and he would ask me: where have you been? And I would answer that I was with some friends. And he would go; OK, fine. And then I'd wash and pray the Morning Prayer. I contradicted myself the whole time. In the prayer you say "lead me on the straight path", and a lot of other stuff right. I mean: I would ask God to lead me on the straight path in my evening prayer and an hour later, look where I would be…
>
> Christine: taking a trip on the wrong path…?
>
> Abid: Exactly, that's extremely double standard. I still struggle with this kind of things, but not as much. There are still some things to think about, but I'm over the worst part. As I said my problem is in a way that I love my religion so much, and I easily get a bad conscience. Many friends who do not practice that much – they are Muslims, but they do not feel so strongly for it – they're fine about it. They go from one relationship to the next without thinking about the religious consequences. But I always think; ok, this is what I have done – and then I would go and see Mohammed – he knows a lot – and ask him about the punishment, for instance for being with a girl. I was thinking a lot about these kinds of things, and it bothered me a lot. I've hurt quite a few girls because of this. I do

> not want to be in a relationship unless I'm serious about it. In the beginning I've always been serious, but then all of a sudden I'd be swept away by doubt; what am I doing? And then I would run away, and they would ask; what did you promise me? I tried to explain myself, but they didn't understand.

Abid's interpretation of his decision to "come back to Islam" contrasts with Aadila's, in that he does not see it as a consequence of social conformity, but as an attempt to bring his own acts in accordance with the love he has for his religion. It is interesting to note how the "love for God", which is often spoken of as a pious virtue in other contexts, here appears somewhat ambivalently as both a virtue and a problem. The affection and love Abid feels for God inspires him to lead a pious life, but at the same time gives him a bad conscience to struggle with, that his less devoted friends do not have to cope with. He characterizes his own conduct as following a double standard (of morality) that is incompatible with his conscience and love for God. Consciousness of what God requires from you and love for God is disciplining in the sense that failing to live up to God's requirements is transformed from negligence or forgetfulness into a conscious act of disobedience. When Abid goes to a discotheque right after prayer he thus perceives it not only as a simple neglect, but as a conscious act of disobedience. Abid thus contrasts his own concern with acting in accordance with Islam, to that of his friends who "do not feel so strongly for it" and are thus less concerned about whether their acts "conflict with Islam". He also stresses his "proper intent" (seriousness, i.e. intention to get married and to not have sex before marriage) in relation to the girls he has been dating, but the way in which he is concerned with the punishment for "being with a girl" also relieves a profound ambivalence as to whether this intent makes his amorous relations acceptable by Islamic standards or not.

Abid's story illustrates a more extensive dilemma related to the relationship between intent and action, and its judgement in terms of good/bad, *haram/halal.* A frequent theme of discussion among the young Muslims I worked with is whether an act of worship could be ruined if it was not performed with the right intention, and, conversely, if an act that appeared to be *haram* would cease to be so if it was performed with a pure intent or "good *niyat*". Could an impure intent or bad *niyat* ruin the rewards of an act that is *fard* or *sunna*, as in Abid's case, who wonders how his morning prayers are received when they succeed a night of clubbing with his girlfriend? Or, in reverse, could one go to a discotheque if one's intentions were not to drink alcohol or to chat up a potential romantic or sexual partner? Or could a girl be unveiled or even wear a bikini, as long as her intents were pure? As we saw in chapter two, the question of intent was central in this respect when discussing gender mixing in the NMU. Here, stress was put on the "pure intentions" that the leaders had in this respect, but that they

could not control the intentions and acts of those who came to meetings. This way of speaking about intentions, points to a dilemma between whether the crucial aspect of acting "Islamically correct" lies in the intention with which a certain act is performed or whether certain acts are *haram* or *halal* regardless of the intention by which they are performed. Many were critical of what they saw as a kind of "relativization" of Islamic virtues by fellow young Muslims who defended their acts with reference to their "good intention". In an article in the MSS magazine *Salam* (2004, nr.1), a young Muslim, writing under the signature "Muslim with a bent back", addresses the question of "The good Intention" in the column called Speaker's Corner:

> Often we hear people say that only the intention matters. One may go to discotheques and Bollywood-concerts as long as one has a pure intent. Girls may be unveiled, or even wear bikinis, as long as their intentions are pure. That one may get senselessly drunk, as long as the intentions behind are good is probably the next. This is pushing it to its extremes, but it is actually what you think, if you defend your acts by saying that there was nothing wrong with your intent.

These discussions bring forth the ambivalence between the focus on an individualized relationship to religion, where I must choose for myself and where my intentions determine the purity, validity, and authenticity of the act, or whether there are some intrinsic aspects to certain acts or ways of acting that make them either good or bad, Islamically correct or not.

Choosing what is good, and its reward

The debates about "intention", as demonstrated above, are inscribed in a wider framework of debate about good deeds and religious reward or merit. The idea of good deeds and religious reward is one of the fundamental ideas of practical ethics in Islam and central to understanding how motivation for Islamic practice and activism is constructed in the context of young Muslims' religious activism. In the conversations and debates of the young Muslims, references were often made to the importance of doing good and the reward that one gets from Allah for doing such good deeds. Several concepts were used in partly overlapping ways in this respect, depending to some extent on the linguistic backgrounds of those speaking, and on their familiarity with Arabic-Islamic concepts and the scholarly tradition. Concepts that were frequently used were *hasanat*, *ajar,* and *sawab*, and expressions such as "points", "merit", and "scores" were also frequent. In the literature *hasanat* is usually defined as "good deeds" an *ajar* and *sawab* as the recompense or reward of those who do good works.

The young Muslims in my studied tended to use *hasanat* for good deeds and interchangeably with *ajar* and *sawab*, or translations such as "reward" or "points".

Usually, references to meritorious deeds and religious merit did not so much concern the obligatory acts of praying, fasting and almsgiving, but rather the voluntary acts in excess of the prescribed ones. Most often, references were made to the merits of doing something good in the context of encouraging someone to live more piously and in particular in the sense of acting in the best of the Muslim community. For instance, references to *hasanat*, *ajar* and *sawab* often accompanied encouragements to "help out" with practical issues, such as cooking for NMU meetings, doing the dishes or cleaning after meetings, or engaging in *dawa* work and public debate. Ramadan is the most propitious time to work for *ajar* by performing good deeds, given that, as Sarah explained to me, "for each good thing you do during Ramadan you gain a lot more than you do normally". In preparing for the celebration of *iftar* in the NMU, an e-mail was sent out: "Anyone else wants to cook? ☺ Remember that there is plentiful reward for cooking for *iftar*". Similarly, the Literature group in the MSS responsible for publishing *Tankevekkende* often refers to the merit (using the term *ajar*) involved in spreading knowledge about Islam as an important motivation for writing in the magazine. In one call for contributions for the next issue of the magazine, religious reward was presented as a "higher purpose" for writing than the acknowledged need to challenge stereotypes and misrepresentations of Islam:

> It is a pleasure to see that many of us engage in social issues, and feel that we can express our opinions and thoughts in *Tankevekkende*. The tendency is clear; we had enough of prejudice and misunderstandings related to Islam, transmitted through today's biased media. Today's Muslims demand to be heard. We are aware that reaching out to people with their opinions and thoughts is a motivation to many when it comes to writing. But there is a higher purpose which in itself should be sufficient to take up the pen. This is an easy way to earn lots of *ajar*. Just think about it, you write something in order to serve your Allah (swt)[312] and will insha Allah be rewarded. But it does not stop there! When you write something informative in a public context, for instance in *Tankevekkende*, many readers acquire knowledge because of you. Ergo, more reward! But it doesn't stop there either! When these people move on, and hopefully share what they have learned with others, the chain leads all the way back to you, and there is *ajar* which limits may be infinite. The treasure of Allah has no limits. We should always strive to collect precious stones from this treasure. We go through our studies collecting credits on credits to get

[312] Subhana wa Ta'ala is an Arabic blessing that is used when the name of Allah is pronounced or written, meaning "May He be Glorified and Exalted". In writing, this expression is usually abbreviated to "SWT". The young Muslims I worked with quite regularly used SWT and PBUH when writing, but more rarely when speaking. When it was used in speech, it was most often in explicitly religious settings when gathered with other Muslims. The expressions signal piety, and were used more frequently when speaking with someone known to be a "practising" Muslim or with a person in a position of religious authority (e.g. imam, lecturer etc.).

> the academic degree we wish for. Exactly in the same way, we must collect as much *ajar* as possible, so that we "pass" on Judgement Day as well, insha Allah (*Tankevekkende* Spring 2001).

While the concern with earning reward for meritorious deeds was a common theme, young Muslims understood the relationship between good and bad deeds, reward and punishment in various ways. The way Sarah, a young woman of Turkish origin, explained it to me, every human being has an angel on each shoulder who registers her good and her bad deeds (Sarah uses the terms *sawab* and *günah*). Whereas good deeds are multiplied when registered, bad deeds are written only once. The angel on the right side, writing down *sawab*, immediately registers any good deeds. The angel on the left side taking care of *günah*, however, waits to allow for repentance (*tawba*). These registered "scores" are the basis for whether one goes to heaven or hell, and in which stratum in paradise one will be ranked, she told me. Whereas the importance of "collecting" *sawab* or *ajar* was generally acknowledged, some of the young complained about the ways in which some Muslims tended to understand these issues in overly concrete and materialistic terms. In a discussion I had with Rasheed on the topic of religious reward, he refuted that God should be dependant on angels – creatures that are ranged below humans in the Quran. He saw the whole idea of angels keeping accounts for God as a very human and mundane way of thinking:

> It is too office-like. I don't think that is how God is. When I was younger I imagined God more in terms of a concrete person. But I really don't know what God is, whether it is something physical, or whether it is really possible to separate the physical from the metaphysical. I imagine it as a kind of power that knows everything, that somehow takes notice of what you do, and will judge you for it.

In a similar way, Ibrahim was critical of the way many traditions have developed the notion of reward into a virtual accountancy, with detailed specifications of how many *hasanat* (*sawab*) will be gained for different acts. In an interview he explained to me that it is important to be aware that you will be judged on the basis of your deeds, but that he understood the idea of religious reward more as an injunction or encouragement for good deeds, than as something that was "countable" in a concrete and materialistic sense:

> Ibrahim: *Hasanat* is the ground on which you are judged on Judgement Day, so it is worthwhile to think a little about it. I'm not quite sure about the standards for counting *hasanat*, so I don't really think a lot about it, but there are certain things that I find tremendously fine and motivating. For instance, when you meet someone and greet him *salam aleikum* and he answers *aleikum salam*, the two get hundred *hasanat*. The one who was first with his greeting gets 99, and the one that answers gets 1 *hasanat*, right. This encourages people to greet each other more often, and I think that is excellent. But I don't think God has this big computer calculating all the *hasanat* you gained during your life in order to judge you.

Christine: So you don't take it that literally?

Ibrahim: Not at all. But I do see the point of such sayings as the one above. It is an illustration of how important it is to greet each other properly, I believe. But I know people who take this very literally, so I don't usually mention the way I see it to them – they might be provoked. The way I see it…one thing that I'm absolutely sure of is that God is just, no matter what. Some people think in the following way: Oh, I heard a hadith that says that if you do this or that you're guaranteed going to heaven. I think those people have misunderstood the religion completely. Because you cannot expect that for instance Hitler, if he suddenly did the same thing, he would suddenly be forgiven everything he did. No, I don't believe that. There are many hadiths and maybe some *ayas* in the Quran that I do believe in, but that I assess as an illustration of the kinds of punishment and recompense that we might expect. God's mercy is immense; He is more merciful than anyone else. It is easy to be granted forgiveness. An issue that I am very careful about, however, is my relationship to other people, because that is very important in Islam. God has said that I can forgive you almost anything you do, but I cannot forgive the tiniest little thing that you did to others. If you steal money from someone, it is he who will have to forgive you, not God. God cannot forgive you for something you did to others. So that's the problem.

Although the consequences are primarily in the "afterlife", the idea of a judgement based on *hasanat*, also conveys meaning on the contemporary social situation in that the recording of good and evil deeds means that injustice will not remain unpunished. Such matters of injustice were often related directly to ongoing or recent historical examples e.g. of war, conflict, and poverty. Just as Ibrahim is assured that Hitler will be judged, Rasheed sees God's justness and judgement as an assurance that those who are responsible for the terrible injustices in the world today will not simply go unnoticed and unpunished:

> And then I think about all the injustice in the world today, for instance towards the Muslims, towards the Palestinians. And no one is really protesting, for instance what happened in Jenin[313], I find that extremely unjust. But then I think; o.k. at least it is recorded, and on judgement day it will become known. So then I think that it is important that these people are seen.

The Islamic framework in which life is a "test" from God that forms the basis of a future judgement is also important in conferring meaning on individual life situations here and now. Nabil, for instance, interprets his current situation of unemployment in the frame of an Islamic discourse about reward and punishment as a "test" from God:

> My relationship to God is of the kind that when I do something wrong, I become frightened. Not frightened in that sense… Lately, after I lost my job, I've been thinking that the harder the test is the kinder God will be later on. On Judgement Day, the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) will stand among the poor because they had a hard life

[313] Rasheed refers to Israel's military action in the occupied Palestinian territories during the so-called Operation Defensive Shield in 2002, right before my interview with him.

> and a hard test, or the Palestinians or the Kashmiris. I have also been thinking about what I did wrong in my life, and whether God is punishing me now because deep down I'm a good person, and by giving me a lousy economy for instance, he punishes me so that I can be forgiven later on. I have been thinking about three things that I want to ask people forgiveness for. I've thought about it for a year, but I haven't done anything yet – I'm not enough of a man, you know. Sometimes I think that if only I ask these people for forgiveness I will get a job the very next day. Because there are things that I know I did wrong. It's really just those little stupid things, and it would be enough to say; hey, I'm sorry I treated you that way. So in a way I think that I am being held responsible for my acts now.

The notion of *ajar* (reward) is also central to Nabil's account:

> I'm very conscious about the issue of reward. Often I get a bad conscience when I do something I know is wrong, or that I could have done better. For instance, the other day there was a collection of food and clothes for Afghanistan, and I gave them all my oldest clothes. I got a really bad conscience, why should I only give them things that I no longer use, and that means nothing to me. So I took my newest jacket and gave. This was a couple of days after I heard this hadith about a man who got a castle in paradise in reward for giving something away. It's almost like a service in return [laughing]. But that gives me a bad conscience as well; I'm not supposed to be doing it because I want a castle in return, right…

Like Abid, Nabil focuses on the "bad conscience" that failure to live up to what he knows is right entails. In a manner similar to Ibrahim, he focuses in particular on ethics pertaining to social relationships, to how he relates to people around him. To Nabil the thought of reward and the fear of punishment, along with a "bad conscience" for knowing what is right, but failing to do it, are all part of the framework in which he understands and scrutinizes his own life. His struggle to find a job is made meaningful by linking it to his previous failures to live as a good Muslim, and to life as a "trial" where God will stand among those who had "a hard test". At the same time Nabil scrutinizes his intentions, and reflects ambivalence in the understanding of "reward" as a pure or impure intention for action. Just as we saw Noor state earlier that Islamically correct one should not behave as a good Muslim because one wants praise from others, Nabil sees "wanting a castle" as an impure intent. Alesha is even more critical in this respect, arguing that Muslims should be motivated by the fact that "God wants us to do the right thing, to be good human beings, not because we want to go to Heaven".[314] The thought of submitting to Allah as a means of achieving Paradise for oneself seems to her basically the same as "what you do with children when you tell them: you do this and you'll get this", and to her, attests to a religious immaturity in which Islam has not really "touched

[314] Others would rather stress the fact that Islam is for the good of mankind, and that Allah is not dependant on our submission.

one's heart". To Alesha and many of the young Muslims I worked with, religious maturity is thus achieved when good deeds are performed not because religious reward functions as a "carrot", or when accounts of punishment are used to scare people (as they say that some parents tend to do), but when people willingly submit to Allah in order to be good human beings. In this view, a virtuous person is motivated to follow Islamic proscriptions and prescriptions because she knows it is the right thing to do rather than because of some externally imposed sanction for failing to follow the rule. This view of good deeds resonates importantly with the centrality of "choice" in the young Muslims' narratives of return to Islam, and their contention that forcing someone to act against their own will had the counter-effect of producing rebellion on the part of young Muslims against their parents and religious authority, rather than virtuous behaviour and ethical responsibility.

It is also interesting to note how ideas about earning merit by good deeds is sometimes made relative to particular socio-historical contexts, where it is more or less difficult to live as a good Muslim. Abid, as previously quoted, was concerned with the "religious consequences" of his acts, and in particular with respect to going out to discotheques and dating. However, he found comfort in the apprehension that his struggle to stay on "the straight path", as a Muslim in a non-Muslim country, was harder than for someone living in a Muslim country. Because of this apprehension, Abid was confident that staying on the straight path must give more "reward" in Norway, where there are countless temptations that may lead one astray[315]. In a discussion we had on the topic he told me that

> I've heard that God shows a good deal of understanding for us who grow up here. It is less strict for us. But we shouldn't misuse this, and I feel that's what I do sometimes. You think you're so smart, and you don't really consider that God sees you. And then you think that he shows understanding again and again.

The relationship between norms, acts and religious consequences was thus made dependant on the particularity of the social context in which he and other young Muslims found themselves. However, as other young Muslims, Abid was concerned that this might become an excuse for young people who want to make life easier on themselves, in a manner that would eventually lead them to forget God's gaze and to rely on "making up" for wrongdoings by asking forgiveness (*tawba*) rather than by striving to do good in their everyday lives. Abid here implicitly invokes the well-known hadith of Gabriel where it is reported that to the question "What is *ihsan*?" Mohammed answered that, "It means that you should worship

[315] Similar arguments about increased merit because of the difficulties of practice in a larger environment that is not Muslim, has been recoded among Muslims elsewhere (Metcalf 1996a).

Allah (swt) as though you see Him, for He sees you though you do not see Him" (narrated by Bukhari). Abid thus acknowledges the importance of reminding himself that God sees him, an attitude that is integral to *Ihsan*, and thus to pious practice. The importance of remembering that God sees you was also often conveyed in the form of short pedagogical stories that were told to children. For instance, in one such story that I heard several times, a young boy was given some sweets by his father and told to eat it somewhere where no one could see him. The boy hid in a cupboard and ate his sweets. When questioned by his father whether he had manage to eat the sweets without being seen, the boy replied in affirmation, but was corrected by his father who reminded him that Allah sees you though you do not see Him. Such pedagogical stories conveyed the importance of learning to fear God in order to act as a pious Muslim.

The general religious notion of earning merit by good deeds performed in this life for rewards in the hereafter, are important motivational devices for the young Muslims I worked with. It is a means by which young Muslims are called upon, and through which young Muslims summon themselves and others, to act in particular ways, and thus to recognize their ethical obligation to realize their lives in a particular manner. Although young Muslims understand and use the concept of religious merit in different ways, a common theme is a critique of religious reward as a means of realizing one's own personal interest to achieve Paradise, and a weight on religious reward rather as an ethical injunction to do good because good deeds are good in themselves, both for the individual and for society. The tendency to understand *ajar*/*sawab* in a less concrete and materialistic sense, as a general ethical injunction rather than as a system of accountancy, reinforces this criticism, and draws attention simultaneously towards individual salvation in the hereafter and towards an ethical commitment in this world. Good deeds are thus important for the sake of earning religious reward in the hereafter and as a vehicle for striving to become a better person in the here-and-now, as well as for realizing a good and just society.

There are two broader points to be made here. One is that there is a multiplicity of motivations, desires and goals involved in young Muslims' religious practices. This includes such things as "love for God", "fear of God", the desire for religious rewards, fear of punishment, expectations and pressure from significant others, concern with being praised by others, hopes to realize a truly Islamic society, the wish to be "myself", or to counter anti-Muslim racism and discrimination. These motivations, desires and goals are constituted at the intersection of complex and partly overlapping discourses, which in efforts to act as a pious Muslim are brought together, thereby opening up a field of potential inconsistencies and

existential dilemmas that must be dealt with. The efforts to become a "good Muslim" mean that these motivations are scrutinized from the point of view of what is considered "virtuous" in Islamic practice, e.g. that one's religious acts and one's moral discernments should be motivated by "fear of God" and "love for God", rather than by concerns with personal interest. The second point to be made relates to how young Muslims are thus summoned to constitute themselves in accord with Islam, and how the Islamic discourses that summon them offer certain models "for setting up and developing relationships with the self, for self-knowledge, self-examination, for the decipherment of the self by oneself, for the transformations that one seeks to accomplish with oneself as object" (Foucault 1990 cited in Mahmood 2005: 28).

Moving on; but where to?

The return to Islam, as a process of work on the Self, is a diversified "path" which may over time intensify, decrease, transform, or be replaced by other narratives of the Self, with other concerns, motivations and moralities. I would like to point out some paths that religious careers may come to take over time. A first thing to note, is that although Islam may continue to be of central importance in people's individual lives, many tend to retreat from the collective Muslim activism of the NMU and the MSS as they move into adulthood, form their own families, and most notably when they get children. In this period of life, the concern with working to change oneself and the situation of Muslims in Norway and globally quite often seems to fall in the background to concerns of a more "practical" nature, relating to the family sphere and working life. The intensity of their Muslim engagement may thus decrease as people move in to adulthood, or it may come to centre on new issues, e.g. related to the Islamic education of children. On the other hand, quite a few continue both their individualized and collectivized efforts to realize Islam in everyday life and secure a space for Muslims in Norwegian society, sometimes by moving on to other organizations such as the Islamic Council of Norway or by finding a new place of activism in one of the more established mosques or Islamic organizations.

Just as the "return to Islam" may be experienced as a significant "rupture" or "personal transformation", moving on to other understandings of what Islam is and a Muslim should be, may be similarly experienced. Looking back on their previous "return to Islam" some speak of it as "a fundamentalist period" in which they were "obsessed with religion". Sarah, for instance, speaks about her "fundamentalist period" as having prevented her from being open

to other points of view, and as having limited her horizon of experience. She has recently come to stress the "inner" and "spiritual" aspects of Islam as more important than conforming to prescribed rules and regulations about the correct form and purpose of given practices. The individual relationship to God, spirituality as well as critical reflection, here gains predominance over the need to "submit" to particular rules and regulations that are authorized as Islamic within the discursive tradition of Islam. Rather than inscribing herself in a lineage of believers, a global religious community, Sarah's approach reaches beyond the boundaries of "religions" as separate and institutionalized systems of beliefs, and into the domain of "religiosity" as a spiritual approach to life. Instead of seeking out absolute truths about Islam, she has come to embrace a more relativist position in which "no one can say about their truth that it is the final one", and in which "there is a unity between Islam and other spiritualities at the metaphysical level". The persuasion that no one can posit their truth as the final one is an implicit challenge to the authorizing powers of established religious communities, scholars and others who claim to speak with authority about the truth according to Islam. Sarah stresses the duty of each individual to think and reason for him/herself in matters of religion, and is fundamentally sceptical of the power the religious establishment has to define correct Islam. Having read a great deal of social science literature on the issue of young Muslims, she interprets her own relationship to Islam in terms of the "deliberative" approach referred to in an above chapter. Access to religious knowledge and the media allows her to do *ijtihad* herself instead of relying on other authorities, she explains to me, and sees this as a positive trend represented by herself and a few other young Muslims.

Interestingly, Sarah has recently married a Southern-European Catholic, who is, she stresses, "also a Muslim at the spiritual level". In doing so, she married counter not only to what is commonly understood to be a fundamental proscription in Islam (women can only marry Muslim men), but also in defiance of the disapproval of her mother as well as major parts of the Turkish and Muslim communities. Through her marriage Sarah has transcended what Cesari (1994: 58) refers to as one of the "principle limits" (endogamy and circumcision) of an individualized Islam where the believer decides for herself which elements of Islam she considers to be binding or not. However, it should be noted that Sarah nevertheless perceives of her marriage as endogamous on some level, because of the fundamental unity between Islam and other spiritualities at the "metaphysical level". This idea of a spiritual unity between different religious traditions is also expressed by the ways in which she conceives of her marriage as the embodiment of a dialogue project that may "show the world that as long as people respect each other as individuals, inter-faith marriages are feasible".

Sarah's religious itinerary may be seen as exemplifying a reformulation of Islamic norms in terms of values and ethics, which are "negotiable" in the sense that the issue is not to follow the letter but the spirit of the law (an approach we saw in chapter five that Rasheed embraced in his understanding of gender equity in Islam). In foregrounding Islam as a source of individual ethics and moral values, Sarah has increasingly come to see "practising Muslims" and organizations such as the NMU and the MSS as too "strict" and as too occupied with ritualism rather than with "emotion" and "ethics". Opting out of the discursive domain of the NMU and the MSS, she has turned to Islamic preachers who foreground feelings and ethics over law, and increasingly takes it upon herself to pursue an individual search for a reflexively based and critical Islamic knowledge and truth(s). Sarah's move from paying attention to what Islam says about how to behave in different contexts to a concern with the spiritual unity of Islam and other spiritual traditions pushes the individualizing trend one step further. Here, the boundaries of the Muslim community (*umma*) are no longer fundamental, as ethics come to be centred on the self rather than on a community of believers. While this trend may be one way in which the religiosity of young Muslims are currently reconfigured, it seems more likely that cases like Sarah's will continue to be the exception, and that young Muslims will continue to rely on various Islamic authorities and authorizing discourses and to relate to established religious communities in their shaping of religious practice.

While Sarah's religious itinerary is in many ways unique, also some others of the young Muslims I worked with tended to grow less concerned with conforming in a strict way to every detail of the Islamic precepts. The intense religious engagement of young Muslims during their "return to Islam" may be partly explained by the lack of a "social routine" with respect to religious practice. Because of the plurality of Islamic discourses and the fragmented structures of authority, defining what it means to be a good Muslim, and what kind of practices that are central to such a way of life, is largely undetermined and revisable. In the "return to Islam", religious practice is thus continually shaped and re-shaped in relation to the inquiry into what "Islam says" and what it "means to be a Muslim". There is thus a strong link between the objectification of Islam and fragmentation of authorizing discourses and authorities, and the concern of young Muslims to subject themselves to Islamic norms in order to live as good Muslims. The need for the individual to "return to Islam" by relating to explicit rules about what is *haram* and *halal* and "Islamically correct" partly arises from the fact that these norms and practices are not embedded in commonly shared social routines. Although this lack of shared social routines is a feature of living in a non-Muslim and largely

globalized society as such, one might expect the consequences of this to be more marked and acutely experienced among those who are young. This is among other things because their patterns of sociality expose them more to the multiplicity of available traditions and authorities and to social situations where the habitual enactment of religious practices and the structures of plausibility underpinning them are challenged. One might thus expect that the relationship of those who are now young Muslims to Islam will change both with respect to life-cycle and with respect to larger social, cultural and political processes in and through which social routines, communities, authorities and discourses are (re)established, contested and transformed.

Self and religious practice in young Muslims' 'return to Islam'

This chapter has sought to bring out the multiple ways in which young Muslims' sought to reconstruct their own knowledges, desires, motivations and ethical disposition in accord with models of Islamic moral personhood, by adopting a number of "technologies of the Self". The majority of young Muslims I worked with stressed the importance of trying to "work on themselves" in order to become "good Muslims". To the extent that their own way of life was not in accordance with what they considered to be the standards for being a good Muslim, whether in terms of ritual practice or in terms of personal faith and ethics, they saw it as a "lack" and strove towards realizing Islam more fully in their everyday lives. On the other hand, they also stressed the importance of choosing individually whether and to what extent they practiced Islam. Practice that was socially enforced, simply habitual, or inherited, was seen as "inauthentic". The analysis has related this apparent duality in the way young Muslims speak of their relation to Islam as pointing to the articulation between different conceptions of the Self. On the one hand the Self is understood according to an individualist ethics of authenticity, that centres on an "authentic Self" – the "who I am, and as I am". According to this ethics, religious practices are conceptualized as individual choices that should express this "authentic Self". To follow the path of Islam demands an individual choice: obedience to religious prescriptions and proscriptions must be preceded by individual reflection in order to be truly religious. Here, religious practice is conceptualized as "expressing" inner states of e.g. faith, conviction, and love for God, as well as symbolizing identity. On the other hand, the Self is understood in terms of an Islamic ontology, where one must strive to "work on the Self" in order to become a good Muslim. Here, religious practices become means of forging a Self in submitting to particular norms and reconstructing desires,

motivations and ethical dispositions in accord with normative models of Islamic moral personhood and piety. Being Muslim is conceived of in terms of an ideal model that this individual Self should conform to in order to realize themselves as true Muslims. It should be noted that this latter understanding of the Self is, just like the "ethics of authenticity", profoundly individualizing, in that the Islamic discourses address individuals and call upon them to effectuate a work on the self (e.g. disciplining desires, working on one's intention, doing individual *dawa* in one's daily conduct). This understanding of what it means to be a Muslim simultaneously compels the individual subject to establish a correspondence between inner and outer aspects of faith, and to engage in religious practices as a means for disciplining and transforming him/herself according to a model of Islamic moral personhood and piety. This duality is at the basis for the stresses and priorities (rather than theological innovations) that were detected in the young Muslims' understanding of what it means to be a pious Muslim: the focus on consciousness, meaning, faith and conscience, the conceptualization of religious community as individual adherence, the stress on the correspondence between inner and outer aspects of faith, and the concern with a continual disciplining of, and work on the Self. The combination of these models of the Self may be conceptualized as related to an appropriation of the Islamic tradition from within the frameworks of a (liberal-secular) modern society.

As Foucault (1984b) argued, the "attitude" of modernity (one could add of the Western, liberal-secular kind) compels people to face the task of producing themselves, a task that is arguably congruent also with modern forms of economic liberalism and "global modernity" more generally, "The individual is now encouraged – in morality as well as in law – to govern himself or herself, as befits the citizen of a secular, liberal society" (Asad 2003: 226). I do not by this mean to indicate that modernity introduces the "individual" or a subjective interiority into Islam, as phenomena that were previously absent. Rather, in continuity with Asad's suggestion (Asad 2003: 225), I have wanted to show how the modern conception of individual authenticity brings a new kind of subjectivity, one that is appropriate to ethical self-determination and aesthetic self-invention (linked to a personally chosen life style), into the field of religious identity and practice, and how this model of the Self interacts with varied understandings of interiority/exteriority, ethics, discipline and self-perfection in the Islamic discursive tradition. This intersection implies that the Muslim individual is now encouraged to govern himself or herself, to willingly obey and transform into an obedient subject. "The return to Islam" is a work on the Self that is launched from within the horizons of the Islamic discursive tradition, and that although enabled and shaped by modern power, is not reducible

to it. The concern with “choice”, “self-determination” and “personal authenticity”, differs from the concern with autonomy as conceived in parts of the Western liberal tradition, in that it forms the basis for individual conformity to a divine model of moral conduct, but where the authority of that model is dependant on “internal conviction” and “choice”. It allows for a break with and critique of specific traditions (branded cultural rather than Islamic), but simultaneously reproduces important virtues and practices that are central not only to the task of producing oneself, but to producing a good and virtuous society.

Chapter seven

Elaborations

The aim of this chapter is to elaborate on some central theoretical and epistemological issues that have been raised at various points throughout the thesis, and to show how the analyses in the above chapters are both informed by, and may serve to further inform, these issues. More precisely, I identify some dilemmas that arise from the efforts to make sense of young Muslims' religious identities and practices. These dilemmas include the relationship between unity and diversity, continuity and change, tradition and modernity, submission and resistance, universalism and relativism. In order to unpack these dilemmas, I engage some of the central theoretical and epistemological debates that have animated research in anthropology as well as other disciplines. While the issues that I raise in important ways overlap and speak to each other, the chapter is not meant to form a "whole" where the themes are necessarily tightly integrated into each other. There are four major elaborations. A common thread in the two first is a concern with theorizing "unity/diversity" and "continuity/change" in the religious engagement of young Muslims. **The first** one concerns the question of whether an anti-essentialist approach to Islam, such as defended in this thesis, requires us to speak of Islams rather than Islam, in order to acknowledge diversity. **The second** one poses the question of whether claims to Islamic authenticity, such as those embraced by the young Muslims in this study, are to be understood as an "(re)invention of tradition". Both these questions are discussed in light of the analysis in the above chapters, and an argument is made that the understanding of Islam as a "discursive tradition", that has theoretically informed the arguments of this thesis, allows us to deal with both unity/diversity and continuity/change without having to re-inscribe a clear cut dichotomy between tradition and modernity and without having to dissolve "Islam" as an object of study. **The third** elaboration in many ways continues these discussions, as it seeks to further explore the notion of "individualization" that has at several times informed the analysis in the thesis. An argument is made for the need to explore individualization not only as a "structural" issue in the sense of individuals who are disembedded from the structuring constraints of traditions, forms of sociality and authorities. I also, and strongly, see it as an expression of a discursive production of individualized selves. In continuity, I argue that we need to move beyond the current tendency to see Muslim youth and women's agency in terms of a stark opposition between choice and force as related to modernity/tradition. To do so I engage critically with

the model of the autonomous subject that seems to underlie such a polarization, and argue that the process of individualization can be read as a production of a particular kind of (post)modern individualized subject rather than as the liberation of the autonomous individual from tradition. In **the fourth** elaboration I develop on this issue with respect to the possibilities of anthropology to offer a "cultural critique" in the field of immigration studies. Discussing some "critical interventions" in the Norwegian public and academic debate and their epistemological and normative political foundations, I identify some problems that relate to the classical dilemma between cultural relativism and ethnocentrism. I argue that both these options have their drawbacks, but nevertheless defend an attempt at retaining a "methodological relativism" at the basis of our research. This is necessary not least in order to question the "methodological nationalism" that is at the basis of many contemporary immigration studies and studies of Muslims in Europe, where social, cultural and religious difference is made to appear mainly as an "Other" to a national imagined community.

The anthropology of Islam or Islams

The essentialist – anti-essentialist controversy

A dilemma that has repeatedly asserted itself throughout this thesis is the need to deal with the relationship between unity and diversity in Islam. On the one hand, this dilemma animates the debates and contestations that young Muslims engage in, and pervades the imaginaries in and through which their religious identities and practices are formed. On the other hand, it animates important theoretical debates in the anthropology of Islam concerning how researchers could best conceptualize and represent Islam. One major issue here has lately, as in other parts of the social sciences, come to be the concern with avoiding reification and essentialism. Since the critique of Orientalism (Said 1978) started a wider reflection about essentialist representations of Islam in the West, developments in world politics where Islam tends to be constructed as a monolithic opposite to "the West", has made anti-essentialist critique more pertinent than ever. In the aftermath of 9/11, Said (2002) re-launched the suggestion made by Al-Azmeh (1996) and before him El Zien (1977), that we speak about Islams rather than Islam, specifying which kind, during which particular time, we are speaking about (Said 2002: 1). Before this, Baumann (1999) characterized Al-Azmeh's contention as "the only safe starting point" if we wish to avoid a reification and an

essentialization of Islam that lock people into false alternatives and pit reified and essentialized communities against each other.

In *Islams and Modernities* (1996), Al-Azmeh challenges what he sees as a persistent misrecognition of "phenomena islamica" as "generically closed, utterly exotic, repellently mysterious, utterly exceptionalist". According to Al-Azmeh, the prevalence of this reified and essentialized view of phenomena islamica in contemporary European politics rests on a convergence between the ways in which mainstream politicians, media and "experts" (academics included) on the one hand, and Muslim spokespersons on the other hand, represent Islam. While mainstream politicians and media represent "Islam" as a "problem" to the West, self-appointed representatives claim to speak for "*the* Muslim community" or for Islam as such. Academic works, that despite the last three decades' trenchant critique of Orientalism continue to depend on a modern Orientalist imaginary, tend to reinforce such reifications and essentializations. What unifies these positions, Al-Azmeh claims, is a "culturalist view of religion" combined with a "tribalist view of culture". Al-Azmeh wishes to claim a historical corrective to these stances and correct what he refers to as "the foundational premises" on which culturalism stands.[316] In order to do so, he argues, we must realize that "there are as many Islams as there are situations that sustain it" (Al-Azmeh 1996).

It should be clear from my own attempts to deal with the religious identities and practices of young Muslims in this thesis that I agree with Al-Azmeh that "presumptions of Muslim cultural homogeneity and continuity do not correspond to social reality" (1996: 4), and that the essentialism on which culturalist understandings of Islam rest, should be challenged, at least in an academic context. However, I will discuss some possible implications of the suggestion to move from Islam to Islams and argue that such a strategy may be neither sufficient, nor necessary, to solving the problem of essentialism. In order unpack some of the issues involved, I will draw upon insights from feminist theory where the issue of essentialism has been extensively debated. But before I do so, let me briefly address some problems that arise from Al-Azmeh's suggestion that are perhaps of particular urgency to anthropologists. Anthropologists generally conceive of their task as somehow related to making sense of the worlds that the people they study inhabit. This is furthermore often conceived of as implying sensitivity to, and respect for, the different ways in which people conceive of their worlds. A

[316]Al-Azmeh here uses "foundationalism" in a specific sense; as referring to the way in which the notion of culture on which culturalist claims stand is "firmly grounded in an organismic metaphysics, in which historical masses are regarded as entities defined by analogy to biological systems, and in which culture is conceived in terms of a bacteriological model" (Al-Azmeh 1996: 25).

question of a methodological and ethical character thus arises, of whether anthropologists can justly conceptualize the religious and cultural traditions of the people they study, in terms that would be offending to many of them. Suggesting that Islam (the religion of the One God) is not one but many would be both unfamiliar and offensive to the Muslims I worked with, who speak and act with reference to Islam and not Islams. Of course, this does not mean that researchers have to analytically subscribe to the idea that there is only one Islam, but that the importance and meaningfulness of the category Islam to many believers and practitioners should be acknowledged.

A further point relates more generally to the relationship between research and identity politics. Within feminist studies, the tension between academic anti-essentialism and the need to form politically useful identities has been a central issue of debate. The anti-essentialist critique came into conflict with thinking and politics rooted in the standpoint and experiences of women and the practical political theme of claiming, legitimating and valuing a suppressed and devalued identity.[317] This paradox has led some feminists to argue that it may sometimes be crucial to "risk essentialism" (see e.g. Fuss 1990). Under certain circumstances self-reflexive claims to strong, basic and shared identity – or, generalizing a term associated with Spivak (1988), "strategic essentialism" – may be useful.[318] Thus, with regard to feminism, it might be argued that essentializing the category "women" was a necessary step towards challenging male dominance and gendered inequalities. The subsequent essentializing of less general categories (such as black or lesbian women) was in turn useful in the political mobilization of women who had other concerns and experiences than those of mainstream white feminism. With regard to the concept of culture there are similar challenges in a socio-political context where "having a culture" and "an identity" are recognized criteria for the distribution of economic, political and, to a certain extent, cultural rights. Anti-essentialist critique thus seems to have put anthropologists as well as feminists "in the awkward position of debunking the essentialist claims of groups whose political aims they nonetheless support" (Handler 1999: 492). In contrast to Spivak, and others who have adopted the term "strategic essentialism", Al-Azmeh seems to be of the opinion that essentialization necessarily works in an oppressive way. The paradox raised by Handler is thus not actualized, not because it could

[317] As Calhoun (1994) points out, this was not, however, a conflict primarily between theory and politics – for the two were deeply involved with each other. The critique of the essentialization of the category "women" came not only from academic deconstructionism, but also, as earlier mentioned, from women who were marginalized – be it with regard to their sexuality or the colour of their skin. However, this critique sometimes tended to essentialize more particularistic identities at a less general level than the category women.

[318] "Strategic essentialism" has come to be used as a general term for referring to the need of "subaltern" groups to temporarily accept an "essentialist" position in order to be able to act politically.

not be, but because those proponents of "culturalist Islam" that Al-Azmeh engages with are groups whose political aims he does not support.

As I have argued in this thesis, essentialist representations of Islam, portraying it as a unified and continuous (although not static) totality, are intrinsic to the identity politics of the young Muslims in my study. The element of "strategy" in the attempt of young Muslims to create "Muslim unity" is reflected in their focus on the importance of "working together", rather than focusing on internal diversity and differences of opinion. I have focused on how this strategy is conditioned and regulated by the socio-historical context where Islam and Muslims are increasingly constructed as the "Others" of Norwegian society. The outward presentations of "Islam" and the "Muslim community" are as I have shown complemented by debates and contestations about these issues internally in the organizations and in a variety of social arenas. Although I have shown that young Muslims' identity politics, as implied in the anti-essentialist critique, entail a process of "purification" and exclusion of "Others", I have also shown that essentializations of Islam can be used by those who are less powerful (in terms of gender, generation and ethnicity) to oppose dominant norms and practices, and in particular for confronting and reconfiguring family relationships, and their immigrant parents' constructions of masculinity and femininity. The stress on a Muslim identity as primary point of identification is utilized to unsettle ethnic boundaries and challenge parental authority, for instance when it comes to endogamous marriages. In this respect, focusing on belonging to "the Muslim community" provides a means for constituting new social identities that allow young Muslims to simultaneously maintain allegiances with their immigrant communities and to challenge gendered, generational and ethnicized regimes of power. In political terms, thus, essentializations cannot be assumed to be essentially good or bad, even if the goal is to destabilize dominant hierarchies related e.g. to ethnicity, generation, or gender. However, the parallel with the struggles that are characterized as forms of "strategic essentialism" should not be pushed too far, in so far as the concept of "strategic essentialism" implies that the acceptance of an "essentialist" position is consciously assumed as a temporary position and primarily as a political device to challenge oppression. As I have sought to show in this thesis, the religious engagement of at least a substantial number of the young Muslims' in the NMU and the MSS, is also geared towards the realization of a pious Islamic subjectivity and society in ways that exceeds the frames of identity politics and resistance and implies submission to a religious "truth".

Questioning pluralization as an anti-essentialist strategy: some lessons from feminism

Pluralizing categories has become a common strategy as a part of a widespread critique of essentialism in the social sciences. There has been a move from feminism to feminisms, from modernity to modernities, from woman to women, and from Islam to Islams.[319] Following Fuss (1990), I will argue that this strategy is not satisfactory, since it seems to displace rather than counter the problem of essentialism. It replaces the question; "What is a woman?" with the question; "What is a black, a lesbian, or a Muslim woman?" Or, with respect to "Islam" that concerns us here, it replaces "What is Islam?" with "What is women's Islam?" or, to overstate the point somewhat; "What is black, lesbian women's Islam?" My point is that by pluralizing the term Islam we may slip into new essentialisms, essentializing particular *kinds* of Islam, rather than Islam as such. If modelled in the way that Said proposes, that, "Each region and people who came under its sway developed its own kind of Islam" (2002: 1), the notion of Islams could easily end up reproducing the arguably essentialist assumptions in much culture-talk in anthropology (see e.g. the edited book by Borofsky 1994). It raises the same kind of questions of boundaries, sameness and difference that has haunted anthropological reflections on "culture" and society" over the last decades.[320]

In anthropology but also in social science more generally, Al-Azmeh's strategy of pluralization is embraced, if not on a theoretical level, then at least at the level of conceptualization. Many writers qualify the term Islam by proper names of e.g. regions, nations, or other specific localities such as e.g. South Asian Islam (Metcalf 1984) Euro-Islam (AlSayyad and Castells 2002), Moroccan Islam (Eickelman 1976), L'Islam de France (Morsy 1993). But it is by no means obvious that the different forms of Islam could best be isolated in terms of geographic regions, nationality or ethnicity, as they most often seem to be. Such isolations tend to reproduce the spatial imaginaries embedded in "methodological nationalism" (see discussion later on in the chapter). It is true that the nation state is often a primary actor in institutionalizing particular ways of understanding and practising Islam, but transnational actors that are based on other criteria than territoriality, such as the cooperation of Muslim youth and students transnationally, may prove to be just as important in some contexts. Al-Azmeh's contention that "there are as many Islams as there are situations that sustain it", thus begs the question "What is a situation?", and evokes the same set of questions

[319] Similarly – to avoid the question of borders and difference evoked by substantive forms –, we have moved to adjective forms such as religious instead of religion, cultural instead of culture etc.

[320] In this connection it should be noted that hegemonic power works not only by suppressing difference within Islam, but also by differentiating and classifying groups and practices as "good" and "bad", "modern" and "anti-modern", "fundamentalist" or "liberal" etc.

as those involved in anthropological reflections on how one should construct a "field" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

The internal heterogeneity and transnational orientations of organizations like the Muslim Youth of Norway and the Muslim Student Society inevitably raises theoretical questions about what difference makes a difference (e.g. nationality, ethnicity, locality, gender, generation, age, class, or denomination). Should I identify the Islam I have studied with a particular location, and, if so, at what level? Is it Oslo's Islam, Norwegian Islam, Euro-Islam, or even Global Islam? Should I identify it as the Islam of a particular group, for instance *L'Islam de jeunes* (Khosrokhavar 1997), *Women's Islam* (Kamalkhani 1998), or yummie's Islam.[321] Or should it be defined by a particular relationship to movement in space, such as *L'Islam de la Diaspora* (Saint-Blancat 1997), or Migrant or *Travelling Islam* (Pieterse 1997)? Al-Azmeh himself seems to privilege socio-economic conditions in determining the "situations" that sustain different Islams. He speaks of European Islam in its varying forms and places, and of the specific configuration of socio-economic locations constituted by British Muslims of Pakistani origin. One could thus assume that in addition to European Islam, we would, at a lower level, find a British-Pakistani Islam (a term I do not think he uses). Al-Azmeh does not satisfactorily clarify why he chooses national background and socio-economic locations as defining of different Islams. Even if one agrees with Al-Azmeh that specific configurations of socio-economic locations constitute particular Islams, one would want to know whether for instance women and men or young and old are not differently located within socio-economic space in ways that would legitimate yet "another Islam".

Within feminist discussions of essentialism/anti-essentialism it has been argued that masking difference is a fallacy inherent in the process of categorizing and naming as such. Martin argues that, "Any naming or categorising tends to call attention to similarities and neglect differences […] the masking of difference is built into language itself" (Martin 1994: 636). Martin's point is thus that any category will necessarily cover up certain differences. If there are categories that do not, they will be too specific to enable intellectual research. This is so insofar as even the "subject" is now increasingly seen as a changing site of difference, multiple subjectivities and contestation. Following this logic, would Islams have to appear in the plural form even when we talk of individual subjects? This is of course taking the anti-essentialist argument to its logical extreme – an extreme that scholars by no means have to

[321] Al-Azmeh uses this term for young, upwardly mobile Muslims (1993: 9).

travel to. Instead it suggests that sameness/difference is a problem of levels of abstraction and balance between the general and the particular, unity and diversity, as well as a question of which samenesses/differences that are seen to "make a difference".

The problem of defining the differences that make a difference, or, in Al-Azmeh's terminology, what the relevant criteria for defining a "situation" in which a particular Islam exists, can be further clarified with reference to the debates about essentialism in feminist theory. In criticizing categories such as "woman", feminists have added other axes of difference to unmask the differences within. But as Bordo (1990: 139) rightly argues, the inclusion of difference in feminist perspectives has sometimes happened in a rather coercive and mechanical way. Where some differences are included (usually gender, race and class), others are excluded. "What happened to ethnicity? Age? Sexual Orientation?" Bordo asks. The same argument can be put forward with regard to the pluralization of the term Islam. Territorial boundedness, nationality and ethnicity seems to be privileged categories both to Al-Azmeh and many others writing about Islams in the plural. These categories may of course be of greater importance than e.g. class, gender, race, sexual orientation, and age in a given situation, but writers seldom bother to argue if and why they are. This suggests that pluralizing Islam does not suffice in order to counter culturalist representations of Islam.

Re-considering the 'essence' of essentialism: An anti-essentialist approach to Islam as a 'discursive tradition'

Let me hasten to add that I do not imply that Al-Azmeh's and other's use of pluralized Islams are essentialist. On the contrary, I mean to argue that whether a representation is essentialist or not depends not on how it is circumscribed, but on the grounds such circumscriptions are made. If this is right we do not have to agree with Baumann (1999) that to speak about Islams rather than Islam is "the only safe starting point" in order to avoid essentialization. In my opinion, a de-essentialization of Islam should have empirical heterogeneity, but in a wider sense than suggested by the reference to national Islams or the Islams of different social groups, as a starting rather than an ending point. Furthermore, the category "Islam", whether in the singular or in the plural, should be constructed on the basis of non-essentialist categorization. In order to envisage such a categorization, the critique of essentialist representations of Islam would benefit from some clarification on what is to be meant by essentialism and of the different forms of "essences" which underlie contemporary representations of Islam. A thorough clarification is beyond the scope of this thesis, but let me

suggest some possible forms of "essence" that may be involved, again with reference to feminist theory.

De Lauretis (1988) cites the three acceptations of the term "essence" that she believes to be most pertinent to a discussion of "essentialism" in feminism: 1) "Absolute being, substance in the metaphysical sense; the reality underlying phenomena"[322] 2) "That which constitutes the being of a thing; that 'by which it is what it is'". This second meaning of essentialism may be further differentiated in what Locke[323] calls A) *real* essence and B) *nominal* essence respectively, or in another used distinction *de re* and *de dicto* essentialism (Martin 1994). *Real essence* (A) refers to that which constitutes the being of a real entity: "Objective character, intrinsic nature as a 'thing-in-itself: that internal constitution, on which all the sensible properties depend'". *Nominal essence* (B), on the other hand, refers to that which constitutes the being of a conceptual entity: the totality of the properties and constituent elements of a linguistic category; indispensable and necessary attributes.[324] As Calhoun (1994) notes: the connections between the arguments commonly called "essentialist" in contemporary social science and the philosophy of "essence" in older metaphysics seem, are for the most, thin and distant. The contemporary anti-essentialist critique within academia mainly concerns a) and b) of 2) above, that is essentialism *de re* and *de dicto*, and not the metaphysical question of absolute, essential being.[325]

Thus we could raise the question of what the relationship is between the "organismic metaphysics" that according to Al-Azmeh underlies the culturalist notion of culture, and the act of naming or categorizing Islam in the singular or the plural for the purpose of research. The traditional theory of categorization endorsed by Western scholars holds that all instantiations of a category must share something in common – a defining or distinguishing feature. One alternative to this is offered by Wittgenstein (1958) through the concept of

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[322] The slogan "Muslim by Nature" may be placed in this category.

[323] According to Locke the familiar objects of common sense are collections of sensible ideas to which we attach a single name like "man" or "horse". When we identify the ideas that are constitutive of the relevant collection we have the nominal essence of a man or a horse. While Locke did not deny that real essences may underlie such collections, he insisted that it was only to nominal essence we might have epistemic access (The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy 1995).

[324] In the explanation of *nominal essence* I depart somewhat from Teresa de Lauretis' formulation, because I think the distinction between *real* and *nominal* essence remains somewhat unclear the way she puts it: "[…] The totality of the properties, constituent elements, etc. without which it would cease to be the same thing; the indispensable and necessary attributes of a thing as opposed to those which it may have or not…" (1988: 5). I think the use of the term "thing" is somewhat confusing here, since *nominal* is distinguished from *real* precisely in that it refers to a conceptual level (Locke talks about collections of ideas) rather than to things as objects in the world.

[325] This however, could be a possible difference between various actors in the religious field, and would need to be further investigated.

family-resemblance.[326] The instantiations of a category may share one or more features, but they need not do so to be conceived as members of the same category. It is sufficient that they are linked together by overlapping similarities of different sorts. One could thus imagine a definition of Islam, or "women" for that matter, establishing the category as one of overlapping similarities, rather than as identity/sameness.

Asad's (1986; 1993) suggestion of viewing Islam as a "discursive tradition" is another alternative as to how we may conceptualize Islam in a non-essentialist manner. His approach is "constructivist" in that it focuses on the discursive production and organization of "truth" and "essentials" in the Islamic tradition. Even if Islam is thus socially and historically constructed by actors that are differently positioned within overlapping discourses and networks of power, there are certain limitations as to how such constructions are made. Certain things *are* more central than others, in the sense that they constitute the historical identity of a particular phenomenon, Asad argues. This is not a question of establishing *real* essences or metaphysical foundations, but of allowing for certain constituent elements. In Asad's definition such historically established constituent elements would be the way in which those discourses we term Islamic are parts of a wider tradition, linking past and future through the present, that relates itself, whether directly or indirectly, to a set of foundational texts (the Quran and the *Hadith*), comments thereon, and the conduct of exemplary figures.

This understanding of Islam could be read as a strong or a weaker argument for continuity and coherence. If understood as a strong argument for the importance of certain constituent elements to the historical identity of a tradition, one could arguably object that too much weight is put on the constraints that the tradition places on Muslims, and that Muslim religiosities are in fact much more fluid and diversified than Asad seems to suggest.[327] If we interpret Asad as positing a weaker assertion of the same argument however, we could argue that we may speak of "Islam" as a historical "tradition" in so far as most Muslims link their own beliefs and practices conceptually to a past and a future through a present. Islam as a discursive tradition thus defined, is not based on a culturalist metaphysics of cultural coherence and continuity, but on the assumption that historical traditions are inevitably heterogeneous (although they may aspire to coherence), dynamic and contested. On this view,

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[326] There is no reason to look, as we have done traditionally -- and dogmatically -- for one, essential core in which the meaning of a word is located and which is, therefore, common to all uses of that word. We should, instead, travel with the word's uses through "a complicated network of similarities, overlapping and criss-crossing". Family resemblance also serves to exhibit the lack of boundaries and the distance from exactness that characterize different uses of the same concept.

[327] Some Muslims would for instance refute the authority of the Hadith and regard the Quran as the only source authorizing the Islamic tradition.

particular "situations" (in Al-Azmeh's terms) or "conditions of possibility" (in Asad's terms), enable the production and maintenance of specific discursive traditions, or their transformation.

Such a reading of Asad is suggested by Mandaville (2004: 56), who develops a reflection initially made by Asad in a discussion of foundationalism in historiography, in which Asad proposes that the unity of historical subjects may be understood as narrative rather than foundational. Substituting "India" (in Asad's initial formulation) with "Islam", Mandaville cites Asad:

> While narrative history does not have to be teleological, it does presuppose an identity ("Islam", say) that is the subject of that narrative. Even when that identity is analyzed into its heterogeneous parts (class, gender, regional divisions, etc.), what is done, surely, is to reveal its constitution, not to dissolve its unity. The unity is maintained by those who speak in its name, and more generally by all who adjust their existence to its (sometimes shifting) requirements (Asad 1993: 16 as appropriated by Mandaville 2004: 57).

Mandaville (2004) suggests that this understanding of narrative unity may also be employed in the conceptualization of Islam. From this perspective, Islam used in the singular does not have to be seen as contrary to the social construction of Islam.[328] This interpretation seems in line with Mahmood who insists that:

> An appeal to understanding the coherence of a discursive tradition is neither to justify that tradition, nor to argue for some irreducible essentialism or cultural relativism. It is, instead, to take a necessary step toward explaining the force that a discourse commands (Mahmood 2005: 17).

In the context of this thesis, Asad's understanding of Islam as a discursive tradition has been useful as a point of departure for describing the way in which young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS relate to Islam. As I have shown, they understand their own activities in terms of the recuperation of certain Islamic knowledges and practices that transcend local cultural interpretations of Islam, but that are nevertheless in continuity with an Islamic tradition. This does not of course mean that they are able to do so, or that it is possible. It implies, however, that they approach Islamic knowledge and imagine their Muslim identities in relation to a wide spectre of Islamic discourses. Trying to categorize or name these discourses, or the way in which young Muslims deal with them, as particular local Islams, would cause innumerable methodological and theoretical problems. Furthermore, I have also shown that the types of knowledge and ways of argumentation they deploy are dependant on various types of historical references. This does not mean that their knowledges and practices mirror those

[328] Mandaville also invokes other theoretical perspectives allowing us to see Islam as fluid, unbounded and yet part of a greater "whole", notably Islam as a master signifier, a discursive field, and as a "life world".

historical forms, as they are always modulated by, and refracted through, *a present* where such knowledges and practices are linked to other practices, institutions, and social conditions in the contemporary social and historical context (as we have seen from the discussion of e.g. *dawa*, the hijab, and *jihad-al-nafs*). To conclude the above discussion: pluralizing Islam seems to be neither a sufficient, nor a necessary condition to avoid essentialism. The strategy raises a number of questions about how different Islams can be delineated from each other. At least in ethnographic contexts such as the one I have been working in, it seems more fruitful to analyse religious beliefs and practices as relating to a (heterogeneous, dynamic) Islamic tradition of discourse rather than identifying them in terms of different "Islams".

Authenticity, tradition and modernity

The above discussions of the essentialism/anti-essentialism and of the concept of Islam as a discursive tradition has some bearings on the issues that I want to discuss in this section, relating to the notions of "authenticity" and "tradition". The question I want to address is whether my analysis would gain something from viewing young Muslims' claims to an authentic and Islamic tradition in light of the "invention of tradition" thesis, or whether other ways of theorizing "tradition", such as that proposed by Asad, better enable us to grasp the matters at hand. I have argued above that a defining feature of the way in which young activist Muslims in Norway (and elsewhere) engage the discursive tradition of Islam is the effort to recuperate a set of practices and ideas they see as grounded in "true Islam". To recover "true Islam", one should return to the Quran and the Sunna and purge religious ideas and practices of inherited "cultural practices" of Muslim communities. This finding concurs with the conclusions of several studies on Muslims in different Western countries (Cesari 2002; Jacobsen 1999; Jacobson 1997; Knott and Khokher 1993; Schmidt 2002), who all note an increasingly self-conscious identification with Islam, and a dissociation of ethnic and religious identities. The religious engagement of young Muslim activists in Europe, who claim an individual adhesion to "authentic Islam", and criticize the "traditional Islam" of their parents, are sometimes spoken of as a "(re)invention" of tradition (Cesari 2000; Valerie 2000). In the following, I reflect on some possible ways of understanding this "quest for authenticity", in relation to different ways of conceptualizing the relationship between tradition and modernity. The understanding that the "quest for authenticity" involves asserting the legitimacy of certain practices, and that the past is used as a reservoir of symbols, idioms and languages to authorize particular projects, is in many ways compatible with the analysis I

have suggested in this thesis. Nonetheless, I find there are several problems with framing our analysis of young Muslims' quest for authenticity as a "(re)invention of tradition". Below, I discuss some of these problems, and point to some ways in which my understanding of the issues at hand differs from the "invention of tradition" thesis. I am concerned not so much with establishing whether young Muslims' religious identities and practices are "modern" or "traditional" but about the ways in which contrasting what is "modern" to that which is "traditional", and the authentic to the inauthentic, is an important characteristic of modernity itself (Strathern 1996). In our times, Strathern argues, tradition and modernity exist side by side, at least when it comes to the use people make of this distinction in identity-work and arguments over values and worth. Such distinctions are also central to the construction of contemporary Muslim identities, by Muslims themselves and in research that deals with these issues, as well as in political struggles related to Islam and Muslim identities.

The invention of tradition

The "invention of tradition"[329] thesis has been extensively explored in recent years, notably by Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983). In their influential book they argued that many "traditions" which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented to serve particular ideological ends. Invented traditions are "responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations, or which establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 2). In line with the "invention of tradition" thesis, claims to authenticity have been analysed as a particular modern mode of asserting the legitimacy of certain practices, where the past is used as a reservoir of symbols, idioms and languages to authorize particular (usually understood as self-interested) political and ideological projects. According to Hobsbawm and Ranger, we should expect the invention of tradition to occur more frequently when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys older social patterns or produces new ones. This perspective has, as Lindholm notes, been taken on by many anthropologists in response to the misuse of romantic ethnography by among others racists and nationalists. As a result:

> Scavenging for the vestiges of a vanishing authenticity has now generally been replaced by the anthropologist's assumption of a more lofty position, floating above local claims for transcendence or truth, demonstrating again and again that these claims actually are

[329] Hobsbawm and Ranger define "invented tradition" as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983: 1).

> political and ideological representations supplied by self-interested parties pursuing domination. In this disenchanted picture of culture as a delusion, it is assumed that the struggle for power prevails over every other motivation. Any claim to authenticity is assumed to be, at best, a "misrecognition" of what is in reality an unwarranted assertion of hegemony. Culture is no longer the seat of a transcendent sacred order, but is contested, construed and contradictory—a never-ending battleground for superiority among competitors who use the notion of the holy as a ploy (Lindholm 2002a: 335).

As Clifford (2000) notes, Hobsbawm and Ranger's distinction between "custom" which was authentically lived, and "tradition" which, under modernizing pressures, was (inauthentically) invented, quickly came under pressure. Indeed, Kapferer pointed out that, "The word invention explicitly carries the notion that some traditions are created and others are not. Ultimately, I cannot conceive of a tradition or mode of cultural action that is not invented" (Kapferer 1988: 210). Handler and Linnekin (1984) made a similar point when they argued that the debate over which traditions are to be counted as genuine and spurious is based on a naturalist paradigm that presumes boundedness and essence. Kapferer (1988) points out two further important implications of the "invention of tradition" argument. Firstly, there is the assumption that if a tradition is invented or constructed it is less real and less potent than those that are not. This assumption seems to underlie frequent shifts in analysis away from the tradition as such towards something that underlies it and is separate from it. The possibility that "the powerful as well as the weak may be internal to the culture of ideology" is thus overlooked (Kapferer 1988: 211). This brings us to Kapferer's (1988: 211) second point, that no tradition is constructed or invented and discontinuous with history. Things may take on new form or achieve original meaning, he argues, but many of the things that human beings fashion contain aspects of the world from which they spring or to which they refer. The invention of tradition is therefore rarely arbitrary. Invented traditions are powerful precisely because they relate to practices and meanings that are integral to daily practices and to the constitution of person. An important critique has of course also been the consequences of the invention-of-tradition approach in the field of politics. The claim that "traditions" are fictions of the present has in many instances been used to dismiss legal and moral claims from subaltern people.

Arguments that draw on the invention-of-tradition approach have been picked up by many who work on "Islamism" and "fundamentalism". I am bringing these debates into the discussion in order to demonstrate the political stakes and uses involved in arguments about the "invention of tradition", stakes that researchers need to acknowledge in their writings. Al-Azmeh, for instance, asserts with reference to Hobsbawm and Ranger that "The 'return' to

Islam is in fact to a place newly created" (2003: 35). The authenticity they claim "is highly inauthentic", Al-Azmeh argues (1996: 32), and "in countries of the south we witness the wholesale invention of vestimentary, ethical and intellectual traditions amongst Islamist ideologues" (1996: 32). Al-Azmeh further argues that the very notion of authenticity upon which such inventions rest, are drawn from European reactionary thought and German romanticism that now form a "universal repertoire" through which political claims are made. On a more positive note, Hardt and Negri (2000: 149) assert that "the fundamentalist 'return to tradition' is really a new invention". They argue that Islamic fundamentalism is a reaction to the present social order, a political refusal of the powers that are emerging in the new imperial order" or "global form of sovereignty" that they call Empire, and thus – unlike Al-Azmeh, focuses on the "resistance" involved in the fundamentalist invention of tradition. If we see the arguments about contemporary Islamic revivalism as an "invention of tradition" in light of Kapferer's critique, we could argue that in Al-Azmeh's claims that the vestimentary, ethical and intellectual traditions amongst Islamist ideologues are "highly inauthentic", there appears to be an assumption that there are in fact some traditions that are "authentic" and "genuine" as opposed to the "inauthentic" and "spurious" practices of the Islamists. These latter are rather presented as "instruments" that, according to Al-Azmeh, Islamist ideologues use in a political struggle. In Al-Azmeh's account, the invention of tradition perspective thus appears to be more of a means of refuting and countering Islamist claims to authenticity than of understanding the importance and meaningfulness of those practices that some Muslims claim to be a "true Islam". Such an intervention raises important ethical and political questions (some of which will be discussed in the next section) about the role of anthropologists.[330]

A similar approach to that of Al-Azmeh was introduced into the Norwegian hijab-debates I discussed in chapter four by the Norwegian-Iraqi writer Walid al-Kubaisi who argued that "The true story of the veil and the scarf in Islam" (Aftenposten 03.02.2004) was that the hijab that Muslims in Europe manifested to defend was a "political uniform for the militant Islamist

[330] The claim that "traditions" are fictions of the present has in many instances been used to dismiss legal and moral claims from subaltern people. With regard to contests over what is to be counted as "true Islam" many European scholars and social commentators have been implicated by stating that this or that is present or not in the founding texts of Islam. I find such interventions both questionable and problematic, at least in so far as they are unconscious of the political consequences of entering such a debate. Berit Thorbjørnsrud relates how an attempt in Egypt at combating female circumscision by defining it as a non-Islamic practice, resulted in some religious scholars doing their utmost to justify this tradition theologically. Some of the problems that have been explored in relation to the "invention of tradition" in the Pacific are also raised in the Islamic context. Who speaks for the group? What kind of goals are sought through discourses of authenticity? What possible ethical stances may be taken by the anthropologist?

movement, invented in our times, and in contrast to traditional clothing for women in Muslim cultures". He argued that the modern hijab erases all ethnic and national differences and accentuates only the political identity related to Islamism, an identity that should not be allowed expression in public space since, in his view, "political Islam" produces "intolerance, hatred, terror, disintegration and violence". Al-Kubaisi uses the claim that Islamist claims to tradition are in fact "new inventions", to refute the claims of those who oppose a ban on the hijab in the French and Norwegian context. Al-Kubaisi's view of the hijab ignores the fact that although the hijab in its current designs and uses may be a contemporary phenomenon, the importance given to the hijab occurs against the background of a living tradition of women's modesty that cuts across the distinction between the "invented hijab" and the "traditional clothing for women" he invokes. Furthermore, Al-Kubaisi shifts the attention from the practices and subjectivities of *hijabi*-women towards an argument about the political ideologies he sees as underlying it. As the analysis in this thesis has shown, the use of the hijab can of course by no means be reduced to a symbol of "political Islam" in the way Al-Kubaisi does, nor can its underlying meaning be reduced to the wish to "spread Islamist political ideology in the world" (cf. Thorbjørnsrud 2004).

While the interventions discussed above are concerned primarily with a critique of "Islamism", the "invention of tradition" thesis has tended to appear in a quite different guise within studies of Muslim youth in Europe[331]. Here, focus on the "reinvention of tradition" seems to be less concerned with assessing the historical legitimacy of what young Muslims claim to be "authentic" Islamic traditions. Rather, the concern seems to be to place young Muslims within "modernity", to theorize a generational gap between the religious identities and practices of the young and of the parental generation, and to emphasize the plural and changing character of Muslim forms of organization and social life in the context of secularized Western societies (cf. Amir-Moazami and Salvatore 2003). Due to the difficulties of transmitting the Islamic tradition in the migrant context, and the inscription of young Muslims into European secular modernity, they must "invent," rather than inhabit in an unreflected manner, the Islamic tradition. "The reinvention of tradition" sometimes retains its instrumentalist associations, in that claims to authenticity appear as a "strategy" employed by young Muslims in order to individualize themselves from the "ethnic communities," or to oppose the values associated with them. As Amir-Moazami and Salvatore argue, perspectives

[331] The presentation here is necessarily sketchy and generalizing as I do not attempt a review of the literature, but to make a general point regarding how the concepts of tradition and modernity function in contemporary debates about Islam.

that focus on "individualization" and the "re-invention of tradition" mostly substitute or oppose notions of tradition to concepts of modernity, and emphasise "how modern" Muslims in Europe have indeed become. In this respect Amir-Moazami and Salvatore, in drawing upon Asad and MacIntyre suggest an approach that is closer to the one I have wanted to adopt in this thesis, namely to focus rather on "the inherent dynamic characters of living traditions, which cannot just be transplanted from one place to another without undergoing changes and creating and modifying fields of social power" (Amir-Moazami and Salvatore 2003: 54).

The discourse of authenticity and the reform of tradition in modernity

Now, let me backtrack some of the arguments I have made in the thesis in light of the above debates. I have argued that young Muslims focus on "true Islam" and their efforts to distinguish ethnic from religious identities and cultural from religious traditions create a "space" from where they may challenge imposed identities and norms. The need to recuperate true Islam was often put forward as a criticism of "cultural practices" of the parental generation that the young associated with "oppression" and "backwardness". In this respect, the reference to an Islamic authenticity may be seen as a way of contesting and negotiating norms and practices in the parental generations and the "ethnic communities" they identify with. As we have seen, such contestation is particularly important in the field of gender relations, where both women and men use Islam as a resource for contesting the restrictive gender models they see as dominant in their communities. In this respect it can be argued that the reference to "true Islam" can create new spaces of, and opportunities for, individual contestation and distancing from religio-ethnic communities.

The "quest for authenticity" may further be understood in terms of the space it offers for challenging dominant representations of Islam and Muslims in public discourse. It appears as a creative way of handling the ambivalences that result from the hegemonic discursive structuration of difference as a relationship between "Us" (the Norwegians, Westerners) and "Them" (the foreigners, immigrants, Muslims). As I have argued in this thesis, the "quest for authenticity" is importantly energized by, and functions as a resource within, the politics of identity of young Muslims in groups like the NMU and the MSS. Clearly differentiating "religion" from "culture" and "ethnicity" is an aspect of young Muslims' identity politics vis-à-vis the majority society, both in terms of deconstructing imposed categorical identities and constructing new ones for which they seek recognition, such as Norwegian Muslims. It is a

point from which the ascription of "cultural otherness" is contested, and from where a new Norwegian-Muslim identity is forged and promoted.

However, the reference to "true Islam" also implies that the debates and contestations that young Muslims engage in is a mode of engagement with a discursive field of statements and practices, which, as Asad suggests, "link practitioners across the temporal modalities of past, present and the future". Conceptualizing Islam as a discursive tradition in Asad's sense avoids some of the problematic assumptions in the "invention of tradition" approach that have been discussed. It provides an analytical focus for raising other questions than whether the practices that young Muslims deem to be "authentic" are spurious or genuine. It further avoids the assumption of voluntary subjects who relate to Islam uniquely as a matter of choice and empowerment. I have argued that this "true Islam" should not be seen as a core of fixed Islamic doctrines to which young Muslims passively adjust. Rather, the way in which young Muslims draw on the Islamic discursive tradition is modulated by, and refracted through, contemporary social and historical conditions. As I have argued in earlier chapters of this thesis, the identity politics of young Muslims engaged in organizations like the NMU and the MSS is fundamentally shaped by what we could term "modern" ideals of equal dignity and authenticity. It is also shaped by "modern" understandings of identity and difference that are central to a broad range of contemporary political mobilizations of identity in the public sphere. As such, it exemplifies some of the logics of exclusion, inclusion and essentialization that are characteristic of such dynamics. However, I have also argued that their identity politics should not be reduced to a simple reflection of such dynamics. On the contrary, the religious identities and practices that are mobilized in young Muslims' identity politics are embedded in, given meaning through, and given direction by, the ways in which they are inscribed in an Islamic discursive tradition of contestation and debate and in the formation of ethical Muslim subjects.

While efforts to recover Islam in its "authentic" form may partly be understood in terms of a politics of recognition and a challenge to authorities and gender and generational hierarchies, it should also be analyzed with reference to a motivational ground that is explicitly religious. For instance, the right and duty to education is a means not only to empower women and youth against established authorities, but a necessary means to becoming a "good Muslim", to strengthen one's faith, and to earn the rewards of paradise. These elements are all related to historically sedimented practices and forms of reasoning that are learned through pedagogical process in the home, in the mosque, in the organizations, and through books and other media (cf. Mahmood 2005:116). Furthermore, the grounds on which

authorities are opposed are not outside of social and cultural processes, but reflect both continuities and important changes in the conditions for the production of Islamic discourses, such as individualization, secularization, and globalization, and in the constitution of persons that go along with such changes.

Young Muslim's reference to Islamic authenticity establishes a relationship to the past and the future through a present. This way of relating is continuous with an Islamic discursive tradition in the sense that there are certain limits to what is sayable, doable and recognizable. At the same time it is clearly not a continuance of an unchanging set of religious practices and meanings. In this view the quest for authenticity is best explained not as an "invention of tradition", but as particular religious interpretations and practices that are linked to and refracted through other practices, institutions and social conditions in the present (Asad 1986).[332] It is a particular appropriation of the discursive tradition in which "authenticity" must be regarded as an assigned meaning rather than an objective property of the phenomena in itself. This assignation of meaning does not imply that "anything goes". The contemporary construction of Islamic authenticity relates to a history of interpretation, and is limited by rules and regularities within Islam as a discursive tradition. Furthermore, the religious interpretations and practices are linked to other practices, institutions and social conditions in the present, e.g. to the social position of young Muslims of immigrant background in Norway.

The contemporary Islamic revival in its many forms has been variously theorized as traditionalism, re-traditionalization, modernization, an "alternative modernity" (Abu-Lughod 1998; El Guindi 1981; El Guindi 1999), a "post-modern refusal of modernity" (Hardt and Negri 2000) and as a manifestation of, and reaction to, post-modernity (Ahmed 1992a; Ahmed and Donnan 1994; Turner 1994a). Common to these perspectives is the effort to understand the relationship of different modes of "Islam" to "modernity". It has not been my concern in this thesis to argue that the religiosities of the young Muslims in my study are traditional, modern or post-modern. Rather, I have sought to develop an approach that does not oppose "tradition" and "modernity". Explaining the "reversion to Islam" among young Muslims in Norway as a post-modern rejection of modernity or as a modern invention of tradition is no more apt than defining it as a pre-modern project. As contemporary formulations of religious identities and practices, the religious activism of young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS is shaped by certain conditions and structures of modern societies. The

[332] The same point may be made with regard to constructivism as such. Arguing that something is a social and cultural construction is just a starting point. What social sciences should do is to show how these constructions actually emerge in specific contexts where they are linked to sets of social practices and institutions.

religiosities of young Muslims are "modern" in being conditioned by the modern nation state, i.e. its secularism and the way in which it develops particular identity categories of insiders/outsiders with respect to citizenship and nationhood. They presuppose the new kinds of social spaces that have been created by modern institutions (administrative, economic, ideological, and educational), international migration and globalization. They are also "modern" in so far as they use all sorts of modern techniques (e.g. new communication technologies, modern scientific forms of knowledge), and in so far as young Muslims are subjected to particular models of the Self and technologies of individualization. At the same time they draw on traditions of interpretation, authority and reform within the Islamic discursive tradition, that are part of an old history – a history of disagreement, dispute and physical conflict. Young Muslims are thus both critical of traditional interpretations of Islam, and deeply reliant on an imagined Islamic past, as well as on the methodologies and ways of reasoning of the Islamic tradition as refracted through the structures and institutions of (post)modernity. The reference to "true Islam" and the politics of authenticity, although inspired by complex sources of influence, find its antecedents in the reform movements of Muslim majority societies in the colonial and post-colonial era. In both contexts, the domination and intervention of other traditions has stimulated objectification and reform of the Islamic tradition. There is thus a structural similarity between these situations, as well as a direct continuity by way of the influence of Muslim reform movements on the Muslim populations in Europe. The confrontation and interaction with the non-Muslim majority has thus accelerated a process of Islamic reform, much in the same way as it did in Muslim majority countries in the colonial encounter. Young Muslims' religious identities and practices might thus be seen to indicate a continuity as much as a disruption of Muslim tradition, or more precisely, a continuity of its reform (cf. Amir-Moazami and Salvatore 2003).

The making of individualized religious subjects

The individualization of religion in modern societies

The argument that young Muslims in Europe are involved in the "reinvention of tradition" is often linked to arguments about the "individualization" of contemporary European Islam. "Individualization" has of course been one of the constitutive terms in the attempt of social theorists to theorize modernization, and in the literature on Muslims in Europe the focus of

young Muslims' themselves on individual choice is most often discussed in terms of the construction of social identity and relationships between individual/society in modernity. Cesari, for instance, argues that in the French context there is a broad trend of individualization. This trend she argues, affects not only what she refers to as the privatization of religion but also what she refers to as fundamentalism which "[…] is, more often than not, a freely chosen identity, not something imposed by the community, tradition, or the family" (Cesari 2004: 54). This "triomphe de la logique individuelle" (Cesari 2000) is explained as a consequence of the inscription of Islam into a secular context, as well as of the "decomposition of the ethnic communities of origin". The increase in individual autonomy is also seen as contributing to further weakening Muslim ethnic and family ties within the West (Cesari 2002).

Roy similarly argues that the inscription of Islam in the occidental context necessarily entails an individualization of practices and choices, since it is no longer a simple given; it no longer defines the social relations, nationality and politics of the community.[333] Al-Azmeh (1996) makes a similar point, arguing that, "Initially disembodied from social practice, religious vision and ritual observance under conditions of migration to Europe takes on a certain autonomy from social processes and prescribes an autonomist notion of the religious ego and a body of allied prescriptions" (Al-Azmeh 1996)[334]. According to Roy (2000), four factors play a key-role in the process of individualization: 1) the crisis of the ethnic communities 2) the absence of religious authorities 3) the absence of a system of coercion (social or juridical) and 4) the importance taken on by the concepts of choice and faith. As I will argue, these theories of individualization point to some important aspects of identity-formation in modernity, but they do not sufficiently theorize the power mechanisms in and through which processes of individualization occur, and through which modern subjects are forged. I will focus only briefly on Roy's three first points, and more extensively on the fourth.

Roy argues that in the immigration context, ethnic communities tend to lose their language and to be de- and recomposed in the form of neo-ethnicities. Migration casts ethnic communities into an "identity crisis". This crisis is observable among those who identify

[333] As Roy (2000) points out, however, an individual relationship to Islam is not a new phenomenon in itself, as all religiosity supposes a form of interiorization.

[334] One important critique that has been voiced against those theories of individualization that relate the emergence of a "Muslim individual" to the inscription of Islam in a European secular context is that it overlooks that parallel forms of change may well be happening in the "back home" countries as well, energized by factors that may in some cases be the same as those energizing change in the immigrant situation (see e.g. Christiansen 1999).

primarily as Muslims and who dissociate themselves from the "cultures of origin", instead promoting an authentic and purified Islam. This dissociation is further manifest in that they promote religious instead of ethnic endogamy, and an orientation in terms of *halal* and *haram* towards the vestimentary and alimental choices in the society they live in, rather than a continuation of practices from "back home". I have shown that young Muslims in the NMU and the MSS identify in a way similar to that described by Roy, and that there are similar changes in value orientations. They construct trans-ethnic Muslim groups and identities, promote religious rather than ethnic endogamy, separate sharply between authentic Islam and cultural traditions, and use Norwegian as their common language in religious and social activities. Similarly, they orient their religious practices in terms of what is perceived as *halal* and *haram*, rather than in terms of their parents' religious practice. The young Muslims explicitly reflect around a perceived crisis of the ethnic communities, indicating that they do not see sticking to the ethnic identities of the parental generation as viable in the future. At the same time however, the "ethnic communities" to which young Muslims belong do not seem to be "actually" decomposing in terms of ceasing to provide a nexus of social relations in which the individual is embedded, and of providing norms and habits of practice. Despite the shift towards religious endogamy at the discursive level, for instance, a grand majority continue to marry someone with their own "back home" country-background (cf. chapter three). And despite the growth of trans-ethnic organizations based on individual adhesion, young Muslims in Oslo tend to continue to be involved in religious activities based on national, ethnic or linguistic commonalities.

In the Norwegian case, thus, those who identify primarily as Muslims and who dissociate themselves from the cultural traditions of their parents may be seen as primarily asserting independence towards the continuing importance of the "ethnic community", an assertion that may in the long term entail a "decomposition," but that is not necessarily a consequence of such decomposition. The observation that such communities are re-composed and that new ethnicities emerge in the context of migration is nevertheless valid for Norway as well as for France. As I have argued in this thesis, the construction of Muslim Otherness in the immigrant context importantly influences the way in which young Muslims come to perceive of themselves as primarily sharing a Muslim identity. The construction of a Muslim "we" that transcends ethnic boundaries is thus partly energized by processes of "Othering" opposing broad categories of "us" to "them". The focus on individualization as decomposition of the ethnic communities of origin should thus pay attention to the forms of power involved in such

decomposition, and the ways in which experiences of misrecognition affect the way in which Islam is lived, reclaimed and represented by young Muslims.

Roy's second aspect in the discussion of individualization relates to the absence of religious authorities. The absence of legitimate and permanent institutions of religious authorities in Western countries permits a discourse that is more autonomous, more autodidact and more dispersed. According to Roy (2000: 76), a consequence of this absence of authorities is that anyone can speak, enounce the truth, and say what Islam is. As I have argued in the above chapter on knowledge, sources of religious authority are both challenged and reproduced in the engagement of young Muslims in Oslo with the Islamic discursive tradition. Young Muslims in the MSS and the NMU increasingly put together knowledge transmitted through mass media rather than through local institutions. However, it is important to remember that mediated relations are still social. Although the increasing heterogeneity in the knowledge that is available to young Muslims allows one to "pick and choose", the production, distribution, consumption and negotiation of knowledge remains embedded within social relationships and attempts are continuously made to re-assert authority. Attention should also be paid to the relations of power and authority which structure the possibilities of Islamic discourse in the public sphere of European nation-states. Furthermore, I have argued that it is important that whereas young Muslims "speak Islam" and sometimes attempt to interpret the religious texts for themselves, the ability to make such re-interpretations effective in daily life depends on complex social structurings of relationships e.g. between generations, genders and citizens and the state.

Roy's third important point relates to the absence of juridical, social, communitarian and customary coercion. He suggests that in the context of immigration, Islamic norms no longer have an exterior support, whether of a directly restricting character (such as a religious police), in terms of social pressure, or in terms of a social environment in which the rhythms and norms of Islam are taken for granted. As I have shown, the continuous challenges that young Muslims in Oslo are confronted with, means that they are in many ways forced to objectify Islam and to develop a reflexive approach to religion. This does not mean, however, that all areas are brought to the fore and questioned. Rather, there seem to be norms and practices that are transmitted from the parental generation that to a significant extent are still taken for granted (for instance with respect to marriage), (see Bredal 2004). Roy's argument with respect to the absence of social pressure also seems somewhat overstated when applied to the Norwegian context, and arguably for the French as well (see e.g. Jacobsen 1999; Khosrokhavar 1997; Lacoste-Dujardin 1992). For instance, social control and sometimes

coercion organize gender relations through e.g. rumour, marriage, and the separation of gendered space. Norms related to gender, whether understood as "cultural" or Islamic, are reproduced through such means, even if they are also challenged. When employed at least in the Norwegian situation, the suggestion that Islamic norms do no longer have an "exterior support," under-communicates the importance of primary socialization, over-estimates the rupture between the first and the second generation, and under-estimates the importance of social pressure e.g. with respect to gender relations.

Roy's fourth point relates to the importance taken on by the concepts of choice and faith. As we have seen, the concept of choice is central to the way in which the young Muslims I worked with conceptualize their own religious careers. Normative stress is put on transforming one's inherited Muslim identity so that it becomes a personal "choice", effectuated by a self-determining and reflecting subject. As an individual one is responsible for choosing one's faith, and for choosing the right way of life according to that choice. The young Muslims repeatedly stated that they follow Islam as the result of a personal choice, most ideally made on rational grounds, because Islam proved, after close scrutiny, to be the one true religion. Parents, and others, who are understood to be Muslim by tradition, just following the rules because they are told to do so, represent a traditional, and less authentic, way of being Muslim. The ideal way of being Muslim is thus one that realizes individual freedom; Islam should be followed, not out of tradition, but resulting from an individual and free choice based on *iman*. That individuality and free choice was seen as guaranteed by Islam – was frequently expressed by the young Muslims who invoked the Quranic saying "there is no coercion in the religion".

Roy asserts that following the Islamic norm is increasingly perceived as a personal decision that has to be upheld by one's will and that has to be justified and rationalized. This is as we have seen highly relevant to young Muslims in Oslo, but there is nevertheless a constant tension between choice and obedience, self-determination and submission. As we saw in the discussion of the group of young women about the concept of *jihad-al-nafs*, they stressed that individual desires and choices are not always in accordance with Islam, and that the Self thus had to be worked upon to guarantee virtuous desire. This work was performed by trying to achieve excellence in ritual practice, and by working to install the right motivations and desires in the process. In the example of chapter four, where Abid and his sister negotiate different clothing practices, Abid invoked a set of rules for public conduct and modesty that Latifa needed to observe as a consequence of her choice to wear a hijab (and thus be a "practising Muslim"). We have also seen how the individualization of religious authority is

limited by a process of normativization of "true Islam", and that the extent to which individuals should be free to form their own opinions about the religious texts is debated. Although they stressed the importance of reflecting on and understanding the rationality of Islamic practices rather than just blindly following rules, young Muslims repeatedly invoked "limits" to what humans were capable of understanding and to their own lack of knowledge. In such cases; following the rules and regulations set forward by those who they saw as more knowledgeable than themselves (whether they were peers, parents, imams, or transnational scholars) was generally endorsed. Furthermore, while individuals to a certain extent put together Islamic knowledge and practices from a variety of sources, they simultaneously conceived of Islam as having a core of unchanging rules and regulations that were non-negotiable. Self-determination is possible only on the basis of having the right knowledge, a knowledge that will ultimately lead the individual to "choose" to submit to Islam. Islam provides some absolute principles that give life meaning and which individuals are not free to question if they are to remain "within Islam". In this perspective freedom is understood as freedom from oppression and to self-realization through submission to Islam, rather than freedom to "do as you like", a position mainly identified with the West. Submitting to Islam, although conceptualized as an individual choice, thus simultaneously involves accepting external authority – the authority of "true Islam". In this respect, the importance taken on by the concepts of "choice" and "faith" indicates an ideal of self-government rather than self-sufficiency (cf. Asad 2003; Mahmood 2005).

With respect to the four dimensions discussed above, we might conclude that migration and globalization in some important respects "disembed" young Muslims from social structures and relationships related to ethnic communities, religious authorities and juridical, social, communitarian and customary coercion. Nonetheless, the affirmation of individual self-determination should not be read as an indication that religious beliefs and practices are no longer socially embedded. Rather, it should be understood as embedded in social formations that are currently reshaped to a considerable extent by modern institutions, international migration and globalization. As I have shown in my discussion of multiple "action horizons", the limits of such social formations cannot easily be reduced to "an ethnic group" or a particular locality, as people are embedded in various socio-cultural spaces and communities through which their social relationships, identities and practices are shaped. In order for religious identities and practices to be meaningful, they must at a given point be shared with others and given social confirmation. Whereas the family and ethnic group continue importantly to provide such confirmation for some and in some respects, we have

seen that the social confirmation of what it means to be a Muslim is sought by some youth in a diversified network of sociability centred around organizations such as the NMU and the MSS, but also in larger "imagined communities" like the Islamic *umma*. The organizations emerge as important arenas of sociability where collective meaning is (re)produced and individual meaning receives social authentication. These arenas are not autonomous, but importantly embedded in a diversity of structuring processes. What is furthermore important is that the Islamic norms that young Muslims "choose" to follow cannot be abstracted from social relations. For instance, the *darses* in the NMU and the MSS frequently concern the qualities of social relationships that are supposed to follow from proper Islamic conduct. This includes obedience of children to their parents as long as it does not hinder submission to Allah, the duty to contribute positively to society by promoting what is right and discouraging what is wrong, and the duty of learning about and teaching others about the correct form of Islamic practices. These duties are invoked as a continuity or correction to existing social relations e.g. between individuals, parents and children, husbands and wives, majority and minority.

The values of autonomy and the production of self-governing individuals

It is my opinion that the aspects of structural individualization that Roy refers to above do not sufficiently allow us to understand the "tension" or "paradox" one observes in seeing that young Muslims emphasize their "self-government" and "reflexive choices", while nevertheless being largely driven by the social context in which they are embedded and in reproducing central moral norms etc. shared with the parental generation (e.g. women's modesty), while also changing these latter. This tension is of course not unique to young Muslims,[335] but it tends to become particularly visible when people make "choices" that do not conform to dominant normative visions of how one would act if one was "free to choose". In order to understand this tension I suggest we distinguish between "choice" as the ethical valorization of certain features of the Self (i.e. as a dimension of subjectivity) and "choice" as an understanding of how people act as social persons (i.e. as a dimension of agency). Whereas the first can be shed light on through an analysis of discourses that shape particular kinds of selves, the second must necessarily be grounded in a socio-anthropological theory of action.

[335] See (Borchgrevink 1987) for a subtle account of how ideas of a "free choice" operates in the sphere of gendered division of labour and marriage in the Norwegian context, and how it allows "traditional" gender relations to be reproduced.

In other words, we need to inquire into prevailing notions of individuality and subjectivity in contemporary Norwegian society, and, on the other hand, to how people are constituted and move within this landscape as socially embedded actors.

Research focusing on "individualization" as a characterizing feature of the development of Islam in Europe (and elsewhere) often seems to assume that such individualization allows people to realize an inherent "freedom" or "personal authenticity", and that this freedom is expressed in the fact that they now "choose" their religious identities and practices. An alternative, and more apt understanding of the focus on choice is in my opinion, in line with a Foucauldian approach to subjectivity, that the ethical valorization of certain features of the person – autonomy, freedom, choice, authenticity, enterprise, and lifestyle – is better understood in terms of new rationalities of government and new technologies of the conduct of conduct (Rose 1996: 320). "The modern self" is constituted within new forms of power and discipline based on the construction of self-regulating subjects (Foucault 1977). The idea of self-creating and freely choosing individuals is thus involved in "the making of subjects" rather than simply an expression of processes of individualization understood as "de-traditionalization". This means that the ethical valorization of choice is a central aspect of the discursive processes through which human beings come to understand and act upon themselves as "selves" of a certain type (Rose 1996).

In order to understand how young Muslims come to understand and act upon themselves as a certain kind of self, it is important to identify some aspects of the discourses of the "self" that prevail in modernity, on a general level, and more particularly how such discourses are articulated in the Norwegian context. An account of the technologies that are involved in the making of individualized self-regulating subjects would take us far beyond the frames of this thesis, and would require a different form of investigation than the one I have been pursuing. However, I will briefly develop on the ways in which "free choice" is constructed in the Norwegian context, and how this construction locks the options of young Muslims in the dichotomies between modern/traditional, secular/religious, choice/force, where only those who rebel against "the ways of tradition" are seen as autonomous, choosing and self-creating actors. This locking makes it difficult to perceive other means of self-realization as the one described in the above chapter, where submission to certain forms of tradition-based authority is a condition for the self to achieve its potentiality, and where desires and the will are seen not as emanating from an autonomous individual self, but as produced in practice. It is my contention that young Muslims' ways of focusing on choice and faith in their religious practice reflects that they are increasingly coming to perceive themselves in terms of

dominant notions of the Self in the modern Western context, and that their narratives about a "return to Islam" attempts to mediate the dilemma thus created between different ways of "relating to the Self".

I do not by any means want to suggest that there is only *one* model of the self in the modern Western context, or in Norway for that matter. As Moore (1994) notes with respect to Western Europe, "many alternative discourses of the person/self exist, some of them more formalized than others, some of them developed in explicit contra-distinction to the dominant model". There is however, a model that Moore (1994: 35) identifies as dominant;

> […] the dominant model of the person/self in Western Europe could be said to be one which characterizes the individual as rational, autonomous and unitary. This individual is the author of their own experience and of their knowledge of the world, and their existence is enshrined in post-Enlightenment philosophy, in political theory and in legislation.

"Autonomy", from Greek *autos,* (self) and *nomos* (law), refers to, among other things, independence, self-determination and self-government. It is an idea according to which (Wo)Man, as a rational being, subjects the pressures and norms with which (s)he is confronted to conscious and critical evaluation, and forms intentions and reaches practical decisions as the result of independent and rational reflection (Lukes 1973).[336] As Rose (1996: 16) argues, this model of the self is bound to regimes of subjectification where subjects are not merely "free to choose", but *obliged to be free*, to understand and enact their lives in terms of choice, but under conditions that systematically limit the capacities of so many to shape their own destiny.

As Borchgrevink has argued, this model, and its stress on "free choice", has also come to function as a basic moral category in the European tradition of thought:

> Central in the European tradition is a persistent attention to the difference between necessity and freedom, and of *choice* as the fundamental moral category. The same tradition offers morally esteemed justifications for breaking with culturally prescribed necessity (Borchgrevink 1997: 31) [my translation].

Whereas this "modern model of the Self" grew out of European Enlightenment, it is arguably no longer, if it ever was, restricted to European modernity. Rather, it is incorporated, negotiated and challenged in different locations throughout the world as a result of the globalization of modernity (Dirlik 1999; Dirlik 2003).

Gullestad has, in a number of articles (1996; 2003), pointed to "autonomy" as a key concept both for understanding everyday life as well as conceptions of Norway as a nation.

[336] Lukes sees "autonomy" as one of the basic or germinal ideas of "individualism" and traces its philosophical genealogy to philosophers like Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, Spinoza and Kant.

With individualization, she argues, the discourse of individual rights and liberties has become hegemonic "foregrounding specific value concepts such as freedom, rights, choice, independence, individuality, uniqueness and achievement" (Gullestad 2003: 540). The idea that each person has to choose her own values among those available has become more accentuated since the 1960s, and is especially pronounced in the new middle classes. Claiming individual autonomy to "be, do, and buy what you like" is also values as part of the process of "growing up" and "becoming adult" in Norway.[337] As Sørhaug (1996) argues, relations between parents and youth in Norwegian society are partly confirmed through over-communicating and legitimizing "breaks" while under-communicating continuities. In everyday practices there is a continual reproduction of meaning and experiences that remain little acknowledged. Such under-communication of dependency on others is related to the valuation of "individual autonomy". Longva (2003: 159) has similarly suggested that autonomy is "perhaps the most critical component in the Norwegian definitions of the good, moral person". Whereas these anthropological studies seem to point unambivalently in the direction of "individual autonomy" as a fundamental value in Norwegian society, Holst (2002) has argued that in the political field the values of "autonomy" and "freedom" have been primarily associated with Conservative politics in Norway, and that the lacking attention given to such values on the political Left has led immigrant women to look towards the Conservatives in their battles for gender freedom.

Whereas Holst's objection is certainly valid to some extent, the value of individual autonomy as a basic moral category has been widely expressed in white papers and policy documents on issues on immigration and integration. In the Report to the Storting (17), the Norwegian Parliament, on "Immigration and the Multicultural Norway" for instance the primacy of the individual in relation to the group is asserted:

> All, independently of their background, have the right to be assessed as individuals, not only as part of a group, culture or religious denomination. […] All children and youth, independently of their origin, must be able to create their own identity and future (St.m. 17: 8) [my translation].

The citation expresses a model of self in which the individual is responsible for creating his/her own identity and future. The expression "not only as part of a group, culture or religious denomination" points to a critique of group-identities which opposes groups to individual choice, as these are seen as reducing the possibilities of individuals to create their own identity and future. What this formulation occludes is of course how the Norwegian State

[337] But growing up can also be about taking on more responsibility within the familiy or with regard to society.

and its institutions govern the identities and futures of its citizens in particular manners. For instance, in chapter four I argued that the migrants "diasporic" loyalties, religious practices, and links to the homeland are seen and treated as a problem and a manifestation of disloyalty to their new country of residence, and that they are regulated through immigration and integration policies. I have also argued that the particular form which Norwegian integration policies take, serve to establish and maintain a dichotomization between Us and Them, and that the inscription of a hegemonic set of "fundamental values" serves to produce knowledge about, control, and domesticate the Muslim minority (e.g. in government initiatives to form imams).

In welfare programmes and white paper policies there has also been an emphasis on empowering women and children as individual decision makers, with the assumption that this empowerment would bring immigrant families and ethnic communities more into line with the ethos of gender equality (*likestilling*) in Norwegian society. A goal has been to teach women and children "the right to individual freedom" that their patriarchal "culture of origin" is presumed to prevent them from having (cf. Gressgård and Jacobsen 2003). The government has run several awareness campaigns directed at immigrant women and daughters, teaching them how they may involve the State and its diverse agents (such as school, child welfare, and courts) to support their individual rights and be protected from their fathers/husbands and/or ethnic or religious communities. Those of the women who wore a hijab, often experienced that State agencies such as teachers and welfare-workers took it upon themselves to teach them (or in some cases enforce on them) individual freedom, for instance in insisting that they should not wear the hijab if they did not wish to themselves, or in demanding that they remove the hijab (in order to "protect their freedom"). Borchgrevink (2002a) points to something important when she argues that such reactions from teachers and welfare-workers to practising Muslims, and *hijabi*-women in particular, reflect not just a reaction to the hijab perceived as a sign of oppression, but also a secularist apprehension of Muslim religiousness as importunate and intruding by the way in which it brings "religion" into the public sphere. State agents thus seem to play a non-negligible role in subjecting young Muslims to a particular model of (secularist) selfhood based on the primacy of individual autonomy.

The way in which the value of autonomy and free choice serves as a basis for evaluating the good, moral person is evident not least in the majority discourse on the Muslim minority

girls and women.[338] As in other Western countries, the majority discourse on Muslim girls in Norway tend to construct them as "victims" of a patriarchal religious and cultural tradition, through a focus on themes such as forced marriage, female circumcision, and female seclusion. As Thorbjørnsrud (2003) puts it, Norwegians are "weeping for the Muslim Cinderellas". What Muslim girls are seen to lack is precisely the possibility of autonomy, choice and self-creation. The Muslim identity and practices of Muslim girls are seen as resulting from outer pressure, conformity, and the use of force – the very antithesis to the positively valued modern autonomous individual. In this discourse, however, there is also another subject position that is offered to Muslim girls, namely that of the "heroic rebel". Names such as Kadra Noor and Shabana Rehman have come to be associated with the rebellion of Muslim girls against the power of tradition and parents. According to Gullestad, this discourse has parallels in the mission-literature, where the "heathens" who chose Christianity, despite being excluded by their families and local communities, were heroized (Gullestad 2001a: 35).

It is evident from the treatment, or lacking treatment, of Muslims, and particularly of Muslim women, who say that they choose to lead a religious life that only some choices are considered as properly free within the majority discourse on autonomy (cf. Gressgård and Jacobsen 2003). The general assumption seems to be that if someone should choose against what is commonly conceived to be "freedom", then they could not have been sufficiently autonomous to begin with. In other words, they are portrayed as suffering from false consciousness, as Shabana Rehman seemed to have implied when she referred to Muslim women who wear hijabs as cattle (in other words, non-autonomous creatures who cannot think or choose for themselves). As Gullestad also argues:

> […] Many Norwegians are provoked, and refuse to accept that to produce oneself by adapting oneself to a religious context, is a free choice. The modern freedom to choose thus applies only within certain confines, and these only come clearly into view when they are transgressed (2002: 35) [my translation].

The equation of "autonomy" with some particular choices seems to rest on an essentialist vision of a "natural" female subjectivity, assuming that if women were properly free they would choose e.g. to live in monogamous rather than polygamous marriages, in "love"

[338] This is particularly evident in the hijab debate. In a televised debate on the issue of whether the hijab should be banned in Norwegian primary schools, all the debaters seemed to share the view that "free choice" was the basic moral category for evaluating whether wearing a hijab was acceptable or unacceptable.

marriages rather than arranged marriages, to wear tights rather than the hijab.[339] In promoting the right of individuals to "autonomy," and their freedom to make individual choices, the State in practice, thus helps to define and regulate normality.

But what happens when the hijab is in fact perceived as something that can be freely chosen by individuals? There seems to be a double bind in how the hijab is inscribed into discourses about "free choice". Borchgrevink (2002a) discusses the paradoxes brought out in a case where a *hijabi*-woman was denied unemployment benefits after having refused several job-offers with the condition that she removed her hijab. The social worker argued that in so far as the woman herself had chosen to wear a hijab, her unemployment was in a sense self-inflicted, which meant that she was not entitled to benefits. Borchgrevink argues that from a "Western" perspective, refusing the woman unemployment benefits could be seen as a way of treating her as a moral person with the dignity of any other choosing adult, in so far as she was made responsible for her own choices (thus not treated as a passive, oppressed, non-autonomous Muslim woman). On the other hand, she argues, the welfare-worker could have opted for the opposite strategy in assuming that the woman did not in fact have a possibility to choose and was not in control over her own life. From the point of view of such an interpretation, the woman could have accorded her unemployment benefits. What is interesting in this case is that the secularist logic seems to imply that either you are oppressed by some external force and not free to choose, or you are properly free and can thus choose to take the hijab off. There is thus no room for the possibility that the hijab may be a *religious duty* of obedience at the same time as it is a choice, or that choice might be differently inscribed than in terms of "autonomy".

A strong ideal in contemporary Norwegian society, expressed in the above case, is that people should understand and enact their lives in terms of choice, and be able to reason through their choices and reflect upon them. However, as already argued, the necessity to actually reason through choices seems to be more acute for those who break with the expectations of what a reasonable choice would normally be (e.g. love marriage instead of arranged marriage). As we have seen, being capable of offering reasons (knowing "why") for

[339] "It could be argued that imposing the end of the veil is not the same, in principle, as enforcing the wearing of the veil. The former is 'liberating' and, therefore, is not an exercise in control but its abandonment; the latter, conversely, is restrictive and, as such, can be considered an exercise in control. In other words, control is only exercised when it is a restriction. But why should enforced removal of the veil be considered liberating and the enforcement be considered restrictive? It is only by assuming there is a "natural" female subjectivity (what Elizabeth Spelman calls an 'essential woman') that it is possible uncritically to equate veiling with a restriction (in other words, the 'essential woman' is unveiled and therefore veiling is a violation of that 'natural' subjectivity)" (Sayyid 1997: 9).

religious practice is also a standard that young Muslims set for themselves and each other by establishing a normative distinction between inherited and chosen Islam. It is also set for them by the surroundings (be it peers, teachers or the like), in requirements to justify their way of life and to make their own choices. There is thus a strong pressure to relate to oneself as the site of individual choice and of agency to form one's identity and forge one's lifestyle. The imperative to question and revise the principles we live by makes "rationality" a central concept in this respect. As we have seen, this concern with "rationality" is expressed in the Islamic discourse of the young Muslims, who present their submission to Islamic practise largely in terms of the "rationality" and scientific status of Islam. Modern conception of the self brings a new kind of subjectivity, one that is appropriate to ethical self-determination and aesthetic self-invention (linked to a personally chosen life style), into the field of religious identity and practice. When insisting on their identification with Islam as an individual choice, young Muslims speak from a subject position within this modern discourse on identity and self-determination. However, as I argued in chapter six, the way in which young Muslims conceive of their own self-determination nevertheless importantly differs from a liberal-secular understanding of autonomy, in that this model of the Self interacts with varied understandings of interiority/exteriority, ethics, discipline and self-perfection in the Islamic discursive tradition. The way in which young Muslims construct their narratives of "becoming Muslim" as an individual choice, may thus be seen as a way of mediating different understandings of freedom and oppression, and to claim dignity as moral persons while simultaneously resisting the liberal-secularist determination of freedom as autonomy.

The discourse of autonomy and the problem of agency

In order to move one step further in the attempt to grasp the importance of "choice" in the narratives of young Muslims, let me sketch some problems that seem to result from a conflation in public discourse as well as in some scholarly work on Muslims in Europe, between "individual autonomy" and "people's capacity for agency". Mahmood suggests that liberal presuppositions about freedom and individual autonomy have become naturalized in the scholarship on gender and the way in which "agency" is understood is such studies. One could add that such naturalization seems to take place more broadly, affecting also the understanding of the identities and practices of young Muslims in Europe. Such naturalization is well captured by Butler:

> Consider that according to one view of agency, a subject is endowed with a will, a freedom, an intentionality which is then subsequently "expressed" in language, in action, in the public domain. Here "freedom" and "the will" are treated as universal resources to which all humans *qua* humans have access. The self who is composed of such faculties or capacities is thus thwarted by relations of power which are considered external to the subject itself. And those who break through such external barriers of power are considered heroic or bearers of a universal capacity which has been subdued by oppressive circumstances. Whereas this model of agency has surely been inspiring for many subordinate people, and for women in particular, it is crucial to consider the way in which this paradigm for thinking agency has come under question in recent years (Butler 1995: 137).

This notion of agency seems to underlie many attempts to theorize and re-theorize especially Muslim women's relationship to the Islamic tradition. In the context of Muslim migration in Europe, but also in studies dealing with Muslim majority contexts, Muslim women (and youth) have often been constructed as passive victims of men's (active) abuse, and as imprisoned by tradition, and as consequently lacking agency. To counter this vision of Muslim women as non-agents, many studies have emerged focusing on "Muslim women's choices", stressing that Muslim women should be seen as actors in their own lives (e.g. Mabro and El-Solh 1994).[340] Common to some of these studies, whether based in perspectives of victimization or de-victimization, is that agency is understood as an attribute or trait inherent in individual subjects, and that it is primarily circumscribed by external circumstances.

In the literature on Muslim youth and women in Europe such "external circumstances" are often connected with "tradition", where people's autonomy is circumscribed by religious traditions, ethnic groups and families. The argument for women's agency has thus tended to be based on the understanding that Muslim women, as they enter modernity, are *no longer,* or only to a limited extent, restrained by tradition, as they now "choose" e.g. to be Muslims, follow Islam, and wear the hijab. Within such a framework, people are generally perceived to become more autonomous, thus increasing their capabilities of agency, through individualization, "de-traditionalization" and integration into "modernity". Consider for example Cesari's (2004: 54) notion that fundamentalism "[…] is, more often than not, a freely chosen identity, not something imposed by the community, tradition, or the family". Here, the community, tradition and the family seem to operate as external relations of power, and when these external power relations disappear, people are "free" to "choose" their identities and ways of life. Cesari's way of putting it is surely effective in countering those who see Muslim

[340] Henrietta Moore, for instance, writes in the 1996 preface to the 1984 book on Marakwet Women that she "wanted to advance a theoretical position that would describe women, even in circumstances of pathriarcal control, as active social agents" (Moore 1996: xvii).

fundamentalists as passive victims of an oppressive community, tradition or family, but it is not sufficient if we are to make sense of the agency involved in the formation of religious identities and practices. With respect to the term "fundamentalism" that Cesari uses, it points precisely beyond the ability of individuals to freely choose their identities and ways of life if we consider how this category is used in contemporary political discourse e.g. to order "acceptable" and "unacceptable" forms of Islam, to police Muslim groups etc.

To me, it seems that this stress on "individual choice" in the literature on Muslims in Europe is partly a consequence of the methods through which knowledge about people's religious identities and practices are produced. As I have discussed, young Muslims' narratives of their "return to Islam" are based on a particular narrative model that focuses on the transformations of an individual life course, on the individual search for knowledge and efforts to implement this knowledge in his or her life, and on the realization of a subjective and individual relationship to Islam as more "authentic" Muslim identity and practice. It should be acknowledged that young Muslims focus on individual choice may also reflect a wish (vis-à-vis their interlocutors) to be recognized as moral subjects in terms of the fundamental values that are attached to the "autonomous individual". This is not to say that they "strategically" present themselves as having chosen, but that the "having chosen" is of fundamental importance for their dignity and sense of self, as constituted in dialogue with others. Through their narratives on "how they came to choose the hijab", they oppose the construction of themselves as an antithesis to the dominant model of the moral person. In a social context where Islam is dismissed as synonymous with "irrationality" and said to belong in the Middle Ages, it becomes urgent for the young Muslims to show that they are neither ignorant nor old-fashioned, but, on the contrary, modern, rational and self-determining individuals, capable of making their own choices. Whereas these narratives focus on the individual self and the "choices" made, data produced to participant observation tended to bring out more clearly issues related to socialization, sociability, belonging, peer group processes, social imitation and conformity. Data produced through participant observation thus points to embedded social actors whose lives are structured in manifold ways, aspects that must be central to any understanding of how people act as social persons. I'm not arguing that the data produced through interviews are less reliable than those produced through participant observation. Instead, I argue that while they importantly contribute to our understanding of how people relate to themselves as selves of a particular kind (with the capacity for autonomy, for making "free choices") they are inadequate to account for "agency" in the sense of people's capacity to act within certain structures of possible action.

In this respect I agree with Asad (1993: 15) who argues that consciousness, in the everyday psychological sense of awareness, intent and the giving of meaning to experience, is inadequate to account for agency. Social actors inherit an ongoing ensemble of social practices and concepts and categories. It is important to consider factors that form the structures of possible actions; allowing and precluding certain possibilities and choices. These factors include such things as habit, the docile body, the objective distribution of goods, the existence of specific institutions, and relations of dominance. The notion of "choice" in narratives of reversion should thus be read primarily as indications of a particular form of subjectivity and not as a sociological explanation of how people come to act as they do. Individual choices are subject to many influences, and the high value placed on individual choices can, as argued above, in itself be seen as a result of social influences and particular historical modes of subjectivation. This does not mean, of course, that young Muslims are not "agents" in the sociological sense; only that determining agency is a lot more complicated than it is sometimes assumed to be. In my opinion, we do not need to assert that young Muslims "freely choose" their identities and religious practices in order to see them as "agents". Defining agency not as the capacity of autonomous individuals to "freely choose", but as "the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act", would enable us better to grasp the agential capacity that is entailed in, to site Mahmood (2005: 23), "the variety of ways in which norms are lived and inhabited, aspired to, reached for, and consummated". In continuity with post-structuralist critique I see agency not as a metaphysical capability but as constituted within historical regimes of power/discourse formations:[341] "[…] 'agency' is a complex term whose senses emerge within semantic and institutional networks that define and make possible particular ways of relating to people, things and oneself" (Asad 2003: 78). This understanding is in line with what Foucault calls the paradox of subjectivation, indicating that the very processes and conditions that secure a subject's subordination are also the means by which she becomes a self-conscious identity and agent (Foucault 1980; Foucault 1982; Mahmood 2005). As Mahmood (2001; 2003; 2005) argues, such a perspective encourages a conceptualization of agency that sees it not simply as a synonym for resistance, but as a capacity for action that specific relations of subordination create and enable. Tradition-rooted categories of social and religious identity and authority are, as Amir-Moazami and Salvatore (2003) also suggest, not by default imparing social agency, but often its necessary condition. I do not mean to raise an argument about the possibility and potential value to different projects

[341] These issues, and their consequences for the possibility of critique and "liberation" have been hotly debated in feminist studies. See for instance (Benhabib 1995).

such as feminism, of a normative definition of agency in terms of individual autonomy and resistance. What I have wanted to point to is rather some of the consequences for making this understanding of agency and individual autonomy a basis for our reasearch. I will continue to develop this argument below, with respect to the issue of politics and epistemology in Norwegian immigrant research.

Politics and epistemology in migration research

Anthropology as cultural critique

The simultaneous existence of different discursive traditions in contemporary societies raises new epistemological and ethical challenges for anthropology. Since the beginning of the 1990s Norwegian anthropologists have become increasingly involved in public debates about immigrants, ethnic minorities and racism. These debates have revealed important differences in the epistemological and ethical approaches that underlie current research, and different approaches to if and how anthropology can be a "critical" activity. In the following, I discuss some of the positions that Norwegian anthropologists have taken in these debates. In particular, I develop a critique of what in chapter four I referred to as a "neo-realist" position; a position that became increasingly pronounced among a number of anthropologists in the 1990s. I argue that although the current debate among minority researchers has raised important questions about the possibilities of anthropology as cultural critique, there are a number of problems with the way in which anthropology as cultural critique has been re-conceptualized by writers representing the "neo-realist" position, some of which I will address below.

In the much cited *Anthropology as Cultural Critique*, Marcus and Fischer (1986) proposed to explore ways of fulfilling what they saw as the promises of cultural critique on which modern anthropology was founded. These promises included:

> To offer worthwhile and interesting critiques of our own society; to enlighten us about other human possibilities, engendering awareness that we are only one pattern among many; to make accessible the normally unexamined assumptions by which we operate and through which we encounter members of other cultures (Marcus and Fischer 1986: ix).

Since then, the dual vision of Marcus and Fischer in which "members of other cultures" may function as a critical mirror for "our own society", has been increasingly problematized. Processes of international migration and economic, social and cultural globalization,

methodological and epistemological reflexivity within anthropology, and anthropologists return "home" to study their own societies, increasingly mess up the boundaries of home and away, us and them, the natives and the anthropologist. The simultaneous existence of different moral systems in contemporary multicultural societies raises new challenges as to how it is possible to compare these in a way that is responsible both in terms of ethics and anthropology as a craft (cf. Borchgrevink 1997).

In a 1991 article, the Norwegian anthropologist Lien took anthropologists in general (she mentions Mead, Rosaldo and Dumont) and immigrant researchers in Norway in particular to task for being relativist and positive towards "the foreigners" and negative and critical towards "ourselves and our own culture" (Lien 1991). She strongly opposed what she saw as the use of different moral standards in the evaluation of "us" and "them". In Lien's view, researchers in the immigrant field are more preoccupied with representing themselves as "a Good Human Being" than with being "a Good Researcher" (Lien 1991). This concern with self-representation, has, according to Lien, undermined the authority of immigrant researchers in the population. It also represents a threat to the scientific truth finding project of research, Lien holds. "Painting a true picture" of reality is opposed to the "moralist" and politically informed research done by radical left-wing researchers who are members of what Brox (1991) calls "the moral elite" (for a critique of Lien see Andersson 2005; Falck 1991; Giertsen 1991; Puntervold Bø 1991).[342] In a more recent book review on Marianne Gullestad's *Det norske sett med nye øyne*, Lien (2002) interprets the current changes in Norwegian immigrant research (that I have referred to as neo-realist) as a paradigm shift:

> […] from a position in which relativism, tolerance and focus on the position of groups have been the central values – to a position in which universal human rights, responsibility and the individual stands in the centre. In this new outlook, responsibility and the role as a helper are coming into favour again, while indifference and too much tolerance lose value (Lien 2002: 100, my translation).

Wikan has been the other main anthropologist promoting the kind of paradigm shift that Lien identifies, and the one most pertinently advocating "the role as a helper".[343] In 1995, Wikan followed up Lien's and Brox's critique of relativist, moralist and anti-racist moral-elite researchers. Like Lien, she seemed to imply that her own research was more objective, representing "truth" rather than ideology. Wikan's (1995) suggestions as to how Norwegian

[342] Brox makes an argument similar to that of Lien. A similar argument is also found in Wikan (2002).

[343] What is interesting to note, is that the political-administrative concern with social order and deviance of Muslims is not present in Wikan's earlier work that was not done "at home". Her work thus indicates how one's position as insider/outsider and the relation one stands in to the moral systems in question, may shape the epistemological foundations of our research.

policies on immigration and integration should be formed, were presented as "realistic", and contrasted to the "ideology" and political correctness of those she opposed. In *Generous Betrayal* (2002) Wikan took up the French philosopher Finkielkraut's arguments against cultural relativism in *La défaite de la pensée* (1987). Finkielkraut argued that the cultural relativism underlying contemporary politics of anti-racism and multiculturalism was a "generous betrayal"; an attitude that betrayed the ideals of universal human rights and that denied "others" a status as moral actors. Based on Finkielkraut's argument, Wikan claimed that anti-racists and other "cultural relativists" betray minority girls and women because they are concerned with representing themselves as good anti-racists rather than with "speaking truth". Wikan's claims to speak "truth" to power were based on her position as a "compassionate witness" to the misery of her informants. The ideal of the anthropologist as a "witness" and "helper" and the call for an anthropology that is based on "facts" rather than "ideology", may seem like an uncanny alliance. However, they are united by a deep distrust of relativism, which is identified as "postmodernism" or "subjectivism". Such a common distrust unifies the apparently contradictory claims of Lien and Wikan to represent reality objectively and to be ethically engaged "witnesses" to cultural cruelty.

One problem with the critique proposed by Wikan and Lien is that their position seems to entail a reversion, rather than transcendence of the anthropological model of cultural critique they oppose. In defending "individuals" against "culture", they reinforce the construction of "Norwegian society and values" as a norm, and "other cultures" as deviance. Both authors assimilate the (liberal humanist) values that Lien argues should underlie cultural critique to "Norwegian society and values". These latter are opposed to the "cultures" of the immigrants that are assumed to represent the anti-thesis of these Norwegian cum universal values. Norway is thus modern and individualistic whereas immigrants represent a collectivist cultural traditionalism that disables them from participation in modern Norwegian society (Gressgård 2005a; Gressgård and Jacobsen 2003). In this way, Wikan's and Lien's defence of individual universal human rights becomes a defence of "Norwegian society and values" and a basis for the claim that immigrants must "integrate" if the human rights of individual immigrants are to be ensured.

Both Wikan and Lien identify the cultures, attitudes and social organization of ethnic minority groups, and their cultural relativist and politically correct anti-racist supporters, as the central hindrance to such integration. This position has been opposed by those who Eriksen (1996) identified as constituting one of two "fronts" (the B-front) in the minority-debate in Norway. In contrast to the "A-front", where Eriksen included Wikan and Lien, the

"B-front", where Eriksen included himself, argues that the most significant problem with regard to integration is not the cultures, attitudes and social organization of ethnic minority groups, but ethnic discrimination in societal institutions and everyday social arenas. Different conceptualizations of what the "problem of integration" consists in, thus leads to different understandings of the *cultural critique* needed in order to ameliorate the possibilities for integration. Whereas the A-front sees critique of the negative aspects of migration-shaped minorities as the most important form of *cultural critique*, the B-front is more in line with Marcus and Fischer's understanding of anthropology as cultural critique of "our own society". What the A-front and the B-front, as defined by Eriksen, share, however, is the conceptualisation of "the problem" in terms of the "integration" of immigrants into "Norwegian society".

Writers like Wikan and Lien do not only disagree with this latter position, they also claim that the anti-racist premises of immigrant research conducted by those representing the above mentioned B-position, undermines the authority of research in the population. Brox, Lien and Wikan, all claim to give a voice to how "most people" in contrast to "the moral elite" perceive the world. Wikan (1995) for instance, has argued that the reason why most people see Muslims as problematic, is that they do in fact cause a significant number of problems in Norwegian society that majority Norwegians experience in their daily lives. Similarly, in *Generous Betrayal*, Wikan, as Fuglerud (2003) notes, takes on the role of a medium for the Norwegian people's negative experiences with immigrants and immigration.[344] Neumann (2004) argues that the critical potential of Norwegian anthropology is hampered precisely by such a will to represent and speak on behalf of "the (Norwegian) people" (cf. Fuglerud 2003). The idea that critical interventions should be made in the name of "the people" makes it difficult to speak against the common sense, the *doxa*; the representations that hold a cultural hegemony. In continuity, one could argue that Wikan's, Lien's and Brox's concern with giving a voice to the problems "most people" experience with immigrants, and the general scepticism towards intellectualism from the often invoked "ivory tower" (that is prevalent well outside immigrant research of the kind discussed here), comes uncomfortably close to a doxic reproduction of common sense knowledge.

[344] In a similar vein, others have argued that the common use of the Norwegian term for "negro" (*neger*) is not an expression of racism, since most people do not intend the term in a racist sense. The linguist Finn Erik Vinje has defended the view that "there is a tradition in Norway for using the word 'negro' in a non-racist way" (cf. Gullestad 2002).

Methodological nationalism in immigrant research

In "When researchers disagree" Lithman (2004) places these debates within a wider framework of different epistemological approaches in the social sciences. Lithman traces two epistemological roots for the social sciences, one related to wonderment over how society is possible, the other related to their auxiliary role in the political-administrative system. According to Lithman, these two epistemological traditions result in different ways of accounting for immigrant/minority life, of designating deviance, and of defining areas of legitimate interventions from the surrounding society. By combining these two epistemological roots with a distinction between perspectives rooted within respectively a national and a global framework, Lithman develops a powerful critique of the ways in which structural globalization and the related changes in the university system, increasingly privileges research of the political-administrative kind. These concerns with political-administrative questions, whether on a global level as in the concern with trafficking or on a national level in the concern with violent immigrant youth, increasingly go at the expense of "wonderment about how society is possible". In Lithman's interpretation, the "shift" in Norwegian immigrant research in the 1990s was not a shift from "indifference" to "ethical responsibility", but a "definitive shift towards a research clearly based on assumptions tied to the political-administrative system, a methodological nationalism to use Wimmer and Glick Schiller's (2002) expression" (Lithman 2004: 163).[345] As examples of this shift, Lithman refers to the above mentioned works of Lien, Wikan, and Brox as "clearly concerned with Norway and the Norwegian, not with wonderment over society" (Lithman 2004: 164).

Now, what are the effects on this shift on the possibility for cultural critique in immigrant research? Lithman argues that research framed within the political-administrative system of the nation-state, tends to reproduce nationalist concerns with social order and the cultural boundaries of the nation state.[346] It rests upon a "methodological nationalism"; the taken-for-granted belief that nation-state boundaries are natural boundaries within which societies are contained. This "methodological nationalism" is evident in the continued prevalence of the

[345] Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) designate as methodological nationalism the assumption that nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world.

[346] Whereas the entanglement of anthropology with colonialism has been subject to much critique (e.g. Asad 1973; Clifford and Marcus 1986), the relation of anthropology (as other social sciences) to the state-building project of modern nations-states at home has been less explored. The case of Norwegian immigration studies indicates that the role of anthropology in reproducing unquestioned assumptions about "the national order of things" (Malkki 1992) needs to be acknowledged.

concept of "integration" in immigrant research.[347] The concern with "integration" in immigrant research is rooted not only in the functionalist tradition, but also in the modern Western paradigm of the nation-state as the principle organizing unit of society (Favell 2003; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002).[348] Discussions about integration often ignore distinctions related to e.g. class, generation, gender, and urban processes, and tend to reify the distinction between "Us" (the Norwegian society representing Norwegian values) and "Them" (being the foreigners that must be integrated). Often, such discussions proceed without questioning the premises upon which our understanding of "integration" depends, and the way in which integration is part of a nation-making process.

In research that is based in political-administrative and methodological nationalist perspective, immigrants and the cultural and religious forms they represent tend to be constructed as "social problems" and "deviance" that need to be solved and brought into order through governing processes (Lithman 2004). A powerful example Lithman uses to indicate the effects of different epistemological perspectives on the possibilities of cultural critique is the issue of arranged marriage. Depending on the perspective adopted, arranged marriage might appear as an issue of deviancy among immigrants or as a part of how a majority of mankind organizes its social life. The consequences for anthropology as cultural critique are obviously important. When immigrants and the social and cultural forms they represent are constructed as "social problems" and "deviance", they can neither allow worthwhile and interesting critiques of "our own society", nor enlighten us about other human possibilities, to paraphrase Marcus and Fischer.

Lithman's article is concerned with "immigrant research", but his arguments could well be transferred to studies of Muslims in Norway and perhaps also in Europe more generally.[349] As noted in an earlier chapter the people spoken about in the theoretical, epistemological and political debates on immigration, are increasingly Muslims. It is probably safe to say that

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[347] This often entails the use of particular sets of metaphors. Marine metaphors are common. Immigrants constitute "waves" etc. In a more exaggerated nationalistic rhetoric, these waves tend to "overflow" the "receiving country" etc. Another set of metaphors revolves around the guest/host relation.

[348] Within the broader concept of integration there is a plethora of other terms: assimilation, absorption, acculturation, accommodation, incorporation, inclusion, participation etc. Recently the term "multicultural society" is increasingly used, but the nation-state is still conceived of as the "integrating" whole of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism as ideology and policy is formulated in a context where nation states dominate. As I have pointed to elsewhere (Gressgård and Jacobsen 2003; Jacobsen and Gressgård 2002) the use of the term "multicultural" in Norwegian policy documents and debates is notoriously vague, referring simultaneously to an (assumed) empirical reality and a normative ideal. It is used variously as an anticipation of future society (Norway is becoming multicultural) and as marking a historical continuity (Norway has always been culturally heterogeneous, as stated in a recent White Paper No. 15, 2000-20001).

[349] Lithman (2004) argues that although the article builds mainly on some case material from Norway, the arguments are meant to have wide external validity.

research as well as public discourse on Muslim migrants in Norway has been framed within a methodological and often normative nationalism. The bulk of anthropological as well as other social science literature in the field has been concerned with processes of assimilation, integration and accommodation or ethnic conflict and exclusion. In research that is framed within a methodological nationalist and political-administrative perspective Islam is usually approached in terms of how it hinders or facilitates the "integration" of "Muslim immigrants" into "Norway" (other European societies, Europe, or more broadly "the West").[350] Frequently, the question of whether Islam as such is compatible with "modern secular democracies" is being posed, but studies of Muslims in Europe based on what Lithman calls "wonderment over society" seem to be less frequent. The dominance of the political-administrative epistemological tradition in this field partly accounts for the fact that studies of "Muslims in Europe" rarely make significant contributions to social scientific theorizing more broadly. It is defined as being concerned primarily with solving a set of "problems" that arise from the presence of Muslims in non-Muslim contexts, rather than as a broader concern with how people and societies come to take the forms they do. More recently, perspectives rooted within a "global" or "transnational" framework, have become prominent. However, when framed within the perspective of politico-administrative research, these studies tend to reproduce some of the major concerns of the nation-state perspective (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002).

Now what are the consequences for the discussions of the ways in which different epistemological traditions in the social sciences shape the field of immigrant research for the possibility of anthropology as cultural critique? A first thing to note is that whether we see our research as a process of "objectively representing reality", of "being a witness", or of "wondering about the world", researchers need, as Favell (2003: 34) suggests, "to have a much higher degree of self-consciousness about the way contextual factors determine the intellectual content of research within this field, so that academics will not unreflectedly underwrite contemporary nation-building efforts". Such an unreflected underwriting seems to be the result of Wikan's and Lien's attempts to re-define the project of anthropology as cultural critique, from a critique of "our societies" to a critique of "their cultural practices" on the basis of "universal human rights" and "the primacy of the individual". When framed

[350] Anthias writes that, "The ethnicity paradigm, like the 'race' paradigm which it often merges into, has tended to focus on processes within the nation state rather than at the transnational level. Despite the more recent interest in hybridity and syncretic cultures, the bulk of literature in the field has been concerned, at different times, with processes of assimilation, integration and accommodation or ethnic conflict and exclusion" (1998: 559).

within the perspective of a nationalist methodology, this endeavour necessarily must result in ethnocentrism. Furthermore, this perspective has certain consequences not only for the description of the social and cultural aspects involved in migration, but also for its moral evaluation and as a basis for policy making.[351]

The continued need for a methodological relativism

My concern in this thesis has not primarily been with offering a "cultural critique". Instead, I have been guided by the understanding that a distinction between methodological and moral relativism is still of importance to anthropology (a position that Wikan has also recently endorsed). Even though it is impossible to exclude all value-assumptions from research, I find striving towards considering different practices and traditions on their own terms worthwhile. If not, it is difficult to grasp the meaningfulness of social and cultural practices to the people that engage in them, or to see them as alternative ways of organizing human life, rather than just as deviance from a norm. In my opinion, this should also entail the possibility that in the process of understanding "other" conceptual orders and traditions than our own, we will discover the particularisms and contingencies of "our own" in a way that may lead us to revise our normative standards for critique. I do not by this want to re-inscribe a radical alterity between Us and Them. As I have argued in this thesis, young Muslims lives cannot be understood by reference to one integrated whole, whether this whole is taken to be a "community", "culture" or "religion". Like the anthropologist, they are positioned at the intersection of different discourses, and their lives and moral horizons are shaped within this complexity.

Arguing for the continued importance of a methodological relativism, does not imply that I claim to have interpreted young Muslims' lives through a "neutral" lens. However, I have attempted to broaden the ways in which these lives are conceived of in public debates on "immigration" and "integration". I have also wanted to move beyond a methodologically nationalist imaginary, defined by a political-administrative field. This does not mean that I have not been concerned with processes that are importantly intertwined with the Norwegian state with respect to e.g. citizenship, identity politics, and representation. What it means, however, is that I have sought to formulate my research problems in a way that avoids

[351] An obvious example is the view that transnational relations are hindering integration, which in turn leads to these relations being perceived as "bad" and to policy decisions aimed at reducing transnational ties (for instance through more restrictions on transnational marriages).

underwriting contemporary nation-building efforts where “immigrants” and “Muslims” function as central “others”. Rather, I have wanted to analyse some aspects of the ways in which these efforts operate, and how they impinge on the construction of Muslim identities and practices of the young Muslims I worked with.

So where does this methodological relativism leave us with respect to anthropology as a project of cultural critique? Is the only alternative to the neo-realist position moral relativism, indifference and too much tolerance, as Lien seems to suggest? This is an important question that cannot be properly addressed here. Let me make two brief points however. The first is that Lien’s position could be criticized on its own grounds, even if we do not hold the belief that references to universal normative standards are necessarily ethnocentric. This is because, as I have argued above, Lien “nationalizes” those standards and makes them synonymous to “Norwegian values and society” in a way that makes “integration” (in the sense of “assimilation of ‘Norwegian’ values”) the most viable (if not only) solution to do away with practices that break with universal human rights. Bredal (2004) argues in this respect that a critique of “their” ways of “being individuals” should be coupled to a problematization of “ones own” *to the same extent*, and on the same level. A second point is that a critique of universalized normative standards as ethnocentric does not necessarily imply a full-fledged moral relativism implying that anything goes. In fact the “relativist” position that Lien argues against, seems to be more of a ghost than a position defended by other researchers in the field. In her discussion of this problem with respect to Norwegian integration debates, Gressgård (2005a) for one argues that a dismissal of universal normative standards as ethnocentric does not necessarily entail that “anything goes”. Rather, Gressgård defends a praxis-based understanding of justice that would make it possible to make critical interventions without presuming universal standards of judgment. This and other contributions, from various normative positions (cf. Bredal 2004; Holst 2005 for a discussion of the normative base for feminist critique in the Norwegian field of gender studies) deconstruct, and suggest ways of reconstructing, the epistemologies and standards of judgement that underlie social science research as a critical project. As such, they may form the basis for a much needed discussion of anthropology as cultural critique in the field of immigrant research in Norway.

Conclusions

As I end the work with this thesis, it is with an acute awareness of the problems and risks continually encountered in generating representations of "the other". My theoretical and methodological orientations, my authorial authority, and my situatedness in the world, have produced representations that are situated and partial. This reflects the reductionism inherent in any attempt at textualizing social worlds, involving processes of objectifying, selecting, authoring, and editing. The situated and partial character of the representations produced in this thesis is all the more important to stress given the current politicization of the topics I have been dealing with. During the time I have been working on this project, representations of Muslim identities and practices have become ever more politicized and contested, not least through such global dramas as the 9/11, the murder of Theo van Gogh, and more recently the so-called Mohammed caricature affairs – historical events that may be understood from the perspective offered in chapter four, relying on Appadurai, as "imploding" into the Norwegian context and public debate. Working within such a politicized context, I have become increasingly aware of the mutual implication of knowledge and power, and have many times considered whether "yet another book on Muslims" would only contribute to further inscribe the power relations through which current representations of "Muslims" and "Islam" are forged.

In particular, dealing with the issue of gender and Muslim women has raised the challenge of not taking "white", middle-class women as a measure for feminist claims, and the importance of keeping in mind that patterns of gender inequality intersect with patterns of inequality related to the power geometries of mobility, ethnicity, class and race (cf. Strasser 1993; Ålund 1999). In this thesis, issues of intersectionality has been brought forth by a focus on how the challenges that young Muslims' in Oslo meet, depend not only on whether they are women or men, but also on how the gendered dimension intersects with other dimensions that serve to position people in society. The need to nuance stereotypes of Muslim women as "victims" has been nurtured in particular by post-colonial feminist criticisms that have increasingly pointed to Western feminist discussions of "foreign" culture and religion as implicated in relations of post-colonial and racist domination (Abu-Lughod 2002; Ahmed 1992b; hooks 1981). Those working within "black feminism" have called attention to how what in feminist theory and politics are often presented as general female experiences and

values are rather based on the life-worlds of Euro-American middle-class women. Anthropologists working with Muslim women in different parts of the world have also pointed to the awkward relationship between feminist research and politics and theoretical and political efforts to recognize and respect differences as products of different histories, as expressions of different circumstances, and as manifestations of differently structured desires (Abu-Lughod 2002; Mahmood 2001). I have dealt with these questions in this thesis, arguing that the challenges faced by young Muslim women in Oslo cannot be reduced to seeing them as "victims" of cultural and religious traditions. If we are blinded by tears as we are "Weeping for the Muslim Cinderellas" (Thorbjørnsrud 2003) our view is distracted from the multiple and overlapping relations of power, domination and authority in and through which young Muslims' identities and subjectivities are shaped. A major challenge that must be faced, and that I could only deal with to a limited extent in this thesis, is thus how to theorize the ways in which social, cultural and religious discourses create gendered forms of power, while simultaneously questioning governmental and popular discourses that polarize women as either fully sovereign subjects or else as oppressed victims needing to be "liberated".

My focus in the thesis, on discussions and debates relating to what it means to be a Muslim and how Islam should be understood and lived, has been informed by a wish to avoid essentializing and reifying depictions of "the others". Attempts to summarize "the findings" of this thesis would necessarily reduce the complexities and ongoing character of social life that I have sought to give room for in my text. The focus on debate and contestation has allowed me to avoid "fixing" a Muslim other, and instead to pay attention to religious identities and practices as processual and dynamic. They have here been presented as unfolding in a particular socio-historical context, and with attention to the "difference within" (e.g. gender, generation, age, ethnicity, education) that generate both commonalities and differences in experience, identities and practices. I have also attempted to take into account how these discussions and debates presuppose historically sedimented practices, institutions and forms of authority, within and through which they are played out. In so doing, I have suggested seeing the Islamic engagement of young Muslims in Oslo as simultaneously inscribed in a process of internal reform of the Islamic tradition and in a politics of identity and representation. To grasp the complexity inherent in this dual process, it has been of particular importance to explore the specific context for the shaping of young Muslim's religious identities and practices by paying attention to processes of migration, transnationalism, globalization and increasing diversity within the nation-state.

With respect to the analyses of "culture" in our times, Barth writes that attention must be given to the ways in which, in increasingly complex societies, people's "cultural construction of reality springs not of one source and is not of one place" (Barth 1989: 130). As the above chapters have suggested, this is an apt characterization of the life worlds that young Muslims in Oslo inhabit. These complex life worlds include memories, histories, values and practices transmitted to them from the parental generation as well as internalized values and ways of relating to themselves and others in the society were they grew up and live (cf. Naguib 2001) . These configurations cannot be reduced to a "home" versus a "host" culture, as they are in themselves differentiated, diverse and processual. In addition, transnational movements of people, capital, ideas, media, and technology, and the power geometries that structure such movements, shape young Muslims' lives. It is within the frames of such complex life-worlds that the religious identities and practices of young Muslims are (re)produced and shaped, and in which discussions and debates arise regarding what it means to be a Muslim, what "Islam is", and how "it" should be lived. In this respect their Muslim identities and practices may be seen as taking shape within a "borderland" rather than within a suspension between a "host land" and a "homeland". While young Muslims' religious identities and practices draw on a tradition of Islamic discourse, they simultaneously imply processes of transculturation and hybridization.

In this thesis, I have been concerned with exploring how Muslim identities and practices are (re)produced and contested in and across differences related to age, generation, gender, ethnicity, and theological, geographical and historical divisions within Islam. A point has been to show that the ways in which Muslim identities and practices are (re)produced and contested in the context of Muslim youth and student organizations must be seen in relation to broader structurings of society, both within the frames provided by Norwegian society, and beyond such frames as they are implicated in, and respond to, wider processes of globalization. These frames have been approached as constituting "horizons of action", and attention has been paid to the visions of the past and the future they offer, their patterns of solidarity, their logics of inclusion and exclusion, and the norms and social obligations that are conveyed within them. At the intersections between these horizons, questions of continuity and change with respect to identities and practices are energized and contested, as young Muslims engage with the implications of being "a Norwegian Muslim", a "European Muslim", a "Pakistani Muslim", and of belonging to a "global Muslim community". In proposing such an analysis, I have attempted to destabilize assumptions about a given correspondence between place, community and "culture" or "local Islams". By focusing on

the ways in which young Muslims orient their lives in terms of multiple horizons of action, I painted a picture of identities as constructed across different, often intersecting and sometimes contradictory and antagonistic, discourses and practices that produce multiple layers of sameness and difference, inclusion and exclusion. The young Muslims I worked with in Oslo (re)configure their religious identities and practices in a variety of directions, but not under conditions of their own making.

One framework for exploring the shaping of religious identities and practices among young Muslims has been the context of the Norwegian nation-state. The Norwegian nation state currently responds to diversity by controlling and disciplining movement, by shaping and providing essentialist understandings of cultures, by culturalizing the difference between "Norwegian culture and values" and its "Others", and by enacting multicultural politics which restate its hegemonic position e.g. in defining the "limits" of the multicultural community. Young Muslims' identity politics are importantly structured in response to these processes and the particular restrictions placed on them by cultural racism, stereotyping and "Othering", in the wider social and political context. Perceived "misrecognition" is at the core of a politics of identity that seeks to restore "a secure identity" and "self-confidence" among young Muslims in Oslo. In particular, I have argued that the ascription of "Otherness" to Muslims conditions how young Muslims come to see themselves and others. They mobilize a politics of recognition on the basis of a Muslim identity, and certain forms of religious practice are made central to the quest for identity, recognition and rights. At the intersection between identity politics and Islamic revitalization, challenging dominant representations of Islam and Muslims comes to be conceptualized as *jihad* and *dawa*, and the hijab becomes a vehicle for asserting "pride" and speaking about the experience of misrecognition. Similarly, active participation in Norwegian society is conceptualized as a religious duty in a way that interacts with and challenges dominant models of citizenship. The activities of the NMU and the MSS in this respect are significantly part of and shaped by the logic of contemporary identity politics in modern nation-states, and the intertwining of a universalist discourse of equal rights and dignity on the one hand, and a discourse of cultural and religious authenticity on the other.

I have situated young Muslims' identity politics within social dynamics related to migration and globalization that contribute towards an "objectification" of Islam. The young Muslims I worked with were concerned with disembedding a set of beliefs and practices - a "religion", from a "culture". This concern was importantly energized by the construction of Muslims as "Others" to the Norwegian society, and to awareness of internal diversity among

Muslims in Oslo. As Barbara Metcalf (1996: 7) puts it, "The sense of contrast – contrast with a past or contrast with the rest of society – is at the heart of a self-consciousness that shapes religious style". An awareness of religious pluralism and the objectifying gaze of the majority society have affected the way young Muslims think about themselves and Islam. The situation of belonging to a minority group means that young Muslims cannot take their religion for granted, and that they must engage in the redefinition of identity/difference and of Islamic traditions. In their ways of forging Muslim identities and practices, the young Muslims I worked with have moved from an Islam based around localized cultures and moulded to the culture of the homelands, to an increasingly transnationally embedded Islam of Muslims from many difference countries and cultures. This development presupposes both the local situation of religious and ethnic pluralism, and the existence of a global normative space of Islamic reference and debate. Relying on Eickelman and Piscatori, I have argued that objectification is related to profound changes in the way knowledge is transmitted and the forms of authority underpinning such knowledge. The result of these changes have been seen to be neither wholly "deliberative" nor wholly "disciplinary", but a complex dynamics between individualization and normativization. Here young Muslims increasingly aspire to engage directly with Islamic texts in order to "choose" which position or interpretation to adhere to, while simultaneously being exposed to normativizing discourses that seek to instruct them on the correct form and purpose of how to be a Muslim and live according to Islam. Whereas I have identified the religious discourses of young Muslims as articulating simultaneously forms of "resistance" as well as "compliance" to gender, generation, class and cultural hierarchies, I have, in line with a Foucauldian understanding, tried to situate resistance in a position of interiority rather than exteriority in relation to power.

These attempts at grasping Muslim identity-formation in its multiplicity, as internally differentiated, and as refracted through multiple horizons of action and changing religious imaginaries and structures of authority have been combined with an effort to understand processes of subjectification involved in young Muslims' efforts to realize a certain kind of virtuous life, to work on the self as well as on society. Given that young Muslims are positioned at the intersection of different, ambivalent and sometimes contrasting discourses, these processes could not be approached with reference to a symbolic "whole". Rather, the line of investigation I followed was to explore how self-knowledge and different techniques for working on the self were produced at the intersection of discourses that provide different models of the Self, and different goals for self-realization.

The analyses of processes of subjectification was inspired by a Foucauldian framework, focusing on how young Muslims actively take part in turning themselves into "good Muslims", aiming at practising Islam as correctly as possible, by means of a number of "technologies of the Self". This line of analysis was inspired by Mahmood's (2005) discussion of the formation of pious selves in the context of Egyptian piety movements, and Christiansen's (1999) efforts to theorize the Islamic activism of young Moroccan women as a processes of subjectification. Mahmood offers "the politics of piety" as an alternative grid of analysis for religious movements in explicit contrast to "the politics of identity". In my analysis of the religious activism of the Muslim youth and student organizations in Oslo I have found it useful to analyze them simultaneously through the prism of "identity politics" and "the politics of piety". This argument springs from the centrality of young Muslims' concerns with the combination of, on the one hand becoming pious Muslims, and on the other hand, with questions of rights, recognition and representation. Both in individual life-histories and the narratives constructed by the organizations about their own activities, there is a constant interplay between concerns with "piety" and "recognition", involving a transformation of the individual, of his or her relation to him or her self and others, and of social relations in society at large. I thus see the approaches to young Muslims' identities and practices in terms of a "politics of identity" and a "process of subjectification" as complementary perspectives on the Islamic engagement of young Muslims in Oslo. The formation of pious selves and the politics of identity are intimately linked, as pious selves are both shaped within the context of identity politics, and are part of the basis upon which the politics of recognition of young Muslims is effectuated. My point here is thus to point to a two-way-dynamics, where young Muslims' religiosity and piety is informed by their particular social and political positioning, and where their social and political positioning is informed by their efforts to turn themselves into "good Muslims".

In a discussion I had with a prominent sociologist of Islam on the issue, he insisted that the concern with "recognition" was prior to and more fundamental than the concern with piety, and that young Muslims' "return to Islam" was primarily energized by dynamics in the process of integration. This reading is perhaps the most comforting to those who continue to see Islam as remains of a traditional worldview that will ultimately wane or change into a "privatized belief" in analogy with the history of Christianity. According to this model, young Muslims' "return to Islam" facilitates a "transition" towards a fuller integration into European nation-states. Whether the Islamic engagement of the descendants of Muslim immigrants in Europe is a transitory phenomenon or not remains of course to be seen in the future. However,

I suggest that we should avoid producing universalist narratives of a modernity moving forward in a unitary direction. The extent and mode by which new generations will relate to Islam and different Muslim communities as a framework for their lives depends on a variety of processes that is not accurately captured by a conventional generational approach to migration and integration, but needs to be complemented by attention to transnational relations and processes of globalization.

An alternative to this integration-oriented reading of the religious revitalization among young Muslims that has been suggested in the Norwegian public debate is that young Muslims are attracted to "fundamentalist" or "Islamist" projects, often explained by their exclusion from society at large or the attraction to "pure" identities in a context of post-modernism and globalization. Here, engagement in the public sphere on the basis of religious identities is taken to be an unwarranted politicization of "religion", a "contamination" or transplantation of political struggles from the Middle East, so to speak. In contrast to this, and in drawing upon Asad, Mahmood and Hirschkind, the argument here is that the main issue is not so much whether religious revitalization is "politicizing" religion, but the fact that "Modern politics and the forms of power it deploys have become a [necessary] condition for the practice of many of our more personal activities" (Hirschkind 2001: 15). Following this line of reasoning, one could argue that to the extent that the lives of Muslims in Norway or elsewhere are brought under the regulatory apparatuses of the nation state, in areas pertaining to family, education, worship, welfare, commercial transactions etc., efforts to live one's life according to the truths of a particular religious tradition will necessarily be politicized and continue to be so. This is so not only for Muslims, but for any group whose members' lives are based on particular visions of the good, the just, and of self-realization that differ from those considered normal, rational, and healthy etc. by the majority population. In this perspective, the assumption that Muslim practices will eventually become "privatized" could be seen to rest on a particular construction of the "public" and the "private" that feminist research, compressed in the slogan "the personal is political", has since long made obsolete. The main challenge is thus not to distinguish between "bad" and "good" Muslims on the basis of whether they politicize religion or not, but to investigate the particular structures and power relationships in and through which such categories as "religion" and "politics", the "private" and the "public" are constituted.

In positioning my argument with reference to constituted debates about the articulation of tradition in modernity and "agency", I have problematized the ways in which debates and research on young Muslims in Europe tend to reproduce a set of dichotomies between

choice/force, modernity/ tradition, individualism/collectivism, change/continuity and deliberation/discipline. The multiple ways in which young Muslims are subjected to, contest, resist, or govern themselves in and through the social, cultural and political structural forces that constrain them is impossible to grasp through the clear cut distinction between "choice" and "force" that dominates much contemporary public debates on issues such as hijab and "arranged marriages". I have argued that this is also so for the clear-cut dichotomy between "tradition" and "modernity", that often goes along with it. Instead of taking such notions as "modernity", "secularization", and "integration" as norms against which the religious identities and practices of young Muslims are measured (expressed in dualities such as they are modern and not traditional, they are becoming more secular or not, they are integrated or not), I have made an effort to turn the gaze towards how such concepts, practices and political formations structure our research as well as the lives of those people we work with. Although I have made an effort to resist couching my work in naturalized, commonsense categories that currently animate debates about Muslim identities and practices, these are nevertheless inevitably present in that they contribute to structuring my own understandings as well as the understandings of the young Muslims I have been working with, whether by reproducing or reacting against them.

In dealing extensively with "individualization" as marking the modality of religious identities and practices among young Muslims in Oslo, I have simultaneously sought to problematize the above-mentioned dichotomies. For one thing, I have questioned the assumption that changes in the religious identities and practices of young Muslims in Oslo may be understood "simply" as a consequence of migration from an assumed traditional Muslim world to an assumed modern European society. This has been done by paying attention to the important continuities between current developments among young Muslims in Europe and Islamic reformist discourses emerging from the Muslim world and the individualizing impetus of these discourses (cf. Amir-Moazami and Salvatore 2003). The notion of Islam as a discursive tradition has served to problematize what Salvatore refers to as "a post-Protestant dichotomy between spiritual choice and unreflected orthopraxis" (Salvatore 2004: 1023), and to inscribe young Muslims' religious engagement in a tradition of reasoning and argumentation, and an ongoing revival and reform of the Islamic discursive tradition. Reasoning and argumentation are vital to the continuity and vitality of traditions, although the ways in which people are made to reflect on themselves and their relation to established practices and authorizing discourses vary through time and space. While simultaneously acknowledging the continuing importance of authoritative Islamic discourses, and the

importance of ”disembedding” mechanisms, I have also argued that the question of how subjects are constituted as particular kinds of selves with particular capacities for e.g. self-reflection, and self-determination within regimes of power, must not be overlooked. The analysis has also insisted on seeing the identities and practices of modern individuals as embedded in social relationships, institutions and discourses.

The introductory book to anthropology that “initiated” me to the discipline more than ten years ago was entitled *Small Places, Large Issues* (Eriksen 1995b), and suggested that one of the hallmarks of anthropology was the intimate connection between minute and concrete detail of the lives of people in “small places” and more ambitious theoretical questions addressing “large issues”. Such a combination of ethnographic and biographic detail (although not situated in a typical anthropological “small place”) with “large issues” also characterizes this thesis. The arguments I have developed are based on fieldwork in two particular networks of young Muslims in Oslo. While there is no claim that these young people are “representative” for a particular category of people, such as Muslim youth in Oslo, Norway or Europe for that matter, the (re)shaping of religious identities and practices that I have detailed in this thesis are not exclusive to these particular networks of young Muslims’ or to a particular locality. Rather, I have pointed to important continuities between young Muslims in Oslo and Muslim discourses elsewhere in Europe, e.g. the effort to move “beyond culture”, the construction of Muslim identity as an individual choice of “return to Islam”, and the identification with a “global Islamic community” (Cesari 2004; Schmidt 2002; Vertovec and Rogers 1998). In dealing with these issues, the thesis has pointed to a number of “conditions of possibility” that structure the ways in which Muslim identities and practices are shaped in and across national contexts under conditions that affect people in various localities in the contemporary world. As such the thesis is part of the anthropological effort to make sense not only of the lives of people in particular “small places”, but also of “large issues” that concern the conditions of human existence in the world.

Glossary

This brief glossary is meant as an aid for readers who are not familiar with the Arabic-Islamic vocabulary used in the thesis. It is not meant to offer "definitions" or precise translations from Arabic, but to indicate the central meaning of certain concepts that recur in the text, some of which are complex and used in multiple ways in the Islamic discursive tradition and by the young Muslims I worked with. The explanations draw on Ian Richard Netton's "A popular dictionary of Islam" (1997), on a glossary provided at www.Islam.no, and on the uses of the young Muslims I worked with.

adhan: the call to prayer.
akhira: the afterlife.
ajar: recompense, reward.
alim: scholar, learned person.
Allehu Akbar: God is greatest.
aya: verse of the Quran.
dar-al-ahd: the abode or house of treaty, truce or covenant.
dar-al-dawa: the abode or house of invitation
dar-al-harb: the abode or house of war.
dar-al-Islam: the abode or house of Islam.
dar-al-shahada: world of witness.
dars: lesson, lecture on Islam.
dawa: call, invitation, and appeal to Islam.
deen: religion, way of life.
deen al-fitra: the natural religion.
dua: supplication.
dunya: this-wordly life.
fard: mandatory, prescribed.
fatwa: formal legal judgement or view in Islamic law.
fiqh: Islamic jurisprudence.
fitra: the capacity of accepting Islam as the right faith.
günah: bad deeds, sin.
hadith: the Hadith is the corpus of records of the sayings and the prophet Mohammed. A hadith refers to one such particular record.
hafiz: used as a title of respect for someone who has memorized the Quran.
hajj: pilgrimage, the Fifth Pillar of Islam.
halaka: religious meetings.
halal: permissible, allowed.
haram: proscribed, forbidden.
hassanat: good deed, religious reward.
hijab: practice of dressing modestly, Islamic headgear.
hilal: crescent, new or half moon.
Hijri-calendar: lunar calendar starting from Mohammed's migration from Mecca to Medina.
ibadat: worship, obedience, humilty, submission.
id-al-fitr: the feast marking the end of the fasting in Ramadan.

id-al-adha: the feast of sacrifice performed on the 10th of the month of pilgrimage (Dhu l'Hijja) imitating Ibrahim's projected sacrifice of Ismail.
iftar: the first meal eaten at the end of a day's fasting in Ramadan.
ijtihad: the exercise of independent judgement in interpretation.
ikhtilaf: difference of opinion.
iman: faith, "knowledge", "belief".
imam: prayer leader
inshallah: "If Allah wills it".
jihad: to strive, struggle.
kadr: (or *qadar*) "divine predestination" or "divine determination".
khatib: preacher of sermons.
khutba: sermon delivered during Friday prayer in the mosque.
madhab: one of the (four major) schools of law.
mahr: part of an Islamic marriage contract, gift of money, possessions, or property made by the husband to the wife.
makhru: reprehensible.
mandub: recommended.
mubah: allowed (neutral).
marabout: holy man, often in the North African context.
mashallah: "what Allah wishes".
mufti: responsible for juridical opinions.
nashid: Islamic hymn.
niyat: intention.
qawwali: devotional song.
pir: saints, spiritual masters, wise guides.
Ramadan: the ninth month of the Muslim lunar calendar and the month of fasting.
sahaaba: companions of the Prophet.
Sahih Muslim: compilation of *hadith* by Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj. *Sahih* indicates the highest level of trustworthiness in *hadith* science.
as-salam aleikum/ aleikum salam: greeting meaning: Peace be with you! Peace be upon you!
salaf: ancestor, predecessor, the early generation after Mohammed.
salah: the ritual prayer. The Second Pillar of Islam.
sawab: recompense, reward
shahada: the Islamic profession of faith. The First Pillar of Islam.
sharia: moral discourses and legal procedures, often referred to as "Islamic law"
Shia: one of the two major branches of Islam
subhanallah: God be Praised
sufi: Islamic mystic
sunna: the practices of the Prophet and his companions
Sunni: one of the two major branches of Islam
taqlid : imitation.
tawba: repentance.
taraweeh: extra prayers undertaken on a voluntary basis during the nights of Ramadan.
ulema: religious scholars, (loosely) religiously learned.
umma: Islamic community.
wasat: middle way.
wodo: ritual ablutions
zakat: obligatory alms tax, the Third Pillar of Islam.

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