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«We Hijabis, we belong here»

The everyday experiences and practices of Muslim women wearing headscarves in German-speaking Switzerland – a qualitative study

Master Thesis in Political Science

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„I would simply like to have the same freedom or the same right as a normal woman here in Switzerland. If I had that - which of course is not easy - because you also have a lot to fight for here in Switzerland. But if we could just get to that level, then we would already feel a bit more comfortable than we feel now.” (Nalia)

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„I wish they stopped reducing us only to our headscarf. I wish so much that they would see us for ourselves. We are unknowns. Honestly. We are never presented as women with headscarves who want to do things. We’re never represented that way.” (Menna)

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„I felt like shit and I didn't understand the world either, because I assumed: just a piece of cloth can't cause such aversion. And personally, I was the same person. I acted exactly the same, I moved the same way.” (Meray)

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„ISIS is present, Al-Qaeda has done something. And then I always have to defend myself. I’ve done nothing! We suffer the most because of these groups. After such events, we are picked on, we have to listen to comments, we have to somehow put the whole thing into perspective, so to speak. We are, we Muslims, the ones who suffer the most because of these organisations.” (Gizem)

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„We Hijabis, we belong here. I feel Swiss and I belong here. I am a part of this society and I love this country more than anything. We have to create a colorful Switzerland together, look at the qualities of the people - and not at a piece of cloth.” (Esma)

Dedication and Acknowledgement

I dedicate this work to all Hijabis, their families, and friends – and especially to the women behind the pseudonyms Gizem, Naima, Marijana, Menna, Meray, Sara, Nalia, Hayet, Esma, Mayla, and Farah.

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Nadja Senn, June 2022

Abstract

With the increase of the internationally widespread Islamophobia, Muslim women wearing the headscarf, i.e. the hijab, encounter greater stigmatisation, and discrimination. The hijab has received a lot of attention from social researchers, but the everyday experiences of wearers in Switzerland are insufficiently or unresearched. This study seeks to evaluate the role played by the headscarf in shaping the everyday life of Muslim women in German-speaking Switzerland. The eight qualitative interviews with Muslim women and three observations illustrate their experiences of wearing the hijab particularly in public spaces and in the labour market. In public, they face stigmatisation, i.e. stares, comments, insults, and physical aggression in one case. The frequency and intensity of this increased when Switzerland voted on the federal „burqa ban" or when an international terrorist attack occurred in the name of ISIS or Al-Qaeda. In the labour market, hijab wearers are denied professional, linguistic, and cultural competencies which consequently exclude them from the labour market while roles involving customer contact are specifically impacted. Both in the public sphere and the labour market, the study shows for the first time the specific role of the Swiss-German dialect and how it functions as a specific form of „othering" in the life of Hijabis. In addition to the experiences, this study addresses the reactions, coping mechanisms, and strategies of these women and demonstrates that contrary to societal stereotypes, they are self-confident and determined women who do not identify as victims and do not just accept stigmatisation and discrimination.

This paper not only aims to offer insight into the real and underrepresented world of headscarf wearers in German-speaking Switzerland but also aims to draw attention to and counteract the misrepresented image of Hijabis in Switzerland's public and political debate.

Table of contents

1 INTRODUCTION 6

1.1 State of research 8
1.2 Structure of the work 11

2 NATIONAL CONTEXT 12

2.1 Political context 14
2.2 Impact of the climate on Muslims living in Switzerland 15
2.1 Legislative framework 16

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 18

3.1 In- and outgroup – or the „we" and „the others" 18
3.2 The construction of Muslims as the „fundamentally other" 19
3.3 Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism? 20
3.4 The instrumentalization of the Muslim woman 23
3.5 Intersectionality 25
3.6 The hijab as a „social skin" 25
3.7 The interplay of stigmatisation and discrimination 26

4 METHODOLOGY 30

4.1 Data collection 30
4.2 The interviews 30
4.3 Ethnographic observations 32
4.4 Reflexivity 33
4.5 Analysis 35

5 RESULTS 38

5.1 Public space and interaction with institutions 39
5.1.1 The gazes 40
5.1.2 Remarks and verbal aggression 42
5.1.3 From different treatment to attack 43
5.1.4 Harassment, damage to property and threats in one's own living space 45
5.1.5 The impact of the burqa ban (SVP) 46
5.1.6 International events 48
5.1.7 Summary 49
5.2 The labour market 51
5.2.1 „One refusal after the other" 53
5.2.2 Pretexts for refusal 55
5.2.3 The number of applications 60
5.2.4 The denial of being an integral part of Swiss society 62

5.2.5 Incidents at work ... *66*
5.2.6 Summary ... *68*
5.3 ENCOUNTERING PREJUDICE AND STEREOTYPES ... 70
5.3.1 Stereotype: A Hijabi does not speak German/Swiss-German ... *70*
5.3.2 Stereotype: Women with hijab are oppressed ... *72*
5.3.3 Stereotype: A Hijabi has a low(er) level of education ... *74*
5.3.4 Stereotype: A Hijabi is associated with extremism or terror ... *75*
5.4 IMPACT ON THE WOMEN ... 76
5.4.1 Effects of the experiences in public space ... *77*
5.4.2 Effects of rejection in the labour market ... *78*
5.5 REACTIONS AND STRATEGIES ... 82
5.5.1 Confronting or not confronting ... *83*
5.5.2 Reporting or not reporting ... *86*
5.5.3 Coping strategies ... *90*
5.5.4 Adapting ... *97*
5.5.5 Negotiation strategies ... *101*
5.5.6 Summary ... *104*
6 CONCLUSION AND OUTLOOK ... 106
6.1 THE PUBLIC SPACE ... 106
6.2 THE LABOUR MARKET ... 107
6.3 THE IMPACT OF STEREOTYPES AND THE ROLE OF THE SWISS GERMAN DIALECT ... 107
6.4 REACTIONS AND STRATEGIES ... 108
6.5 OUTLOOK ... 109
7 BIBLIOGRAPHY ... 111
7.1 PUBLISHED SOURCES ... 111
7.2 BOOKS ... 111
7.3 ARTICLES ... 113
7.4 JOURNALS AND PERIODICALS ... 113
7.5 THESES ... 117
7.6 WEBSITES ... 117

1 Introduction

In recent decades Islam and Muslims have become an omnipresent topic in Western public and political discourse, with gender being particularly central. This can be seen in European wide debates about whether Islamic head coverings should be allowed or forbidden. Switzerland entered this debate and on the 7th March 2021, the electorate voted 51.4 per cent in favour of the *Egerkingen Committee*'s popular initiative to ban face coverings.[1] Although the initiative's text also foresaw the inclusion of hooligans in this initiative, it quickly became known as the „burqa ban".[2] Alongside the 2009 success of the minaret ban, it highlights the current social and political climate of Islamophobia. In this context, Muslims are portrayed as patriarchal, fundamentalist, and misogynistic.[3] Since the attack on the Twin towers in 2001, Muslims have also been associated with terrorism on the basis of their religion and staged as a threat to national security which has to be fought by the state.[4] This is reflected in Switzerland where on the 13th of June 2021 the electorate voted 59.5 per cent in favour of the introduction of the new Federal Law on Police Measures to Combat Terrorism, whereby debates often mentioned 'Muslim terror' as a threat and therefore promoted fear of Islam and the population (read as) Muslim. The circulation of these associations in the Swiss public discourse also lead to the equation of Islam with Islamism[5] and generating a fear of an „Islamisation of society." This was clearly illustrated in the *Egerkingen Committee*'s campaign images which read „Active for Switzerland - Stop the Islamisation of Switzerland."[6]

The three previously mentioned votes emphasise rising Islamophobia in Switzerland, which is also supported by various studies including the report of the Federal Service for Combating Racism (FRB), where reported cases of anti-Muslim discrimination increased significantly, especially since 2015.[7] In 2019, 35 per cent of the Muslim population reported experiencing

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[1] EIDGENÖSSISCHES JUSTIZ- UND POLIZEIDEPARTEMENT, « Volksinitiative „Ja zum Verhüllungsverbot" », *Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft*, https://www.ejpd.admin.ch/ejpd/de/home/themen/abstimmungen/verhuellungsverbot.html, consulted on 07.01.2022.

[2] TUNGER-ZANETTI Andreas, *Verhüllung: die Burka-Debatte in der Schweiz*, Zürich : Hier und Jetzt, 2021, 193p.

[3] REFAELI Nora, « Rassismus im Jahr 2020 », S. 10, *Eidgenössische Kommission gegen Rassismus*, vol. 44, 2020, p. 195.

[4] MARFOUK Abdeslam, « I'm neither racist nor xenophobic, but: dissecting European attitudes towards a ban on Muslims' immigration », *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 42, nº 10, Routledge, 2019, p. 1747-1765.

[5] The fundamentalist, political stance with the aim of establishing an Islamic order that encompasses all areas of life, cf.

[6] « Egerkinger Komitee », *Egerkinger Komitee*, https://egerkingerkomitee.ch/, consulted 07.04.2022.

[7] FACHSTELLE FÜR RASSISMUSBEKÄMPFUNG FRB, « Rassistische Diskriminierung in der Schweiz. Bericht der Fachstelle für Rassismusbekämpfung 2019/2020 », Fachstelle für Rassismusbekämpfung, 2021, S. 149.

discrimination based on their religious affiliation[8], placing them ahead of discrimination against other religions (26 per cent).[9] The annual Report from the Counselling Network for Victims of Racism also registers a significant increase in anti-Muslim discrimination with cases rising from 23 in 2010 to 53 in 2021.[10]

The 'burqa' and minaret bans display the crucial role of gender in the debates surrounding Islam. Muslim women are instrumentalised in political and public discourse and portrayed as oppressed, not being able to make their own decisions or not having any will of their own.[11] The Swiss People's Party's (SVP) campaign in connection with the 'burqa' ban is once more emblematic of this discourse, having been conducted under the pretext of „liberating" women by saving them from „Islamic patriarchy."[12] Illustrative of the centrality of gender is the portrait showing a sinister image of a woman wearing a black niqab, accompanied by the slogan „Stop extremism", suggesting a connection between extremism, veiling and Islam.[13] Not only are women wearing a burqa or a niqab targeted, but also those wearing a hijab[14]*/headscarf. Since their head coverings make their direct affiliation to the Muslim faith recognisable they are often subject to stigmatisation and discrimination.[15] The social researcher Fatima El-Tayeb (2011) formulates the stigma weighing on headscarf-wearing women as follows: „Islam […] is considered a primary identity that cannot be incorporated into the nation. Muslim girls wearing the hijab are the visible incarnation of this incompatibility."[16] This erroneous perception is illustrated by a survey conducted at the University of Geneva. It shows that the percentage of women reporting to have become a victim of religious discrimination is 7 per cent higher than that of men. Women wearing a headscarf are particularly affected with their percentage amounting to more than 50 per cent.[17] How the processes of essentialisation and othering of

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[8] Experienced discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation was also surveyed for the first time in 2019 as part of the FSO's Language, Religion and Culture Survey (LRCS), *Ibid*., S. 145.

[9] *Ibid*. S. 146.

[10] HUMANRIGHTS.CH et EIDGENÖSSISCHE KOMMISSION GEGEN RASSISMUS EKR, « Rassismusvorfälle aus der Beratungsarbeit », *Bericht zu rassistischer Diskriminierung in der Schweiz auf der Grundlage des Dokumentations-Systems Rassismus DoSyRa*, Beratungsnetz für Rassismusopfer, 2022, https://www.humanrights.ch/de/fachstellen/fachstelle-diskriminierung-rassismus/rassismusbericht-2021, consulted on 08.04.2022.

[11] REFAELI, « TANGRAM », *art. cit*., S.

[12] TUNGER-ZANETTI, *Verhüllung*, *op. cit*.

[13] « Egerkinger Komitee », *doc. cit*.

[14] This paper uses the terms hijab and headscarf as synonyms, as these were also used by the interviewees, in German „Hijab" und „Kopftuch".

[15] GALLONIER Juliette, « Barbes et foulards : les marquers genrés de l'islamophobie. », in LEPINARD Éléonore, SARRASIN Oriane, GIANETTONI Lavinia (dir.), *Genre et islamophobie : Discriminations, préjugés et représentations en Europe*. Lyon : ENS Éditions, 2021, p. 181-200.

[16] EL-TAYEB Fatima, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe (Difference Incorporated)*, Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2011, 253 p., p. 106.

[17] GIANNI Matteo GIUGNI Marco, MICHEL Noemi Vanessa*, Les musulmans en Suisse: profils et intégration*, Lausanne : Savoir Suisse, 2015, 144 p.

women with a headscarf affect their everyday life remains insufficiently studied in social science research. Although the hijab itself has been widely discussed, a study conducted by Anaïd Lindemann (2021) represents one of the first to explicitly address discrimination against Hijabis in Switzerland. The report which is based on the insight from field experts shows that discrimination is omnipresent in their lives, as it not only occurs in a variety of areas of life and certain forms but also „affects a wide range of socio-demographic profiles."[18] While little research exists on the experiences of discrimination in different areas of the life of Hijabis in Switzerland, this is particularly so in German-speaking Switzerland, where, to my knowledge, no study comprehensively addresses the everyday life of Muslim women wearing headscarves whilst focusing on their perspective. This study, therefore, aims to close this gap by focusing on the everyday experiences of headscarf-wearing women/Hijabis in the German-speaking part of Switzerland in the light of current gender-specific Islamophobia. This master's thesis pursues the following research question: In which areas of life and how does the hijab/the headscarf shape the everyday life of Muslim women in German-speaking Switzerland? Based on the women's narratives, specific attention is paid to their experiences in the public sphere, in professional life as well as to the prejudices and stereotypes they encounter, to then explain the effects of these experiences on the women themselves and the strategies they have developed. To answer the research question, this thesis uses a qualitative research method. Firstly, eight interviews were conducted with Muslim women living in five different German-speaking cantons of Switzerland, seven of whom wear the hijab (born 1973-2002; Aargau, Zurich, Bern, Basel-Stadt, and Schaffhausen) and secondly, three ethnographic observations were undertaken to ensure better understanding of the context. Finally, the different types of stigmatisation and discrimination were examined, as well as how to navigate the increasing Islamophobic climate to which women are exposed.

1.1 State of research

Islamophobia as a phenomenon and the discourse about Muslims have long been the subject of international academic research, although the focus on those affected, i.e. the Muslims themselves, has only recently moved into academic focus. The study by Sabine Berghahn and Petra Rostock (2009)[19] on the headscarf debate in Germany, Austria and Switzerland is an

[18] LINDEMANN Anaïd, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland: Insights from Field Experts », *Religions*, vol. 12, nº 7, 500, Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, 2021, p. 16., p. 9.
[19] ROSTOCK Petra, BERGHAHN Sabine, *Der Stoff, aus dem Konflikte sind : Debatten um das Kopftuch in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz*, Bielefeld : Transcript Verlag, 2009, 526p.

example of a comprehensive work dealing with the interplay of Islamophobic public and media discourse and the accompanying institutional and legislative consequences (e.g. burqa and headscarf bans). In the francophone context, i.e. in France, Belgium, and Switzerland, Eléonore Lépinard et al. (2021)[20] draw for the first time a complete picture of gender-specific Islamophobia by addressing not only the public discourse and the institutionalisation of the phenomenon but also the effects on those who experience it.

The hijab has already been examined in research from various perspectives. One line of research examines the hijab and how it is perceived by the Western majority society and also investigates the accompanying discrimination effects. In this context, Marc Helbling's quantitative study (2014)[21] is worth mentioning, showing that anti-Muslim attitudes in European countries are stronger among women who wear headscarves than among those who don't. The study by Doris Weichselbaumer (2020)[22] uses correspondence tests to examine the effects of wearing a headscarf in the German labour market and the considerable discrimination that accompanies it. In the French context, Patrick Simon (2021)[23] investigated the types, intensity, and effects of discrimination to which Muslims are exposed. Using the data collected, the author was able to show that wearing the headscarf highly disadvantageous, especially in the labour market, and has an overall othering effect (denial of membership of the national community). Juliette Galonnier (2021)[24] addresses the othering and racialisation of headscarf-wearing women in France and the USA, while Steve Garner and Saher Selod (2015)[25] focus on the US cities of Chicago and Dallas. In the Canadian context, Katherine Bullock's contribution (2002)[26] explores the stereotype of the 'oppressed' headscarf-wearing woman prevalent in Western societies while contrasting it with the statements of the Canadian Hijabis themselves.

Further research focuses on Hijabis' agency. In the British and Danish context, Medeleine Chapman (2016)[27] shows in a socio-psychological study what effects the stigma has on the

[20] LEPINARD Éléonore, SARRASIN Oriane, GIANETTONI Lavinia (dir.), *Genre et islamophobie. Discriminations, préjugés et représentations en Europe*, Lyon : ENS Éditions, 2021, 234 p.
[21] HELBLING Marc, « Opposing Muslims and the Muslim Headscarf in Western Europe », *European Sociological Review*, vol. 30, nº 2, 2014, p. 242-257.
[22] WEICHSELBAUMER Doris, « Multiple Discrimination against Female Immigrants Wearing Headscarves », *ILR Review*, vol. 73, nº 3, 2020, p. 600-627.
[23] SIMON Patrick, « Le genre de l'islamophobie : les musulman.es face aux discriminations en France », in LEPINARD Éléonore, SARRASIN Oriane, GIANETTONI Lavinia (dir.), *Genre et islamophobie : Discriminations, préjugés et représentations en Europe*, Lyon : ENS Éditions, 2021, p. 143-156.
[24] GALONNIER Juliette, « Barbes et foulards : les marqueurs genrés de l'islamophobie », *art. cit.*
[25] GARNER Steve et SELOD Saher, « The Racialization of Muslims: Empirical Studies of Islamophobia », *Critical Sociology*, vol. 41, nº 1, SAGE Publications Ltd, 2015, p. 9-19.
[26] BULLOCK Katherine, *Rethinking Muslim Women and the Veil: Challenging Historical & Modern Stereotypes*, Herndon, VA : International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2002, 275 p.
[27] CHAPMAN Madeleine, « Veil as Stigma: Exploring the Role of Representations in Muslim Women's Management of Threatened Social Identity », *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, vol. 26, nº 4, Wiley, 2016, p. 354-366., p. 354.

identity formation and agency of Hijabis. Similarly, research by Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad (2007)[28] in the North American context and Eva Marzi et al. (2019)[29] in the Francophone context shows that the hijab can serve as a display of modesty, self-determination, affirmation of identity, gaining respect or representing a political direction. In the French context, Hanane Karimi (2018; 2021) examines the exclusion of Muslim women from the labour market and its impact on women's political, professional and religious agency.[30] In the Swiss-German context, Nathalie Gasser's dissertation (2020)[31] makes a first-ever contribution to the educational trajectories of young Muslim, second-generation women with headscarves living in German-speaking Switzerland through an ethnographic study also exploring the women's agency.

The consequences of wearing the hijab on the everyday life of the women concerned have only recently been examined in a few publications whilst attention usually focuses on one area of life and more particularly on the economic effects of the headscarf. For example, Svenja Adelt's dissertation (2014)[32] explores the connection between having a job, wearing the headscarf and dealing with discrimination in Germany. In relation to public space, Emma Tarlo (2007)[33] and Chris Allen (2014)[34] address the impact of the headscarf in the UK.

Research has also examined the impact of the hijab on a personal level and strategies developed by headscarf-wearing women. Narjis Hayder, C. A. Parrington and Mariam Hussein (2015)[35] address personal and social identity, coping with stress, experiencing discrimination, and feelings of isolation among women wearing headscarves in the USA. In terms of strategies in response to stigma, another two pieces of research are relevant. In the Dutch context, Nette Sijtsma's master's thesis (2011)[36] examines discrimination and negotiation strategies of

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[28] HADDAD Yvonne Yazbeck, « The Post-9/11 Hijab as Icon* », *Sociology of Religion*, vol. 68, nº 3, 2007, p. 253-267.

[29] MARZI Eva, MONNOT Christophe, PIETTRE Alexandre, « Le voile au-delà de la piété. Portraits de trois femmes musulmanes engagées », in SALZBRUNN Monika, *L'islam (in)visible en ville. Appartenances et engagements dans l'espace urbain*, Genève: Labor et Fides, 2019, p. 65-81.

[30] KARIMI Hanane, « The Hijab and Work: Female Entrepreneurship in Response to Islamophobia », *International journal of politics, culture, and society*, vol. 31, nº 4, Springer US, New York, 2018, p. 421-435.; KARIMI Hanane, « Voile et travail en France : l'entrepreneuriat féminin en réponse à l'islamophobie », in LEPINARD Éléonore, SARRASIN Oriane, GIANETTONI Lavinia (dir.), *Genre et islamophobie : Discriminations, préjugés et représentations en Europe*, Lyon : ENS Éditions, 2021, p. 181-200.

[31] GASSER Nathalie, *Islam, Gender, Intersektionalität: Bildungswege junger Frauen in der Schweiz*, Bielefeld, Germany : transcript Verlag, 2020, 374 p.

[32] ADELT Svenja, *Kopftuch und Karriere: Kleidungspraktiken muslimischer Frauen in Deutschland*, Frankfurt am Main : Campus, 2014, 426 p.

[33] TARLO Emma, « Hijab in London: Metamorphosis, Resonance and Effects », *Journal of Material Culture*, vol. 12, nº 2, SAGE Publications Ltd, 2007, p. 131-156.

[34] ALLEN Chris, « Exploring the Impact of Islamophobia on Visible Muslim Women Victims: A British Case Study », *Journal of Muslims in Europe*, vol. 3, nº 2, 2014, p. 137-159.

[35] HYDER Narjis *et alii*, « Experiences of Hijabi Women: Finding a Way Through the Looking Glass for Muslim Americans », *Advancing Women in Leadership Journal*, vol. 35, 2015, p. 172-177.

[36] SIJTSMA Mette, *Negotiating the Oppression of Discrimination Encountered in Outdoor Leisure: A Study of Muslim Women in the Netherlands*, Master Thesis, Waegeningen University, 2011, 55 p.

headscarf-wearing women in the field of leisure, while Melanie Eijberts and Connie Roggeband (2016)[37] investigate the individual and collective coping strategies with negative stereotypes of Muslim migrant women in the Netherlands.

Very little research has though been done on comprehensive discrimination in everyday life and different spheres of life, both in the international and Swiss context. Ines Sayed (2018)[38] examines the representation of the headscarf and the associated difficulties in labour market integration and the increasing stigmatisation in the public sphere through the biographies of three Hijabis living in the canton of Neuchâtel. Anaïd Lindemann (2021)[39] made a very important contribution by presenting the types of discrimination experienced by Hijabis living in the three linguistic regions of Switzerland through the accounts of experts from governmental institutions for racism prevention and from non-governmental Muslim associations. However, research that specifically addresses the experiences of women in German-speaking Switzerland from their perspective could not be found.

1.2 Structure of the work

The first section addresses the national context. Subsequently, the theoretical framework is introduced with a brief discussion of the concept of Islamophobia and its gender-specific aspect. This is followed by the theory of in-group and out-group, the consideration of the hijab as a 'social skin' and then the interplay of stigmatisation and discrimination. The following chapter describes the methodology used, i.e. the data collection, the interviews, and the ethnographic observations, and continues into the reflexivity and the method of analysis. The results are then presented and discussed. First, the women's experiences in public space and everyday life are described, with mention of the effects of the political climate such as the initiative to ban the burqa. Then the consequences of wearing a headscarf in the labour market and at work are presented. In the following chapters, the women's encounters with stereotypes, the effects of the experiences on the women themselves, and finally their responses and applied strategies are presented and discussed. The final part of the master's thesis is the conclusion and an outlook.

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[37] EIJBERTS Melanie et ROGGEBAND Connie, « Stuck with the stigma? How Muslim migrant women in the Netherlands deal – individually and collectively – with negative stereotypes », *Ethnicities*, vol. 16, n° 1, 2016, p. 130-53.

[38] SAYED Inès, *Être musulmanes et voilées dans le Canton de Neuchâtel: trajectoires de vie et représentations du port du voile. Les narrations de Samia, Myriam et Chloé*, Master Thesis, University of Lausanne, 2018, 136 p.

[39] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit.*

2 National context

As Lépinard et al. (2021) point out, Islamophobia is a global phenomenon that must always be „seen against the background of a particular history and political context"[40] which shape the development and mobilisation of Islamophobic discourses. Accordingly, „history and relationship to post-colonial and economic immigration, conception of the right to religious freedom and secularism, mobilisations of Muslim minorities, anti-discrimination law, strength of right-wing populist parties, etc." must be taken into account.[41] It is important to present demographic data on Switzerland's Muslim population before discussing the political and public debate. Switzerland's Muslim population made up around 5.5 per cent of the total Swiss population in 2020 from which more than a third (36 per cent) are converted Swiss Muslims.[42] Contrary to what is often portrayed in public discourse as a homogeneous Muslim community, it is very heterogeneous differing according to ethnic-national as well as linguistic affiliation.[43] The highest percentage of the Muslim population are nationals of the Balkan states (33.8 per cent), followed by Turkey (9.8 per cent), the Middle East (4.5 per cent) and North African states (3.5%).[44] Of the Muslims with a so called migration background, first-generation immigrants make up around two-thirds, while one-third belong to the second or third generation. Likewise, one third have Swiss citizenship. Contrary to the so often expressed public opinion, Muslims living in Switzerland are not more religious than the Swiss average and only 12-15 per cent practise their faith through regular visits to mosques.[45]

Despite their small share of the total population, Muslims and Islam have become a constant subject in Swiss public discourse, as Gianni et al. (2015) point out. On the one hand, within the international context in relation to the Middle East, the Palestinian conflict and Islamic terrorist attacks, and on the other hand, at the national level, focussing on radicalisation, perceived integration problems and the wearing of religious clothing such as the hijab.[46] Since the attack on the Twin Tours in 2001, there has also been an increase in the fear of Islam and Muslims,

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[40] SARRASIN Oriane, LEPINARD Éléonore, GIANETTONI Lavinia, « Islamophobie, racisme et genre : quelles intersections ? », in LEPINARD Éléonore, SARRASIN Oriane, GIANETTONI Lavinia (dir.), *Genre et islamophobie : Discriminations, préjugés et représentations en Europe*, Lyon : ENS Éditions, 2021, p. 11-28., p. 15.

[41] *Ibid*., p. 15.

[42] « Schweiz - Muslime nach Staatsangehörigkeit 2020 », *Statista*, https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/645619/umfrage/muslime-in-der-schweiz-nach-staatsangehoerigkeit/, consulted 15.04.2022.

[43] GIANNI Matteo, « Muslime in der Schweiz Identitätsprofile, Erwartungen und Einstellungen », Bern : Eidgenössische Kommission für Migrationsfragen EKM, 2010.

[44] « Schweiz - Muslime nach Staatsangehörigkeit 2020 », *doc. cit.*

[45] BAYARD Nathalie, HULAJ Anedeta, KORAL Zeynep, *et al*., « Ich spreche für mich. Erfahrungen von muslimischen Jugendlichen mit Vorurteilen », NCBI Schweiz, 2019, p. 35.

[46] GIANNI *et alii*, *Les musulmans en Suisse*, *op. cit*., p. 9.

which has affected the representation of Muslims in public discourse and led to Islam being stigmatised in the political and legal framework as incompatible with Swiss values.[47] The Swiss People's Party (SVP) played a particularly decisive role by constructing an „Islamic emergency" employing racist, nationalist, and exhaustive campaigns and placing Muslims living in the country at the political forefront.[48] In the words of Giannis et al, the Muslim presence in the public debate was „linked to a recognisable 'difference' and to a social and political category that causes 'problems'."[49] The media discourse has been extensively studied by Patrik Ettinger (2018), among others, who were able to show that reports make use of sweeping generalisations and portray the Muslim minority as homogeneous. In 55 per cent of the reports examined, Muslims were not interviewed at all and in 25 per cent only marginally.[50] This means that they are not talked to but only reported about.

As Gianni et al. point out, the fact that Muslims are repeatedly the focus of public attention must be seen in the context of the country's migration history, as it recalls, for example, the public treatment of Italian, Spanish or Portuguese nationals in earlier decades. Since, the Muslim population in Switzerland has increasingly organised itself into associations[51], they also requested the authorities recognise their cultural and religious particularities (halal meat, the appointment and training of imams, or the Islamic headscarf/hijab).[52] As Gianni et al. point out, one can recognise that this phenomenon had already occurred in the past since the fact that the immigrant population was making demands lead to the rise of fear in Swiss society „that certain practices and values attributed to Muslims could pose a threat to the constitutive values of the state."[53] (cf. next chapter: the construction of the 'fundamental other'). This connection is also discussed by Elisa Banfi (2021). Thus, the racialisation of a particular group, such as in this case the Muslim population, can be observed along pre-existing mechanisms rooted in Switzerland's history: (i) the creation of the law on foreigners and the statistics on foreigners (ii) the policy against the 'Judaisation' of Switzerland and (iii) the structuring of a racialised

[47] ESKANDARI Vista et BANFI Elisa, « Institutionalising Islamophobia in Switzerland: The Burqa and Minaret Bans », *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, vol. 4, nº 1, Pluto Journals, 2017, p. 53-71., p.55.
[48] *Ibid*., p. 55.
[49] GIANNI *et alii*, *Les musulmans en Suisse*, *op. cit*., pp. 10.
[50] ETTINGER, Patrik (2018): Quality of Reporting on Muslims in Switzerland. A study commissioned by the Federal Commission against Racism FCR with the support of the Mercator Foundation Switzerland. Ed. by the Federal Commission against Racism FCR; fög - Research Institute Public Sphere and Society, University of Zurich. Bern. Online: http://www.ekr. admin.ch/pdf/Studie_Qual_Berichterst_D. pdf (28.10.2020).
[51] To date, however, there is no association at the national level that represents all Muslims in Switzerland, but rather associations and organisations in different regions that are mostly oriented towards the country of origin. However, only a small proportion is represented by them. FACHSTELLE FÜR RASSISMUSBEKÄMPFUNG FRB, « Rassistische Diskriminierung in der Schweiz. Bericht der Fachstelle für Rassismusbekämpfung 2019/2020 », *doc. cit*., p. 144.
[52] GIANNI, « Muslime in der Schweiz Identitätsprofile, Erwartungen und Einstellungen », *doc. cit*., pp 9.
[53] GIANNI *et alii*, *Les musulmans en Suisse*, *op. cit*., p. 10.

migration policy. While the creation of the foreigners' statistics led to the stoking of a fear of 'foreigners taking over the values of the state', the discourse of 'Überfremdung' (overpopulation due to foreigners), which was particularly strong in the wake of the Second World War concerning the Jewish population, influenced Switzerland's migration policy as it distinguished between races such as Jews and non-Jews and linked religious affiliation to the foreign population's inability to assimilate.[54]

2.1 Political context

As already mentioned, the Swiss People's Party (SVP) is notably responsible for the emergence of Islamophobia in Switzerland. Through the production of xenophobic and racist campaigns the party had already gained particular influence around the turn of the century[55] also being the initiator of most parliamentary motions and interventions concerning minarets or the burqa. As the researchers' Vista Eskandari and Elisa Banfi (2017) point out, the party decisively pushed Islamophobia on an institutional level by employing two popular initiatives: the ban on minarets (2009) and the ban on face coverings (2021). Both were launched by the Committee against the Construction of Minarets, also known as the *Egerkingen Committee*, which was founded in 2007 by 16 politicians and continues advertising the slogan „Stop the Islamisation of Switzerland".[56] These initiatives should be regarded despite the fact that in 2009 Switzerland had only four minarets and the number of burqa-wearing women was estimated at only 50-100.[57] An analysis by the University of Lucerne (2021) even concluded that there are no burka wearers in Switzerland , but only 20-30 niqab wearers.[58] As Eskandari and Banfi point out, two central mechanisms were used in the campaigns: on the one hand, the construction of two camps drawn around 'us' and 'them', and on the other hand, the use of neo-orientalist and colonial stereotypes, including the threat of an Islamic invasion, the supposed backwardness of Muslim countries and the rhetoric that Islam systematically oppresses women.[59] The demarcation based on colonial racial hierarchies now ran anew along the lines of religion and contrasted the supposedly „homogeneous national group" with the „foreign" Muslims[60]:

[54] BANFI Elisa, « Genre et racialisation des musulman.es: une analyse des interventions parlementaires en Suisse (2001-2016) », in LEPINARD Éléonore *et alii* (dir.), *Genre et islamophobie : Discriminations, préjugés et représentations en Europe*, Lyon : ENS Éditions, 2021, p. 31-55.
[55] ESKANDARI et BANFI, « Institutionalising Islamophobia in Switzerland », *art. cit.*, p. 55.
[56] « Egerkinger Komitee », *doc. cit.*
[57] ESKANDARI et BANFI, « Institutionalising Islamophobia in Switzerland », *art. cit.*
[58] The niqab (or nikab) is a face-covering veil that leaves the eyes uncovered.
[59] ESKANDARI et BANFI, « Institutionalising Islamophobia in Switzerland », *art. cit.*, p. 60.
[60] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

> „This way, the fear of Islamic aggression in the Helvetic territory is symbolically intertwined with the oppression of Muslim women wearing the burqa. Muslim women and Muslim men are represented as belonging to an inferior human group whose religion is an obstacle in their evolution towards the civilised humankind of Helvetians."[61]

In this sense, the initiative committee propagated that minarets represented a „religious-political claim to power" coming from Islam[62] and thus a direct threat to the Swiss legal order. Moreover, they claimed that 'political Islam' was already shaping the Swiss discourse for years eventually leading to the introduction of Sharia law.[63] On the other hand, the gender aspect has been mobilised in institutional and political discourse to justify discriminatory decrees such as the minaret initiative. This instrumentalization of women's rights can also be found in other contexts such as right-wing populist parties in Europe or to justify military interventions in Afghanistan or Iraq.[64] The SVP also abused the supposed equality of men and women by declaring it as an essential Swiss value. This should be seen against the background of the party's misogynistic stance in the past and its opposition to advancing women's rights.[65]

2.2 Impact of the climate on Muslims living in Switzerland

Various studies or annual reports record discrimination against Muslims in Switzerland. However, it should be noted that most cases are not actually being reported and if so it's only the ones presenting sufficient evidence. Stigmatisation, everyday experiences or unreported cases are (usually) not mentioned. Moreover, it is rarely stated whether it is gender-based racism and whether the person concerned wears a headscarf.

Nevertheless, different reports offer insight into how the in public and political discourse widespread portrayals of Muslims and Islam are reflected in the Swiss population. A study conducted by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office studied coexistence in Switzerland (ZidS) and

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[61] *Ibid*., p. 65.

[62] LIEBRAND Anian, « Volksinitiative «Gegen den Bau von Minaretten» », *Egerkinger Komitee*, https://egerkingerkomitee.ch/project/volksinitiative-gegen-den-bau-von-minaretten/, consulted 18.04.2022.

[63] *Ibid*.

[64] ESKANDARI et BANFI, « Institutionalising Islamophobia in Switzerland », *art. cit*., p. 54. ; BOULILA Stefanie C., « Insignificant Signification: a Feminist Critique of the Anti-Muslim Feminist », in *Jahrbuch für Islamophobieforschung*, New Academic Press, 2013, p. 88-103., p. 89. BOULILA Stefanie C., « Insignificant Signification: a Feminist Critique of the Anti-Muslim Feminist », in, HAFEZ Farid, *Jahrbuch für Islamophobieforschung*, Wien : New Academic Press, 2013, p. 88-103.

[65] BOULILA, « Insignificant Signification: a Feminist Critique of the Anti-Muslim Feminist », *art. cit*., p. 93.

hostility towards different groups living in Switzerland. The study found that in 2019/2020, hostility towards Muslims (12 per cent) is higher than towards black people (11 per cent) or Jews (8 per cent). In addition, the study looked at specifically anti-Muslim attitudes, offering insight into the stereotypes about Muslims that are prevalent in Swiss society. Among 20 per cent of respondents, the following descriptions of Muslims were common: „fanatical", „aggressive", „oppressive to women" and „do not respect human rights". Negative statements about Muslims included: „better no Muslims in Switzerland", „forbid religious practice", „prohibit immigration", „provide support for terrorists", „want to enforce Sharia law" and „want world domination".[66]

The international comparison of Switzerland in an international context (Switzerland, Germany, Austria, France, and the UK) is also indicative. It shows that in 2017, 35 per cent of Muslims living in Switzerland experienced discrimination, ranking the country the highest of all the contexts studied. In addition, 17 per cent of non-Muslims surveyed in Switzerland said they did not like having Muslims as neighbours.[67]

The different treatment of Muslims is also reproduced in the Swiss labour market. For example, Anaïd Lindemann and Jörg Stolz (2018) show that Muslims are disproportionately likely to be unemployed, regardless of their level of education. [68]

2.1 Legislative framework

In addition to the previously discussed ban on the full veil, the hijab has also repeatedly been the subject of public and legislative debate, even though very few Muslim women in Switzerland wear a headscarf. It is often a clear commitment to Islam, but it can also take on a cultural function. While headscarf and veiling bans can vary by municipality or canton, there are no headscarf bans in public spaces. Even though attempts continue to ban the wearing of headscarves in schools, they remain unsuccessful. A decisive factor here was the ruling of the Swiss Federal Court in 2015, rejecting the complaint of a school in St. Gallen that wanted to ban a female pupil from wearing her headscarf.[69] However, the Federal Court also banned a

[66] FACHSTELLE FÜR RASSISMUSBEKÄMPFUNG FRB, « Rassistische Diskriminierung in der Schweiz. Bericht der Fachstelle für Rassismusbekämpfung 2019/2020 », *doc. cit.*, p. 145.
[67] HALM Dirk et SAUER Martina, « Muslime in Europa. Integriert, aber nicht akzeptiert? », *Religionsmonitor*, Bertelsmann-Stiftung, 2017.
[68] LINDEMANN Anaïd et STOLZ Jörg, « The Muslim Employment Gap, Human Capital, and Ethno-Religious Penalties: Evidence from Switzerland », *Social Inclusion*, vol. 6, n° 2, 2018, p. 151-161.
[69] BAYARD *et alii*, « Ich spreche für mich. Erfahrungen von muslimischen Jugendlichen mit Vorurteilen », *doc. cit.*, p. 60.

teacher from wearing a Muslim headscarf, a ruling that was supported by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ('Dahlab v. Switzerland').[70]

Since 1995, the anti-discrimination law has been in force at a national level (Art. 261-283 StGB), which can punish religious discrimination with imprisonment or a fine.[71] However, the employer is free to decide who is employed, although in specific areas dress codes are in force which until now made it impossible to employ a person wearing a headscarf.[72]

[70] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit.*

[71] The penal norm against discrimination and incitement to hatred criminalises acts that explicitly or implicitly deny people equal existence in public on the basis of their race, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. Also punishable are racially discriminatory denials of goods and services intended for the general public.

[72] BAYARD *et alii*, « Ich spreche für mich. Erfahrungen von muslimischen Jugendlichen mit Vorurteilen », *doc. cit.*, pp. 59.

3 Theoretical framework

This section explains what exactly is meant by Islamophobia. The aim is not to discuss the term or the concept itself, but to show that Islamophobia builds on power structures and, due to the intersection of specific racism and sexism and constitutes a very specific phenomenon that affects political, institutional and individual levels. While at its inception in the late 1990s[73] the term Islamophobia was used by political activists to address the existing climate in Western liberal democracies regarding Islam and Muslims, it has since then been predominantly understood as a concept seeking to understand the origins, presence, dimensions, intensity, causes and consequences of anti-Islamic and anti-Muslim sentiments.[74]

3.1 In- and outgroup – or the „we" and „the others"

As Ulrich Wagner, Patrick F. Kotzur and Maria-Therese Fries (2021)[75] point out that when one's considering discrimination and the rejection of certain people, the power-based concept of in- and out-group is particularly important. Henri Tajfel's social identity theory states that group membership provides information about a person's social identity and that people want to be perceived positively.[76] Combining the processes of categorisation, identification and the urge for positive self-evaluation, a distinction inevitably arises between one's own group membership and other groups, often placing one's own higher than the other. In particular, the concept of intergroup threat, i.e. the perception that a person or group threatens one's own material resources or values, is an important factor influencing the negative perception and categorisation as an out-group. Consequently, if a person is assigned a certain group affiliation, this can have a strong impact on the interaction with this person. This depends on how strongly a person identifies with a group and how much emphasis is placed on it. The importance of intergroup threat is particularly evident when looking at current public and media discourse, where intergroup threat functions as a tool to reject immigrants – and especially Muslims.[77] In the case of Muslim women with head coverings, this can even lead to „double othering", as they are perceived as „the others" due to their religion and their (falsely assumed) different

[73] LÉPINARD *et alii*, *Genre et islamophobie. Discriminations, préjugés et représentations en Europe*, *op. cit.*
[74] BLEICH Erik, « What Is Islamophobia and How Much Is There? Theorizing and Measuring an Emerging Comparative Concept », *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 55, nº 12, SAGE Publications Inc, 2011, p. 1581-1600.
[75] WAGNER Ulrich *et alii*, « Anti-immigrant prejudice and discrimination in Europe », in TILEAGĂ Christian *et alii* (dir.), *Tileaga, C. & Augoustinos, M. & Durrheim, K. (Eds.). Routledge handbook of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination. London: Routledge, Routledge International Handbooks*, London : Routledge, 2021.
[76] HENRI TAJFEL, *The social psychology of minorities*, London : Minority Rights Group, 1978, vol. 38la.
[77] WAGNER *et alii*, « Anti-immigrant prejudice and discrimination in Europe », *art. cit.*, p. 79f.

citizenship.[78] In this context, Abdellali Hajjat and Marwan Mohammed (2016) also point to the power relationship between the established and the marginalised for the purpose of analysing Islamophobia by following the argumentation of sociologist Norbert Elias, who points out a specific aspect: [...] „A despised, stigmatised and relatively powerless marginalised group is tolerated as long as its members are content with the low rank which, according to the understanding of the established groups, is due to their group, and as long as they behave in accordance with their low status as subordinate and subservient."[79]

3.2 The construction of Muslims as the „fundamentally other"

Islam has been one of the most controversial topics of public and political debate in Western societies for the past decades.[80] Especially since the attack on the Twin Tours on the 11th September 2001, Muslims are staged as a threat to the security of Western liberal values because of their religion, against which the state must defend itself.[81] Furthermore, various studies show that Islam is increasingly stigmatised as incompatible with Western values and liberal democracy.[82]

Overall, this juxtaposition functions as the establishment of a power structure. The researchers Fatima El-Tayeb (2011) and Sarah Mazouz (2018) speak of the creation of an „unequal dichotomy", in which the concept of universalism is particularly effective. El-Tayeb describes universalism as fundamental, as it is characterised by seeing „paradigmatically human and other, non-Western parts of the world as inevitably deviating from this norm."[83] Mazouz explains in this sense that universalism awakens in majority groups their own notion „that they are neutral and that only the dominated embody a partial point of view. Therefore, they believe that they are entitled to call any difference an anomaly (deviation)."[84] Concerning Islamophobia,

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[78] ALLEN Chris, *Reconfiguring Islamophobia: A Radical Rethinking of a Contested Concept (Palgraphe Hate Studies)*, Hampshire : Palgrave Piviot, 2020, 151 p. ; see LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit.*, p. 9.

[79] ELIAS Norbert in : HAJJAT Abdellali et MOHAMMED Marwan, *Islamophobie*, Paris: La Découverte, 2016., p. 21f.

[80] GIANNI Matteo *et al.*, *Les musulmans en Suisse : profils et intégration*, Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes, 2015., ; VERKUYTEN Maykel, « Anti-Muslim Sentiments in Western Societies », in Tileagă Christian, AUGOUSTINOS Martha, DURRHEIM Kevin (dir.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Discrimination, Prejudice and Stereotyping*, London : Routledge, 2021, p. 118-135.

[81] LEPINARD Éléonore *et ai*, *Genre et islamophobie. Discriminations, préjugés et représentations en Europe*, ENS Éditions, [s.d.]., p. 4. ; VERKUYTEN, « Anti-Muslim Sentiments in Western Societies », *art. cit.*, p. 118.; MARFOUK, « I'm neither racist nor xenophobic, but », *art. cit.*

[82] VERKUYTEN Maykel, « Justifying discrimination against Muslim immigrants: out-group ideology and the five-step social identity model », *The British Journal of Social Psychology*, vol. 52, nº 2, 2013, p. 345-360. ; ESKANDARI et BANFI, « Institutionalising Islamophobia in Switzerland », *art. cit.*

[83] EL-TAYEB, *European Others*, *op. cit.*, pp. 81.

[84] MAZOUZ Sarah, Républicanisme et altérité - sortir du « secret public », 2018.

El-Tayeb speaks of how this is paradoxically not based on a fundamental confrontation of religious differences, i.e. as a conflict between Christianity and Islam, but on the construction of Islam as incompatible with Europe, as it is opposed to European humanism with its „'evil, intolerant, foreign culture.'" As a result, Europe stands for universal, „while Muslims represent the particular and thus inferior."[85] In this sense, according to El-Tayeb, the notion of European secularism can also be deconstructed. In the process, the Muslim presence is only recognised to contrast it with a 'new, united Europe based on the principle of secularism and to construct a „permanent moment of crisis"[86] out of this marginalised minority. Hajjat and Mohammad describe this juxtaposition in public discourse as a „stigmatisation of Islam and Muslims without any complexes."[87]

3.3 Islamophobia or anti-Muslim racism?

The terminology of Islamophonia has been widely discussed and criticised in research and consequently also knows other terms, such as anti-Muslim prejudice or anti-Muslim racism.[88] For example, Maykel Verkuyten (2021) argues for a distinction between two terms: Islamophobia and anti-Muslim attitudes. Accordingly, Islamophobia is described as the negative attitude of individuals towards „Islam as a religious belief system and various practices", whereas in anti-Muslim prejudice the attitude is directed against „Muslims as a group."[89] In contrast, Erik Bleich (2011) shows that negative discourses about Islam and Muslims (or supposed Muslims) are often inseparable from the general perception. One of the reasons is that criticism of a religion is more socially acceptable than criticism of a group of people.[90] As Verkuyten points out, populist politicians use the distinction between Islam and Muslims, for example, to avoid being labelled discriminatory, following the line of argument that Islam is not compatible with secular or liberal values.[91] Thus, Bleich specifically addresses the phenomenon's formation of prejudice by defining Islamophobia as „indiscriminate negative

[85] EL-TAYEB, *European Others*, *op. cit.*, pp. 81.
[86] *Ibid.*, p.
[87] HAJJAT, MOHAMMED, *Islamophobie*, *op. cit.*, p. 12 f.
[88] ASAL Houda, « Islamophobie : la fabrique d'un nouveau concept. État des lieux de la recherche », *Sociologie*, vol. 5, nº 1, 2014, p. 13-29., p. 18.
[89] VERKUYTEN, « Anti-Muslim Sentiments in Western Societies », *art. cit.*, p. 120.
[90] BLEICH Erik, « What Is Islamophobia and How Much Is There? Theorizing and Measuring an Emerging Comparative Concept », *American Behavioral Scientist*, vol. 55, nº 12, SAGE Publications Inc, 2011, p. 1581-1600.
[91] VERKUYTEN, M. « Justifying discrimination of Muslim immigrants: Outgroup ideology and the five-step social identity model», *British Journal of Social Psychology, 52,* 2013, pp. 345-360. ; ESKANDARI et BANFI, « Institutionalising Islamophobia in Switzerland », *art. cit.*

attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims."[92] By including negative attitudes and emotions into the definition, it encompasses not only discriminatory actions but also addresses the formation of prejudice which does not necessarily have to but can lead to discrimination. Bleich's line of argument is also followed by an international research team from the Georgetown University called the *Bridge Initiative project*. They define Islamophobia as „an extreme fear of and hostility towards Islam and Muslims [which] often leads to hate speech and hate crimes, social and political discrimination [and] can be used to rationalize policies such as mass surveillance, incarceration, and disenfranchisement, and can influence domestic and foreign policy."[93] Taken together, these broad definitions allow the phenomenon to be viewed in its entirety, including the dimension of the resulting discriminatory actions and negative attitudes. The same line of argumentation is followed by Hajjat and Mohammed who in the French context define a so-called „Islamophobia of the pen". This is based on the juxtaposition with the „fundamentally other" already presented by El-Tayeb, which in public discourse is seen as a „stigmatisation of Islam and Muslims without any complexes", leading to a creation of a „Muslim problem that urgently needs to be solved by the public authorities."[94] The authors propose to consider Islamophobia as a „total political fact" that encompasses the totality of society, i.e. the political, administrative, judicial, economic, media and intellectual institutions. „Islamophobia involves individuals and social groups, in conscious or unconscious ways, which largely explains the 'hysterical' or 'passionate' dimension of controversies over the Muslim question."[95] The researchers describe Islamophobia as, among other things, „an irrational fear that gives rise to dimensions of aversion, hatred, rejection and racism."[96] Although they concede that the suffix „phobia" could have been chosen more appropriately and more broadly than just reducing it to phobia[97] they consider it important to use one word only to describe this social reality. After all, this leads to its „existence being acknowledged", while not naming it leads to „it being socially and politically obscured".[98] The researchers understand Islamophobia as a:

> „complex social process of racialisation/othering based on the sign of (actual or perceived) belonging to the Muslim religion, which varies according to national context and historical period. It is a global and „gendered" phenomenon because it is influenced

[92] BLEICH, « What Is Islamophobia and How Much Is There? », *art. cit.*, p. 1581.
[93] GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, « The Bridge Initative », *Bridge Initiative*, https://bridge.georgetown.edu/, consulted 07.04.2022.
[94] HAJJAT, MOHAMMED, *Islamophobie*, *op. cit.*, p. 12 f.
[95] *Ibid.*, S. 18f.
[96] *Ibid.*, S. 18f.
[97] *Ibid.*, S. 19.
[98] *Ibid.*, S. 20.

by the international circulation of ideas and people as well as by gender relations. We assume that Islamophobia is the consequence of the construction of a 'Muslim problem' whose 'solution' lies in disciplining the bodies and even the minds of (supposed) Muslims."[99]

As can be seen from the above definition, Islamophobia is a gender-specific phenomenon. This dimension together with its effects were studied by Lépinard et al (2021).[100] The authors point out that at the academic level, the negative aspects of Islamophobia are often discussed while less emphasis is placed on the initiatives of those affected. To counter this circumstance, they consider the phenomenon through three dimensions while explicitly focusing on the impact of gender: (i) the discourses of public institutions, (ii) the adoption by citizens, and (iii) the discriminatory impact at the individual level. Thus, in the public discourse, the principle of gender equality is set up as a Western model and norm. In a second step, it is incorporated into „Western thinking" and instrumentalised for the purpose of dominating Muslims, which can ultimately lead to the othering and discrimination of Muslim women and Muslims.[101] Following Bleich, the researchers emphasise that Islamophobia also „includes negative attitudes or emotions without necessarily leading to discrimination, since it uses specific discursive registers and repertoires [...] that refer to racism but also include ideological elements and stereotypes typical of a negative view of Islam as a religion."[102] In sum, Lépinard et al. understand Islamophobia as negative attitudes or emotions towards Islam or Muslims, which is reproduced in public discourse, i.e. the media, politics and institutions, and consequently generates specific types of racism and sexism towards Muslim persons or persons read as Muslim, emphasizing that the discourses must be rigid, unchanging and indiscriminate in order to be labelled Islamophobic.[103] Furthermore, as El-Tayeb suggests, they look at Islamophobia from a social and historical perspective and understand it as a process based on power structures that enable the perpetuation of „prejudiced social ideas that stem from the colonial past and help to justify the social relegation of the populations concerned."[104]

As this work focuses on the impact of Islamophobia on the lives of Muslim women wearing headscarves, a separation of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim attitudes suggested by Verkuyten is not useful. Instead, this work follows the apt and significant lines of argument proposed by

[99] *Ibid*., S. 19.
[100] LEPINARD *et alii*, *Genre et islamophobie*. *Discriminations, préjugés et représentations en Europe*, *op*. *cit*.
[101] SARRASIN *et alii*, « Islamophobie, racisme et genre », *art. cit.*, p. 12.
[102] *Ibid.*, p. 12.
[103] *Ibid.*
[104] *Ibid*., p. 21.

Bleich, Hajjat and Mohamad, the Bridge Initiative and Lépinard et al. To focus on the perspective of the Hijabis themselves, the author of this master's thesis understands Islamophobia as follows:

> Islamophobia is a global and gendered phenomenon built on a historically developed power structure and involves undifferentiated or negative attitudes or emotions towards Islam or Muslims. These can be (re)produced in the whole of society – politics, institutions and public discourse. They often have an impact on how Islam and Muslims or people viewed as Muslims are viewed, which can lead to contempt, stigmatisation or discrimination. Islamophobia, therefore, has an impact on the thoughts, feelings, bodies and actions of Muslims.

3.4 The instrumentalization of the Muslim woman

As already evident from the minaret and burqa ban, the influence of gender is essential in the analysis of Islamophobia. This is also shown by Lépinard et al.: in public discourse, the principle of gender equality is set up as a Western model and norm, in a second step it is incorporated into „Western thinking" and finally instrumentalised for the purpose of dominating Muslims, leading to the othering of and discrimination against Muslims, and even more so against Muslim women.[105] El-Tayeb also emphasises this process by referring to the fundamental juxtaposition of „European" and „Muslim" culture. In this sense, Muslim identity is shaped exclusively by men, according to their own interests, which are directly opposed to the interests of Muslim women who are disenfranchised in every possible way, violated, immobilised and in need of being saved from the outside."[106] The Muslim woman is thus portrayed as an isolated and hostile person who cannot speak for herself and has no interest in individual freedom or equality.[107] The origin of this stereotyping can be traced back to colonial times, among other things, in which the veil or the burqa functioned as the ultimate sign of oppression. This can be seen, for example, in the case of Algeria, where the public „unveiling" of „oppressed" Muslim women was staged as „modernisation" and „liberation".[108] In this sense, this seemingly archaic culture is contrasted with that of the European states presented as progressive, which declare the equality of men and women as a fundamental value. Thus, from

[105] *Ibid*., p. 12.
[106] EL-TAYEB, *European Others*, *op. cit*., p. 93.
[107] *Ibid*., p. 104.
[108] See ABU-LUGHOD, Lila, «Do Muslim Women Need Saving? », Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013.

this construction of a threatening Muslim man derives a victimisation of Muslim women who should be saved from these patriarchal traditions. In this sense, headscarf bans are put forward with the justification of saving young girls from an 'oppressive and sexist religion'. Muslim women are consequently seen as passive and alienated victims of Muslim men. This discourse leads to an alleged need to liberate Muslim women from their oppressors by banning the wearing of the veil or burqa.[109]

Thus, the image of the oppressed Muslim woman serves as a justification to affirm the incompatibility with the national corpus and the danger posed by 'uncivilised Muslims'.[110] In this discourse, the burqa becomes a symbol of „belonging to an uncivilised community" and an „inability to emancipate oneself without the aid of Western actors."[111] According to Banfi, the veil is „transformed into a cultural marker that refers to the alleged racial identity of a group (in some cases citizens of the country) to symbolically and legally exclude them from the national body [and deny them] socio-political rights because they are portrayed as not participating in the putative national capital of gender equality."[112]

A particular illustration of the instrumentalization of Muslim women is the popular initiative „Yes to the ban on veiling", adopted by the Swiss electorate on 7 March 2021, which bans the covering of faces in places accessible to the public.[113] Although the ban also includes the banning for veiled demonstrators, the referendum debate was dominated by the Islamic veil and the media soon spoke of the „burqa ban" – even though the number of women wearing a total veil in this country is minimal. As Andreas Tunger-Zannetti et al. (2021) show in their research, both public discourse and supporters misused the rhetoric of equality and propagated instrumentalised stereotypes of the 'helpless Muslim woman' who is „poorly integrated and forced by her father or husband to wear the full veil."[114] It was constantly ignored that the majority of niqab wearers in Switzerland are well-educated women socialised in the West who wear the veil of their own conviction.[115]

[109] ESKANDARI et BANFI, « Institutionalising Islamophobia in Switzerland », *art. cit.*, p. 60.
[110] EL-TAYEB, *European Others*, *op. cit.*p. 92-94.
[111] ESKANDARI et BANFI, « Institutionalising Islamophobia in Switzerland », *art. cit.*, p. 60.
[112] BANFI, « Genre et racialisation des musulman.es », *art. cit.*, p. 43.
[113] This does not apply to houses of worship and other sacred places, or to covering for reasons of safety, health, climatic conditions and local customs.
[114] UNIVERSITÄT LUZERN, « Analyse zur Burka-Debatte in der Schweiz », *Universität Luzern*, https://www.unilu.ch/news/analyse-zur-burka-debatte-in-der-schweiz-5576/, consulted 15.04.2022.
[115] TUNGER-ZANETTI, *Verhüllung*, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

3.5 Intersectionality

For analysing discrimination, also being present in the concept of Islamophobia, research increasingly use the concept of intersectionality.[116] This refers to the idea that social categories such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity, social class rarely occur in a one-dimensional way, but intersect and build on each other reciprocally.[117] In this regard, Lépinard et. al are researching the field of Islamophobia and expanding an intersectional view of discrimination with the category of religious affiliation.[118] The individual categories are not to be considered in isolation but in combination, focusing on the simultaneous interaction of social inequalities.[119] The accumulation of different characteristics and class affiliations makes it possible to look at the individual experience of discrimination in more detail.

3.6 The hijab as a „social skin"

As explained in the previous chapters, prejudice against Muslims is very common in the current socio-cultural context. As Lavinia Gianettoni (2021) points out, wearing a headscarf, a burqa or a niqab leads to individuals being automatically assigned to a certain category and, depending on the situation, to a certain personality according to their clothing.[120] In this sense, Chris Allen (2014) argues that in today's Western world head coverings often lead to an association with stereotypes of „false", „problematic" and „threatening" Islam, whereby those women are perceived as „different" and as the physical embodiment of this very problematisation.[121] Anaïd Lindemann (2021) also identifies the hijab as a „visible marker of otherness", which, according to her results, often leads to a (false) categorisation as foreign women.[122] In the French context, Patrick Simon describes this process of racialisation of national identity, defined as the „denial

[116] LEPINARD *et alii*, *Genre et islamophobie. Discriminations, préjugés et représentations en Europe*, *op. cit.* ; WEICHSELBAUMER, « Multiple Discrimination against Female Immigrants Wearing Headscarves », *art. cit.* ; EIJBERTS et ROGGEBAND, « Stuck with the stigma? How Muslim migrant women in the Netherlands deal – individually and collectively – with negative stereotypes », *art. cit.*

[117] CRENSHAW Kimberle, « Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color », *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, nº 6, Stanford Law Review, 1991, p. 1241-1299.

[118] SARRASIN *et alii*, « Islamophobie, racisme et genre », *art. cit.*, S. 15.

[119] WALGENBACH Katharina, « Intersektionalität als Analyseperspektive heterogener Stadträume », in Scambor Elli, Zimmer Fränk (dir.), *Die intersektionelle Stadt: Geschlechterforschung und Medienkunst an den Achsen der Ungleichheit*, Bielefeld : transcript Verlag, 2014, p. 81-92.

[120] GIANETTONI Lavinia, « Le sexisme des autres : Préjugés islamophobes et violence de genre », in LEPINARD Éléonore, SARRASIN Oriane, GIANETTONI Lavinia (dir.), *Genre et islamophobie : Discriminations, préjugés et représentations en Europe*, Lyon : ENS Éditions, 2021, p. 105-119.

[121] ALLEN, « Exploring the Impact of Islamophobia on Visible Muslim Women Victims », *art. cit.*,

[122] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit.*, p. 8.

of frenchness".[123] As summarised by Gianettoni, the religiosity evident through clothing thus functions as a crucial mechanism in social recognition and the categorisation that accompanies it.[124] The hijab can therefore take on a significance similar to „skin colour"[125], as it can function as a reason for stigmatisation, racism and prejudice due to the open declaration of Islam.[126] Thus, this work focuses on different reasons for discrimination, such as religion. Because of the hijab, Muslim women are assigned to social categories, which affects their everyday life. These processes can be described as „ethnoracial exclusion", which is the process of excluding specific groups based on „appearance, ethnicity, nationality or other characteristics".[127] Ethnoracial exclusion includes both the concepts of discrimination and stigmatisation.[128]

3.7 The interplay of stigmatisation and discrimination

This work aims to analyse women's everyday experiences and therefore draws on Michèle Lamont et al.'s (2018) definition of the stigmatised. It summarises...

> „a wide range of subjective experiences, namely, incidents in which respondents experienced disrespect and their dignity, honour, relative status, or sense of self was challenged. This occurs when one is insulted, receives poor services, is the victim of jokes, is subjected to double standards, is excluded from informal networks (e.g., is not invited to parties), is the victim of physical assault, or is threatened physically. It also includes instances where one is stereotyped as poor, uneducated, or dangerous, or where one is misunderstood or underestimated"[129]

Moreover, Lamont et al. emphasise that in the case of stigmatisation, it is not only microaggressions and the experience of stereotyping that are meant, but also experiences of respondents feeling left out or ignored, the latter not constituting incidents of aggression but of non-attention.[130] According to Derald Wing Sue (2010), microaggressions are „brief and

[123] *Ibid*., p. 8.
[124] SIMON, « Le genre de l'islamophobie », *art. cit*., p. 17., « déni de francité ».
[125] VGL. ABDELMALEK Sayad A. Sayad, Histoire et recherche identitaire, ouvr. cité, p. 102.
[126] Ibid, S. 8.
[127] LAMONT Michèle, SILVA Graziella M., WELBURN Jessica S., *Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel*, Princeton and Oxford : Princeton University Press, 2018[2016], 400 p., p. 6.
[128] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit*., p. 5.
[129] LAMONT *et alii*, *Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel*, *op. cit*., p. 6.
[130] *Ibid*., p. 7.

everyday verbal, behavioural and environmental humiliations, whether intentional or unintentional, that convey hostile, derogatory or negative racial, gender, sexual and religious slurs and insults to the target person or group".[131] As in the research of Lamont et al., this process is also understood as "assult on worth".[132]

Stigmatisation is also completely context-dependent, i.e. it depends on „access to social, economic and political power that allows the identification of differences" and the construction of stereotypes.[133] Erving Goffman (1963)[134] describes the process of how stigma is formed, which was later discussed and clarified by Bruce Link and Joe Phelan (2001; 2013). According to the latter, stigmatisation is a process occurring in power relations in which people are „labelled, delimited and associated with undesirable characteristics", thereby „constructing a rationale for their devaluation, rejection and exclusion".[135] Stigmatisation is constructed through the following steps[136]:

i. *Labelling*: In the first component, individuals are „distinguished and labelled" on the basis of human differences, whereby the majority of external characteristics such as big noses are not socially relevant, but those such as skin colour, sexual preferences or – in this case the headscarf – are decisive.
ii. *Stereotyping*: In the second component, negative stereotypes are attributed to a person, which are generated by „prevailing cultural beliefs". For example, a person wearing a headscarf is automatically branded as „oppressed".
iii. *Separation*: In the third component, a certain categorisation is made that distinguishes between „us" and „them". A Hijabi, for example, becomes the incarnation of Islam and the „foreigner".
iv. *Loss of status and discrimination*: In the last component, the stigmatised lose status, which ultimately results in different forms of discrimination.

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[131] SUE Derald Wing, *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation*, Hoboken, NJ, US : John Wiley & Sons Inc, 2010, p. xxiii, 328., p. 5.
[132] LAMONT *et alii*, *Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel*, *op. cit.*, p. 7.
[133] LINK Bruce G., PHELAN Jo C., « Conceptualizing Stigma », *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 27, nº 1, 2001, p. 363-385., p. 367.
[134] GOFFMAN Erving, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Englewood Cliffs : Prentice-Hall, 1963, 180 p.
[135] LINK Bruce G., PHELAN Jo C., « Labeling and stigma », in *Handbook of the sociology of mental health, 2nd ed*, New York, NY, US : Springer Science + Business Media, 2013, p. 571-587., p. 579.
[136] *Ibid.*, p. 578f.

Stigmatisation thus provokes reactions in both the subject and the object. While in the former it may manifest itself as "anger, irritation, fear or pity, in the stigmatised it triggers emotions such as embarrassment, fear, alienation or shame."[137] The following quote from Link and Phelan illustrates the importance of stigma in the context of discrimination:

> „Because there are so many stigmatised circumstances and because stigmatising processes can affect multiple areas of life, stigma is likely to have a dramatic impact on the distribution of life chances in areas such as income, housing, criminal involvement, health and life itself." [138]

While stigma can lead to discrimination, it does not have to. Consequently, it is significant to title the impact of stigma on the individual, even if it is not followed by discrimination. Discrimination is defined in this paper (following the definition of Lamont et al.) as all those incidents in which the persons concerned believe that they have been denied access to opportunities and resources (e.g. credit, jobs, housing, access to public places) because of their headscarf, ethnic origin or nationality.[139]

Much of the existing research on discrimination has two patchy tendencies: Either they focus only on empirically measurable discrimination, namely the denial of access to resources[140], without also addressing the preliminary stage, stigmatisation; or they tend to always include the perspective of the majority society when considering incidents. The fact that stigmatisation is only sparsely studied has two main reasons: on the one hand, that description of stigmatisation on the part of those affected is often passed off as merely „representations of a subjective experience". On the other hand stigmatisation is – in contrast to discrimination – often dismissed as a concept for being more difficult to measure and grasp.[141] According to Lamont et al., the focus on „measurable" discrimination is also explained by the meritocracy prevailing in Western societies and the concept of the American Dream postulating equal opportunities and equal access to resources.[142]

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[137] *Ibid*., p. 367.
[138] LINK, PHELAN, « Conceptualizing Stigma », *art. cit*., p. 363.
[139] LAMONT *et alii*, *Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel*, *op. cit*., p. 6.
It should be noted that the researchers do not list „religion" as a ground for discrimination.
[140] According to Lamont et al. (p. 6), discrimination is defined as incidents where respondents believe they have been denied access to opportunities and resources (e.g. credit, jobs, housing, access to public places) because of their race, ethnicity or nationality. This paper uses almost the same definition for this, but the denial of access to opportunities and resources is owed by religion, and here explicitly the headscarf.
[141] LAMONT *et alii*, *Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel*, *op. cit*., p. 18.
[142] *Ibid*., p. 8.

This study aims to counteract these tendencies. It does not focus on the point of view of the dominant group and instead looks at the stigmatisation and discrimination experiences of the women concerned using an interpretative and intersectional approach. The former will only come to light to the extent that it is evident from the recited narratives. Moreover, this work focuses specifically on stigmatisation, which, although more difficult to measure than discrimination, is by no means less significant. As Lamont et al. underline, looking at the subjective experiences of incidents of discrimination and stigmatisation is essential. However, always including the perspective of the perpetrator of such incidents is, in the words of the researchers, „neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for proving that such an incident has occurred".[143] In addition, it should be noted that power relations between the discriminator and the person affected are often unequal, possibly leading to a downgrading of the produced reality of the stigmatised. And even though stigma is more difficult to measure than discrimination, it should not be considered less significant, as Lamont et al. put it: even 'only' „subjectively experienced and defined, the harm is no less real for those who believe they are underestimated, ignored or stereotyped."[144] While those experiences dominate the everyday lives of affected women, they are little known to mainstream society. This paper therefore also aims to involve the latter and encourage them to dismantle existing hierarchies in the future. Therefore, this Master's thesis seeks to answer the following research question: In which areas of life and how does the headscarf shape the everyday life of Muslim women in German-speaking Switzerland? Special attention is paid to the perspective of the interviewees concerning their experiences, the prejudices and stereotypes they have encountered, the effects the experiences had on themselves, and the associated strategies they have developed as a result.

[143] *Ibid*., p. 7.
[144] *Ibid*., p. 18.

4 Methodology

To answer the research question, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight Muslim women living in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, which were then analysed using an initially inductive and subsequently deductive, interpretative, and intersectional approach.

4.1 Data collection

The data collection was challenging, as I am neither affected nor Muslim. Access to women wearing headscarves was made even more difficult, as interviews deal with a very personal and sometimes vulnerable area of life. This requires a great deal of trust on the part of those affected.[145] In order to gain a deeper understanding of the women's everyday lives, the ideal would be to conduct observations within an organisation or association of Muslim women who wear the headscarf. This was not possible due to three factors: firstly, I am (still) not aware of any official, public organisation or association which is limited to Muslim women wearing headscarves and where Muslim women meet regularly. On the other hand, due to the COVID-19 pandemic present at the time of the research, such meetings and activities were limited or non-existent, making access to them even more difficult. Finally, due to my non-affiliation to the Muslim community, it was not possible for me to join any existing unofficial groups of Muslim women that meet in mosques, for example. In order to get in touch with affected women, I decided to focus on conducting a qualitative interview study. In conversation with the interview partners, I was offered the possibility of three ethnographic observations (c.f. ethnographic observations).

4.2 The interviews

In order to find possible interview partners in German-speaking Switzerland, I followed three paths: First, I wrote to Muslim associations and organisations, then I used personal contacts and finally followed the snowball system. Among the associations contacted was the Young Swiss Muslims Network (YSMN), which does networking work with Muslim associations in Switzerland. After contacting me by phone, a co-leader of the organisation offered to present my research in a WhatsApp message which was then sent in a WhatsApp group with possible

[145] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit.*, p. 5.

interview partners. As a result, at the end of July, a young woman from Basel agreed to have a first meeting in August. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the first encounter with her took place virtually, via Zoom, and addressed the basic aims of this study. This enabled the establishment of an initial familiarity and then to conduct the first interview with her the following month. After the first interview, I used the snowball system, asking the first interviewee for any interested women, whereupon another six contacted me directly. Separately, I contacted a Muslim friend in Zurich (who does not wear a hijab) to ask her if she knew any Muslim women with headscarves who would be interested in participating in my study. She put me in touch with a woman who knows her father from a mosque in Zurich and finally agreed to do an interview with me. I met the eighth interviewee at the annual YSMN conference at the end of October, where I asked her directly for an interview and received an immediate positive response. Overall, this approach enabled me to conduct eight semi-structured interviews with Muslim women living in German-speaking Switzerland, of whom seven wear the hijab. The interviews took place between September and December 2021, in locations freely chosen by the women, such as in their homes (n=2), in a coffee shop (n=1), in a park (n=1), at university (n=1) or via Zoom (n=3). The majority of the interviews were conducted in the preferred language of the interviewees, i.e. in seven out of eight cases in Swiss-German dialect and one in French. The questionnaire covered: their personal history, their relation to religion and the headscarf, their everyday experiences (e.g. work, public space, institutions), and their politicisation (e.g. impact of political campaigns, social moods, etc.). The women interviewed are between 19 and 47 years old and live in various cantons of Germany-speaking Switzerland, namely Basel-Stadt (n = 2), Aargau (n = 2), Schaffhausen (n = 1), Bern (n = 1) and Zurich (n = 2). Six out of eight live in larger Swiss cities. Almost all interviewees have Swiss (n = 7) and another nationality, namely Turkish (n = 3), Tunisian (n = 2), Somali (n = 1), North Macedonian (n = 1) and Moroccan (n = 1). For the protection of the interviewees, their names are anonymised and a pseudonym is used (cf. Table 1).

Table 1

Pseudonym	Age	Occupation	Date of birth	Nationality	Canton of Residence	Immigrated	Parents immigrated
Gizem	27	Lawyer	18.02.94	Turkish / Swiss	Basel-Stadt	no	yes (Turkey)
Naima	24	PhD Immunology	15.12.96	Moroccan / Swiss	Basel-City / Vaud	no	father (Marocco), mother (Austria / Switzerland)
Marijana	37	Intern at the Swiss Red Cross	19.11.83	North Macedonian / Swiss	Aargau	yes, at 5	yes (Northern Macedonia)
Menna	47	Currently unemployed	17.04.73	Tunisian / Swiss	Zurich	yes, at	no
Meray	28	Pharmacist	19.06.93	Turkish / Swiss	Schaffhausen	no	yes (Turkey)
Sara	26	Project assistant in pharmaceutical industry	20.05.95	Turkish / permit C	Aargau	yes, at 7	father (Turkey)
Nalia	29	Specialist in law	05.05.92	Somali / Swiss	Bern	yes, at 1	yes (Somalia)
Hayet	19	High school student	11.11.02	Tunisian / Swiss	Zurich	no	yes (Tunisia)

4.3 Ethnographic observations

In addition to the interviews, I conducted three ethnographic observations between October 2021 and January 2022, which had the purpose of better understanding the everyday life of the women concerned as well as the Muslim community in Switzerland. The observations include:

i. Attending an annual meeting of the Young Swiss Muslim Network (YSMN)[146]: The annual meeting of the YSMN serves the networking, exchange, and cooperation of Muslim youth and student associations active in Switzerland. On that day, various workshops were held from morning to afternoon, and at the end, a summary was given of the challenges facing the (young) Muslim community in Switzerland. As an outsider, I was allowed to attend the final discussion.

ii. Attending the event „Women with headscarves in the world of work": In November, an event planned by the information and counselling centre GGG[147] took place in Bern. Its goal was to raise awareness about discrimination against young women with headscarves in accessing education and the labour market and to develop a dialogue

[146] The organisation aims to build a cooperative network of young Swiss Muslims by promoting networking, exchange and cooperation among active Muslim youth and student associations.
[147] Together against violence and racism is an information and counselling service offered by municipalities in the Bern and Burgdorf area on the topics of racism/racist discrimination, violence in public spaces and right-wing extremism: https://www.gggfon.ch/

between those affected and possible employers. The event encompassed the testimonies of and a panel discussion with concerned Hijabis which was followed by discussions in firstly small and then a big group.

iii. Visiting a mosque located in Zurich: To generate a better understanding on my part, I attended a lecture for women at the Blue Mosque in Zurich in January, which was followed by a short discussion among the participants.

4.4 Reflexivity

As a qualitative researcher, it is important to remain about one's role in a study. When Switzerland voted on the veiling ban in March 2021, polarising posters and discourses about Islam and Muslim women circulated. In the discussions on the topic, the media did not let the affected women speak for themselves but instead put forward proclaimed experts, leading to a very prejudiced portrayal of the matter. This led to my motivation to address the effects of the public discourse on the women concerned. I myself am neither Muslim, nor religious, nor do I belong to a minority and therefore find myself in a privileged position. I grew up in an atheist household and rarely had contact with religious people. So far, I only knew Islam from my stays in Muslim countries or in connection with the Arabic language. It should be noted, however, that Islam and Arabness are often wrongfully mixed in the public and political spheres. In the spirit of Edward Said's Orientalism, Silke Schmidt (2014) underlines that ethnic origin and religious identity are predominantly mixed in Western media and political discourse. Thus, for the majority of non-Arabs, the very heterogeneous group of Arabs „are indeed 'purely one thing', namely Muslim".[148] In this sense, Danielle T. Keaton (2006) also points out that in the French context „'Muslims' and 'Muslim issues' become quasi-synonymous with the Magrebins and more specifically Arabs in discourse, writings, and public perception.[149]

The aforementioned, initially difficult access to the community is probably due to the fact that I am not a Muslim myself or that I am part of the majority society, which is responsible for the everyday experiences of women (e.g. which discriminates against them). In order to dispel these fears, I tried to clearly explain the motivation for my study and my openness towards them and the topic, especially during the introductory interviews. In addition, I tried to make the interviews as pleasant as possible for the women concerned by letting them openly tell their

[148] SCHMIDT Silke, « The Framed Arab/Muslim: Mediated Orientalism », in *(Re-)Framing the Arab/Muslim*, Transcript Verlag, 2014, p. 137-190., p. 175.

[149] KEATON Trica Danielle, Muslim Girls And the Other France: Race, Identity Politics, & Social Exclusion, 2006., p. 3.

own stories at the beginning, by actively listening to them, letting them choose the interview location themselves, and always leaving them the opportunity to complement their narrative.
I also consider the motivation and reactions of the women to my requests to be of particular importance, as they are not only illustrative of the current climate in Switzerland but also of the need for such research having to be done. On the one hand, they often reacted with surprise that I, as someone who is not a Muslim woman and not affected, was interested in the topic. Illustrative of this and of the lack of openness in our society is, for example, Hayat's narrative regarding my contacting her mother, Menna:

> „When my mother said that you were coming here and that you were doing the interview with her [...] I thought that when I came in here I would see someone with a headscarf, with Arab culture, who is Muslim and who probably wants to change something now. [...] But afterwards when I saw you, I was like 'what!'. One who is on the outside does something about that. [...] I really couldn't believe it. I think it's really important that you're doing this."[150]

On the other hand, despite some painful moments due to reliving experiences, most of the women expressed gratitude towards me for the fact that someone was interested in the topic, listening to them and possibly providing a platform through which more awareness could be created about the different forms of discrimination.
The direct encounters with women wearing headscarves and the use of inductive methods rendered the confrontation with Islamophobia somewhat direct and immediate for me as a researcher. This created a relationship with the interviewees and participation in their accounts. As a budding researcher, privileged by her background and religion, being confronted with the violence of the narratives and the brutality of the social world made me empathise with their reality. So the interviews often left me feeling powerless and wanting to do more for these women. But conducting this research also made me critically question my own attitudes towards religious people and become aware of the prejudices – even if I had not acknowledged them at first – that I had towards religion, despite my initial conviction that I was unbiased. The different dialogues and interactions during interviews or at conferences I attended (October, November) as well as a visit to a mosque, for example, showed me that religion can also be seen as a value system or a guide that helps to structure life and the challenges that come with it. This can give people support, and make them stronger and more resistant.

[150] Hayet, p. 31.

Thus, one of the aims of this work is to initiate this process in you, the reader of this work, and in our fellow human beings. This discussion can lead to seeing our fellow human beings as equals and with an unbiased attitude, instead of categorising them in advance on the basis of existing stereotypes and prejudices.

4.5 Analysis

I conducted my qualitative research along the lines suggested by Uwe Flick[151] , following Janine Barbot[152] for interviews and Sébastien Chauvin and Nicolas Jounin[153] for observations. In order to track my thoughts and progress and to interpret the interviews, I kept a diary in which I wrote both interview and observation summaries as well as specifics and different thoughts.[154] Since transcription of the interviews is necessary for a well-founded interpretation,[155] I transcribed the recordings word-by-word using the programme Express-Scribe. In this step, the interviews were anonymised and 'translated' from Swiss German dialect into High German. To ensure that the transcription was as realistic as possible, I noted the reactions of the interviewees, such as laughter, exclamations, etc., according to the following scheme:

Note in the text	**Meaning**
WORD	Capitalisation as an indicator of emphasis
[...]	One part omitted
Word-	Termination or indicator that a word is not finished being pronounced
(?)	Lack of understanding of what is said
[Comment]	Reactions such as „[laugh]".
[Word]	Uncertain transcription / interpretation of what was said assumed by the researcher
[sic.]	Word omitted in order to be able to take over the citation in the continuous text in the same sense

[151] FLICK Uwe, *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*, Los Angeles : Sage Publications, 2009, 504 p.
[152] BARBOT Janine, *Mener un entretien de face à face*, Presses Universitaires de France, 2012.
[153] CHAUVIN Sébastien et JOUNIN Nicolas, *L'observation directe*, Presses Universitaires de France, 2012.
[154] FLICK, *An introduction to qualitative research*, *op. cit.*, p. 303 ; CHAUVIN Sébastien et JOUNIN Nicolas, « L'observation directe », in *L'enquête sociologique*, Paris : PUF, 20, p. 143-165.
[155] FLICK, An introduction to qualitative research, op. cit., p. 299.

In the next step, I formed codes and themes, first inductively and finally deductively.[156] After the first open questions, the questionnaire contained topic-specific questions that were developed by me based on my professor's research knowledge and the literature. Deductive coding was used specifically to categorise applied responses and strategies, following Lamont et al. The researchers categorise the different responses of stigmatised and discriminated people (e.g. skin colour, nationality, ethnic group) into the following 5 categories: (i) confronting (ii) management of the self (iii) not responding (iv) focusing on hard work and demonstrating competence (v) self-isolation/autonomy.[157]

The data analysis took place from October 2021 to March 2022. After the third interview, I conducted a first inductive analysis. The first significant themes and findings from the perspective of the women already interviewed were integrated into the questionnaire as additional questions. Since these women did not feel represented by existing religious structures in Switzerland, a newly integrated question was: „How do you live out your religion and what opportunities do you have in this regard?"

By means of inductive initial analysis and coding, the focal points of the interviews were identified and compared, and summarised in a first synthesis. The open question at the beginning of the interview allowed the women to report their everyday experiences in connection with the headscarf. Based on these narratives, the most significant thematic areas were inductively identified: work, public space, and strategies. The results and synthesis of the initial analysis were discussed and further developed with my accompanying professor and two researchers from the field. In the meetings, the codes were further developed based on the results of my initial analysis and the inputs of my companion. This was followed by a deductive analysis based on the follow-up questions given in the questionnaire.

The final topic areas were categorised in the following code scheme. Below is the main category (written normally) and the *subcategories* (written in italics) with explanation (in brackets) where applicable:

- Type of experience: *support; positive experience; stigmatisation; discrimination*
- Place of discrimination: *public space; work; institution* (authority figure)
- Effect of discrimination on the discriminated person/self-perception: *reinforcement; (absence of) respect; dehumanisation; desire of invisibility; suffering/cruelty/ humiliation*

[156] *Ibid*., p. 306-329.
[157] LAMONT et alii, Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel, op. cit.

- Reactions and strategies:
    - *Confrontation* (of the aggressor directly; by means of the use of the law)
    - „*Management of the self*": (assessing the costs of a confrontation and the associated energy Mistrust in institutions; mistrust in the legal system)
    - *Not answering* (diminution of experience; renunciation of right)
    - *high work ethic; wilfulness; endurance*
    - *Isolation or autonomy* (with the aim of independence from the majority society)
- Subjectively identified reason for discrimination: *ignorance; stereotyping; xenophobia/xenophobia; Islamophobia; sexism; ethnicity; skin colour*
- Politicisation: *sense of representation; relation to political parties and political climate; politicisation of religion; relation to feminism*
- Reference to the headscarf: *decision to wear the veil, family transmission*
- Life history/general migration background

Due to the abundance of results, I decided in a final step that this Master's thesis will be focussing on three main thematic areas. The results presented are mainly based on the interviews and are supported by the observations carried out. From the observation at the GGG-Fon event, the statements of three women were recorded and included under the pseudonyms Esma, Mayla and Farah. The findings are presented as follows: (i) domain and places in which experiences were described and in which stigma and discrimination occurred, (ii) stereotypes and prejudices faced by the women (iii) impact on the women, how they reacted to the incidents and what strategies they used. After editing, all women quoted were offered the opportunity to provide feedback on the results section of this paper. The women cited in this paper expressed their thanks and agreed on the results chapter. They did not request any changes except that individual interjections were removed at their request or rephrased in their own words without changing their meaning.

The analysis and writing of this Master's thesis took place in German. The final German master's thesis was then translated into English by myself. As I went to school in the USA for a year and have a C1 level in English, I felt competent to translate the women's quotes and to render them truthfully and accurately.

5 Results

The results presented in this chapter are mainly based on the inductive analysis of the eight interviews conducted with Hijabis living in German-speaking Switzerland. The eight women interviewed are between 19 and 47 years old and seven of them wear the hijab. Depending on the topic, the results are complemented by ethnographic observation. Before the most prominent thematic fields are discussed in the following chapters, the themes that emerged in the interviews will be briefly outlined. The women talked to me about various topics, ranging from the decision to wear the headscarf, positive and negative experiences in everyday life and in the labour market, to moments and feelings of despair, humiliation, embarrassment and also determination and affirmation. They also expressed their opinion about the (inter)national political climate, the institutional framework, and the media debate in Switzerland. Furthermore, they identified possible factors or people responsible for the increasingly Islamophobic climate in Switzerland as well as abroad and expressed both their wishes, expectations, and, to some extent, fears regarding their future in this country. Although all of these statements are significant and important, the following chapters will focus on the topics that most frequently appeared in the interviews, namely the public sphere and the labour market. An intermediate chapter summarises the most occurring and reproduced stereotypes in Swiss society that were encountered by the women. This is followed by the effects of the experiences on the women themselves while the last chapter addresses the reactions and strategies applied by the Hijabis. Each chapter not only outlines this study's findings but also discusses them with previous research which is finally summarised in the conclusion.

5.1 Public space and interaction with institutions

Through the interviews, it became apparent that public space in German-speaking Switzerland is a domain in which the headscarf has a particularly clear impact. After the women were asked how their everyday life had changed since wearing the hijab, almost all of them first spoke about their experiences in public space. Each of the Hijabis reported being addressed first in High German during everyday encounters, making them feel like they are seen as foreigners. In addition, they all addressed the stares or gazes that they are subjected to on a daily basis – this is particularly the case in public transport and on the street, but also in cinemas or coffee shops. In those cases where it did not stop at glances, the women reported negative comments, insults, or even physical attacks. The different treatment because of the headscarf is also noticeable in institutions. Here, too, the women report that they are always addressed in High German first. In addition, some accounts show that the police did not act despite the fact that an offence had been committed, thereby denying the women their rights.

The fact that women wearing headscarves are exposed to different types of stigmatisation and discrimination in their everyday lives is shown by the results of various international studies. For example, Chris Allen et al. (2013) examine the experiences of discrimination of 20 Muslim women, the majority of whom wear a hijab or niqab. The women's accounts include verbal abuse in the streets and on public transport, intimidation, threats in public parks and in their own homes, and violence against individuals.[158] In the Dutch context, the research conducted by Mette Sijtsma (2011) also shows that the women interviewed experienced discrimination in various everyday activities such as shopping, public transport, or driving. These were not of a violent nature, but included unpleasant looks, prejudice, disapproval, feeling unwelcome and negative comments. The discriminatory acts accompanied many of the veiled women in other everyday activities, such as shopping, driving, travelling by public transport and public services.[159]

By interviewing experts from both governmental organisations, to which victims of racism can report, and non-governmental organisations, i.e. Muslim organisations, Lindemann shows for the first time the breadth of stigmatisation and discrimination to which women wearing headscarves are exposed in the three linguistic regions of Switzerland. The experiences identified include implicit or explicit discrimination and range from glances to verbal or

[158] ALLEN Chris *et alii*, « Maybe we are hated »: the experience & impact of anti-Muslim hate on British Muslim women, Institute of Applied Social Studies, School of Social Policy, 2013., p. 1.

[159] SIJTSMA, « Negotiating the Oppression of Discrimination Encountered in Outdoor Leisure: A Study of Muslim Women in the Netherlands », *art. cit.*, p. 37.

physical attacks to exclusionary practices. The experts interviewed for the study reported exclusion, bullying, or refusal of service in 61.9 per cent of the cases, while 31 per cent of the cases involved verbal abuse and 7.1 per cent physical violence. In public spaces, stares, insults such as „go home" or physical violence occur predominantly in the streets, supermarkets, airports, the post office or bank, on public transport, or in parks.[160] In the reported cases of physical violence, women were spat on, jostled, and beaten, and one woman had her hijab torn off.[161]

Based on the women's narratives this chapter is structured as follows: Looks, remarks and verbal aggression, from being treated differently to assault, harassment, and damage to property and threats in their own living space. Finally, specific reference is made to the national vote on the burqa ban on the 7th of March 2021, after which the effects of international events on women's everyday lives are discussed.

5.1.1 The gazes

> „You are just as a woman with the hijab, you are really naturally the symbol of Islam and therefore people will just look at you more than they look at my brother, for example, who is Muslim - but he doesn't wear a headscarf. [...] Because one doesn't quite notice that he's Muslim, one just notices me, and then there are just more stares that you're exposed to."[162]

All of the women interviewed mentioned the constant staring that they were subjected to. The fact that these glances are due to the headscarf becomes evident from the fact that the described glances only began when the women started wearing their hijab. Naima (24) wanted to wear the headscarf when she was 10 years old. When she started, she noticed the change in the behaviour of people: „At the beginning it was a bit difficult, because you had the feeling that people were looking at you more. [...] Well you still get quite strange looks from time to time. There's also times where you ask yourself: ok, what's the point of that now?"[163] In this sense, Sara (26) also reports: „At the very beginning, I felt these gazes from time to time. For example, when I got on public transport, I somehow already noticed that especially older people were

[160] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit.*, p. 9.
[161] *Ibid.*, p. 9.
[162] Nalia, p. 6.
[163] Naima, p. 2.

looking at me."[164] Meray (28) also confirms that glances have become an integral part of her experience in public space: „Well, you see glances all the time anyway."[165] She further mentions that these also include evil glances from women: „What I've also felt sometimes since I started wearing the headscarf is that I just feel such evil glances from women. I mean, they can be non-Muslim or Muslim, whatever, making you feel like: ok, maybe it [the hijab] doesn't suit them."[166]

Nalia (29), a dark-skinned Hijabi also describes how gazes and stares have become part of the everyday life of women wearing a headscarf: „You just notice that people stare at you more, you are looked at more. [...] And I'm someone who rather wears colours and stuff; and you notice that people were looking at you, you were always the centre of the group. Or when you are outside, of course everyone is staring at me again."[167] She clearly attributes the stares to the headscarf and not to her skin colour, as they did not occur before she wore the hijab: „Well, I never attributed [the reactions] to my skin colour but to my headscarf – because the headscarf was new and the colour of my skin wasn't since I've always had that."[168] Illustrative of the effect of the headscarf in public space is a specific situation she described. She meets monthly for brunch with a group of about 10 Muslim women, the majority of whom wear headscarves: „Of course, we dressed up a bit nicer for brunch and thought: ok, we'll go on a tour of the city and so on. And the looks we got, people really looked at us as if they were so surprised and so amazed that we were walking around so freely and that we were laughing like that."[169] This quote impressively illustrates how differently women with headscarves are perceived and what stereotypes are projected onto them, namely that they are not seen as free or cheerful.

Marijana (37), who started wearing the headscarf in 2009, also makes clear that it is not simply a matter of glances, but often of stares: „Today it's not as extreme anymore. But 10-12 years ago it was more extreme. You were looked at, stared at [pause]."[170] She remembers that the stares were particularly noticeable and also disturbing at the cinema or in a coffee shop, for example: „At the very beginning I didn't even dare go to the cinema [because of the stares]. It was just not usual for someone wearing a headscarf to go to the cinema. [...] Then going out for a drink, I found that really dreadful at the beginning. But not because I considered it forbidden, but because the others would look at me. That bothered me."[171]

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[164] Sara, p. 2.
[165] Sara, p. 10.
[166] *Ibid*, p. 5.
[167] Nalia, p. 4.
[168] *Ibid*.
[169] Nalia, p. 22.
[170] Marijana, p. 5.
[171] *Ibid*., p. 7.

In summary, the women speak of more than normal looks, which are described as glances or even stares. These range from being described as strong, disturbing, and even evil.

5.1.2 Remarks and verbal aggression

As the interviewees explained, it is often not 'just' the penetrating glances or stares. On the one hand, they spoke of frequent „remarks" about the headscarf. For example, when Nalia was speaking about the brunch she went to with other Hijabis in Bern, it was not „just" glances. Some people came up to her and said: „'Oh, how cool that you are out together like this.'"[172] She emphasises that these are „compliments" that „aren't compliments at all in the end."[173] To make this clear she compares her experience with a performance: „[...] In the zoo you don't just go up to an animal and compliment it on why you were staring at it. It was somewhat like a performance for them because they just looked at us like that."[174]

Sara describes comments and remarks for example as „stupid proverbs"[175] that she and her headscarf-wearing friends hear late at night at the train station: „There were a few young people looking at us and saying something about headscarves, blah blah blah."[176] In addition to these comments, some women speak of concrete situations in which they were verbally attacked and/or insulted. Naima for example describes a situation at the river: „There are also worse things [than looks]. For example, I was swimming in the Rhine with the burkini[177] and came out of the water. And then an older man sat there and said something like: „'What do we have here now, is that some new fashion or what? Stupid cow!' And I was like: what, ok, just like that. [laughs]."[178]

Gizem (27) also recites an incident in which she was insulted in the university library: „And then someone equipped with a recorder came up to me and pointed it out to me. And he said something like: 'Hey you fascists. What do you think about the content of the Quran?' And 'go away from here'. He also called us Nazis, which I didn't understand at all."[179] Here, one can observe how the headscarf leads to a process of „racializing othering" and operates as a „sign of foreignness"[180] as described by Juliette Galonnier (2021), since by saying „go away from

[172] Nalia, p. 22.
[173] *Ibid*., p. 22.
[174] *Ibid*., p. 22.
[175] Sara, p. 16.
[176] *Ibid*., p. 16.
[177] Muslim bathing garment covering almost the whole body's skin.
[178] Naima, p. 2.
[179] Gizem, p. 2.
[180] GALONNIER, « Barbes et foulards », *art. cit*., p. 14/33.

here" the aggressor implies that he does not see them as people „from here", i.e. from Switzerland. Furthermore, he associates the hijab with both extremism and war crimes, implying the by Galonnier described „essentialisation" of women wearing the headscarf.

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5.1.3 From different treatment to attack

5.1.3.1 „They treated me as if I were made out of air."[181] (Meray)

Some women report that they are not noticed, ignored or perceived as speaking a different language because of their headscarf. Menna (47) reports that not 'only' do seats often remain empty next to her on public transport, but that some people explicitly look for another seat: „Sometimes you're sitting and someone changes seats. There are people – even before Corona – who don't want to sit down because the woman is wearing the headscarf. Ok, there are not many, but there are some."[182]

Gizem on the other hand describes how people start to gesture instead of talking to her: Either people don't talk to me. So instead of asking me 'would you like to get off', they gesture 'get off now' with their hands, in the sense of 'she can't speak German anyway'."[183] Meray also illustrates this by saying that when she spoke up in certain situations, she was often met with surprised reactions like „wow, you can even talk."[184] Furthermore, she reports that in many situations on public transport she is simply ignored: „I tried to get off the tram and people didn't give me precedence. And I hadn't known that before. You let the others get off first and only then you get on. And before that, they [the people] had always shown me respect, without a headscarf. [...] And that was suddenly gone after I wore the headscarf. They treated me more like I wasn't there. So it wasn't that they treated me stupidly, but rather like I was made out of air."[185] Her descriptions show that she was prevented from getting out of the tram and was no longer respected and seen as she was before, without the headscarf.

This „treatment like air" is also evident in the example Meray describes on the street. Since there were no traffic lights at a crossing, she had to count on the passing cars stopping: „And there are just no cars stopping, no way. [...] And I always hope that there would be someone next to me, or preferably even some woman with a pram so that I could cross with her. [...]."[186] Meray thus finds herself forced to cross the road accompanied by a mother, as this is respected

[181] Meray, p. 4.
[182] Menna, p. 8.
[183] Gizem, p. 10.
[184] Meray, p. 4.
[185] *Ibid*., p. 4.
[186] *Ibid*., p. 5.

by motorists and perceived as a reason to stop; while motorists do not even *want* to let a woman with a headscarf pass.

This process of Hijabis becoming somewhat invisible to others is also described by Galonnier. The American and French converts interviewed for her study also reported that from the moment on when they started wearing their headscarf, they felt as they had become „transparent", reflecting „the invisibility and insignificance of veiled women" and that people would due to their hijab assume that they are „blind, deaf and dumb".[187]

5.1.3.2 „And if a woman runs without a headscarf, the bus driver opens the door. But not for one with a headscarf."[188] (Menna)

Meray also reports that some car drivers would actively crank it up to prevent her from passing the road: „[The car drivers], they even step on the gas."[189] Such incidents are also described by Menna. She refers to public transport, specifically to the behaviour of bus drivers: „It's not just me who says that; many of my friends with headscarves say that. That if they run, if a woman with a headscarf runs [to the bus], she has no chance. And if a woman runs without a headscarf, the bus driver opens the door. But not for one with a headscarf."[190] In this context, she describes an incident where the bus stopped for her because someone saw her and held the door open for her: „And I quickly ran onto the bus. And when I was on the bus, he quickly accelerated and then braked [imitates the sound of a brake] so that I would fall down. He did that on purpose."[191] Despite the kind gesture of a fellow human being, the bus driver's acceleration exposes her to the potential danger of falling down.

5.1.3.3 „[This woman], she only hits women wearing headscarves. Only her."[192] (Menna)

Almost all interviewees emphasise that „fortunately" in the public space it stopped at glances, stares, and comments. This is not the case with Menna. She reports about a „crazy" woman known to the police who hit her on the tram in Zurich:

[187] GALONNIER, « Barbes et foulards », *art. cit.*, 15/33.
[188] Menna, p. 8.
[189] Meray, p. 5.
[190] Menna, p. 8.
[191] *Ibid.*, p. 8.
[192] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

„And once a woman hit me in the tram on Bahnhofquai. But she is crazy, she is a bit crazy. [She] only hits women wearing headscarves. How did she hit me? I'm sitting and I can't see anything behind me, she is there and hits me on the head and flees. The tram keeps going, I can't do anything. She hit me with all her might. [...] If this woman who hit me on the head had hit a weak woman, I am sure she would have been sent to the hospital. Because I am strong. And for three days my whole head hurt. Here [she runs her hand over her entire head]. Uallah, three days. Everything! Inside, outside, the skin."[193]

In public spaces, there are people who are psychologically impaired and often harass people. In this case, however, it is noticeable that the harassment is specific to women wearing headscarves, manifesting itself in strong physical violence.

5.1.4 Harassment, damage to property and threats in one's own living space

This section will shed a light on a case described by Menna which due to its complexity and significance deserves a more detailed description. While this section deals with the experience itself, the chapter on reactions and strategies shows in more detail how Menna dealt with it and how the police (repeatedly) did not take action.

Menna (47) came to Switzerland from Tunisia at the age of 27 and has lived in Zurich ever since. She is a Tunisian-Swiss dual citizen and mother of four daughters. She describes the case of her former Swiss neighbour on the first floor, Manfred*, who insulted and harassed her for a long time, destroyed her property, and threatened her children. At the time, she lived alone with her three daughters in a flat in an apartment block in Zurich. It all started with one of her daughters playing with Manfred's daughter at his house. One day her daughter, who was five at the time, came to her and explained: „'Mum, I was with her [Manfred's daughter], she told me: 'take your clothes off'. She took off her clothes. And she told me 'you have to be on the floor and I will be on top of you'."[194] When she said this to Menna, she told her daughter that she would never be allowed to play at her house again, only outside. This day when Manfred's daughter told her father about Menna's reaction marked the beginning of two years of recurring harassment: „And from that day on, I lived like that for two years-[pause]. You can't imagine how I lived. A woman without a husband with three daughters. [...] Every day he hammers on

[193] Menna, p. 11.
[194] *Ibid*., p. 10.

my door, at 5, at 6 o'clock in the morning; dsch, dsch, dsch [imitates door hammering]. And then he leaves. When I go and ask who is at the door: nobody."[195] What started with verbal harassment soon led to damage to property: „In the basement, he poured dirty oil on my clothes [sic]. [...] He went into my attic, upstairs, and opened the door with a lock and poured water on my winter clothes."[196] Once he gave her Tunisian dates under the pretext of wanting to make peace. After she had already thrown them away, she learned from her daughter that Manfred's daughter had told her: „'My father peed on the dates and gave them to your mother'."[197] Another time he wrote „fuck you" on her front door. She had always reported all these incidents to both the apartment's caretaker and the police – but no one reacted; until the time Manfred damaged the caretaker's car, at which point he was given the notice to leave. „But when he did all that to me, for years. Nothing. Nobody reacted. Nobody."[198] Her conclusion from this story and from the one with the woman who beats women with headscarves and the police didn't take action in both cases is the following: „Now you tell me: did the police do nothing because they can't or because they are women with headscarves?"[199]

5.1.5 The impact of the burqa ban (SVP)

The SVP campaign operates with slogans such as „Stop extremism!" and in this context shows a Niqab-wearing woman with an evil look. Thus, the niqab is associated with extremism and evilness. Moreover, according to the rhetoric of the initiative committee (*Egerkingen Committee*), Muslim women are portrayed in a patriarchal way and as if they were guided by a false consciousness mediated by religious commandments. It is systematically assumed that they lack genuine freedom of choice and thus moral autonomy. On the one hand, the SVP campaigns triggered the increase of otherwise already present looks in the majority of the interviewed Hijabis. Naima describes this as follows: „During this whole time I had the feeling that I got a lot more nasty looks, so just because of this campaign."[200] This is also shown by Meray's description: „And that was just at that time – Corona time – we all had masks on [...] Suddenly I see that people look at me strangely. You see gazes all the time anyway. And then I thought yes ok, those gazes occur all the time. Then I saw the poster and was extremely shocked and got the feeling: ok, I don't look much different from the woman depicted there.

[195] Menna, p. 10.
[196] *Ibid*., p. 10.
[197] *Ibid*., p. 12.
[198] *Ibid*.
[199] *Ibid*.
[200] Naima, p. 8.

Really like the face covered and one can see only eyes, my headscarf- [pause].”[201] As the feeling of shock was described in this case, the vote and the accompanying (image) campaign also triggered feelings of threat and undesirability. Thus, Meray describes in relation to the incident described above: „And I realised: Sh**t, I'm actually not wanted there, so to speak, you know, they actually have my picture there and I'm walking here on the street, like- alive [...] I also felt so strange; and wanted, you know [pause]. Like ‘hey, you’re not wanted here at all.’”[202] In addition, she (and other interviewed women as well) point out the paradox that at the time of the campaign, due to the Covid-19 pandemic masks were compulsory in many places: „I had the feeling, during that time when posters were still up, that I was just walking around like a target because I just looked like a burqa wearer with this mask on; even though every other person was wearing it.”[203] In addition to the feeling of being threatened, Meray also perceives the sense of being wanted and therefore persecuted. Sara also describes a feeling of being threatened: „When I saw these posters and was walking past them, I had already felt threatened, I have to admit that. So this general mood that they don't want you. [...] It's rather discriminatory. In any case, it is discriminating to see that. And yes, even if you didn't notice it directly when you saw it, you already felt threatened.”[204]

In addition, some women report that they are afraid of more radical measures because of the campaign in relation to political developments in Switzerland. Gizem, for example, says that she is always affected by such campaigns, even if she wears neither a niqab nor a burqa: „Well, every time it comes to any Islam-related issues I am somehow affected. [...] Because in the end [...] there are more and more laws that mainly concern Islam and go in the direction of banning it. [...] I then ask myself: what’s the next thing to come?”[205] This fear of the future is particularly present in the young women who grew up here and were interviewed for this work, specifically illustrated by Meray:

> „I like the country, I mean I don't know anything else. I grew up here, I was born here. [...] And what if they go one step further, what if suddenly the headscarf is banned. What do I do then? I'm working, I'm studying to be in a leadership position. And I mean, why should I raise my children here if maybe they will want to wear a headscarf one day but

[201] Naima, p. 8.
[202] Meray, p. 10.
[203] Meray, p. 10.
[204] SaraGIANNI Matteo, « Injonction à l’intégration et citoyenneté pour les musulmans en Suisse », *L’islam (in)visible en ville*, Labor et Fides, 2019, p. 83-103., p. 17.
[205] Gizem, p. 13.

will experience exactly the same thing and will also be excluded? [...] When I have these thoughts, I get a bit scared and worried for the future."[206]

This shows that the women feel directly excluded and threatened by the circulating discourses and consequently worry about their own safety in their home country, Switzerland, as well as being afraid of the future.

5.1.6 International events

„ISIS is present, Al-Qaeda has done something. And then I always have to defend myself. I didn't do anything!" [207] (Gizem)

The following accounts clearly show how the perception of women with headscarves in Switzerland is changing in a negative way as a result of international events. Nalia describes this as follows: „When something happens in this world that is compared to Islam, then, of course, when you go into town the next morning, you get more stares now than when nothing happens. [...] For example, when these things happened in Paris in 2015 I think; Then, of course, you already didn't feel comfortable going out wearing your headscarf the next day."[208] In addition to expressing the feeling of discomfort, she illustrates how the hijab functions as a figurehead of Islam and how women with headscarves directly feel the effects of it as a result of negative reporting: „Then of course you have: ah, everyone is looking again and everyone is talking something bad about Islam again. And you are just a woman with the hijab, you are naturally the symbol of Islam and therefore people will just look at you more than they look at my brother, for example, who is Muslim – but he doesn't wear a headscarf. [...] Because one doesn't quite notice that he's Muslim, one just notices me and then there's just more stares that you're exposed to."[209] Finally, the clear marker of the hijab as a Muslim woman and the associated gender-specific aspect of Islamophobia becomes apparent, namely that women with hijabs are particularly affected by Islamophobia. Nalia illustrates this in relation to the days following a terrorist attack as follows: „It's really just gazing where you just notice, it almost doesn't stop, they just really focus on you, 20 minutes long you're just in the field of vision."[210]

[206] Meray, p. 11.
[207] Gizem, p. 14.
[208] Nalia, p. 6.
[209] *Ibid*.
[210] *Ibid*.

Many of the women also describe the impact on public transport. They say, for example, that in connection with international events it happens repeatedly that the seats next to them remain empty more often than usual. For example, if an assassination attempt occurred in Europe, suddenly no one wants to sit next to Marijana: „There were these assassination attempts [...] and depending on [...] when I was sitting on the train, they totally avoided me [laughs]. So yes, then they actually only sat next to me when everything was really full. [...] And depending on the situation, I still notice that today."[211]

Overall, it can be said that the campaign and the international events accentuate already existing othering. The women received more stares, and nasty looks and were shunned. Because of their headscarf and the obligation to wear a mask during the Covid-19 pandemic, they feel affected and compared to the evil niqab-wearer depicted on the poster. They are shocked, feel unwanted, discriminated against, excluded, persecuted, threatened, and targeted. The vote and the accompanying campaign also generate a fear of future restrictions and bans. Moreover, because of the headscarf, which represents Islam, the women get to feel the negative talk about their religion in day-to-day situations as a result of a terrorist attack.

5.1.7 Summary

This chapter clearly showed that in public spaces, Hijabis are exposed to strong stigmatisation. They are subjected to more than normal, but strong, staring, disturbing and nasty looks, are ignored, are victims of verbal aggression and in one case suffer physical violence, threats and damage to property in their own living space.

The literature also shows that women wearing headscarves are exposed to glances in public spaces. In Lindemann's research, one expert describes glances as a form of discrimination that „sometimes" occurs in the streets in public spaces. However, this work shows that gazes and stares are a very prominent phenomenon that has become part of women's everyday life. The fact that they perceive the stares as very incriminating, but often do not register them, could be due to the fact that the women do not see the stares as „such a bad"[212] incident, as Marijana puts it, i.e. not as something that is or can be reported to an organisation or institution. As a result, if it is 'just' a gaze, they won't report it to a governmental or non-governmental anti-discrimination agency.[213]

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[211] Marijana, p. 6.
[212] *Ibid*.
[213] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit.*, p. 10.

Lindemann's research also identifies similar verbal aggression, with the central location identified as the streets, where insults such as 'go home' occur or when fellow men make a remark and then quickly walk away.[214] Physical violence is also reported, for example, by Allen et al. in the British context, where a pregnant woman was deliberately run over.[215]

Anaïd Lindemann and Ines Sayed (2018) also confirm the influence of international events. The former states that verbal or physical aggression depends on the international context, as their number „seems to increase directly after a terrorist attack."[216] This is also shown by Sayed's analysis, in which the interviewees stated that those events strongly influence the perception of Islam and have a direct impact on women. Thus, some looks appear to be more striking than others and some statements directly equate Islam with terrorism.[217]

In her research, Lindemann makes use of Erving Goffman's concept of the division into three different social places[218] : namely (i) the out-of-bound place, which is inaccessible to stigmatised persons; (ii) the civil place, where stigmatised persons are tolerated but not perceived with all their competences and from which they are subliminally excluded; and (iii) the back place, where stigmatised persons can live without social costs. Based on the experts' descriptions, Lindemann describes public space as a 'civil place' for Hijabis, since according to the law „these are officially inclusive places"[219] but in everyday life become unofficially exclusive. This description is also confirmed by this study, as the women interviewed regularly encounter stigmatisation and clearly cannot live without social costs.

[214] *Ibid*., p. 9.
[215] ALLEN *et alii*, Maybe we are hated, *cit*., p. 1.
[216] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit*., p. 10.
[217] SAYED, *Etre musulmanes et voilées dans le Canton de Neuchâtel*, op. cit., p. 116.
[218] GOFFMAN Erving, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Englewood Cliffs : Prentice-Hall, 1963, 180 p., p. 81-82.
[219] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit*., p. 11.

5.2 The labour market

> „You can be discriminated against for wearing a headscarf, even if it is written in the Federal Constitution that you are not allowed to do so. [...] They say freedom of religion, but afterward, the companies are still allowed to discriminate against someone if they wear a headscarf. So it [the law] is just there, but it is not respected."[220] (Nalia)

As the analysis of the interviews shows, the labour market is one of the most significant domains in which discrimination and stigmatisation occur for women with a headscarf living in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. In addition to the numerous statements on the topic, this is evident from the fact that almost all of the women interviewed addressed the topic mostly without being asked and after only a very short interview period. The fact that women with a hijab experience discrimination in access to education and the labour market is also evident from the fact that an event[221] on the topic was held in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. From the observation of this event, certain testimonies from those affected will be included in this chapter. Particularly in the application process, it became apparent that the hijab leads to a discrepancy in professional competencies and, especially in sectors with customer contact, to a very high rate of exclusion. On the one hand, this is evident from the very high number of written applications and subsequent rejections. On the other hand, the employers' statements show that a lack of professional skills was not the reason for rejection. The hijab was not mentioned in writing by potential employers in Switzerland in almost any of the cases, but mostly only verbally as a reason for rejection. This can be attributed to the fact that anti-discrimination laws based on religion exist in Switzerland, but are circumvented in practice in this way. However, if employment did take place, the women were only allowed to do the job in the background.

The fact that Hijabis are excluded from the labour market despite existing laws is also shown in the study conducted in 2016 by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR). The researchers note that specific national and regional regulations in eight different European countries result in Muslim women being excluded from the public sector due to a narrow interpretation of „secularism" or „neutrality".[222] In the German context, Christian Unkelbach

[220] Nalia p. 16.
[221] Beobachtung II: GGGFon Veranstaltung «Junge Frauen mit Kopftuch in der Arbeitswelt 16.11.2021.
[222] « Forgotten Women: the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women », *European Network Against Racism*, 11.02.2016, https://www.enar-eu.org/forgotten-women-the-impact-of-islamophobia-on-muslim-women/, consulted 12.05.2022.

et al. (2010) show how women with a headscarf are perceived in the professional context from the employer's point of view and how this concretely affects their job situation. The results of their experimental study reveal the clear disadvantage for Hijabis in the labour market. What the authors call the „hijab effect" was detectable at different performance levels and despite the specific consideration of academic performance. Even when the participants in the experiment looked specifically at education, the hijab had a clear negative impact on women's chances of employment, despite the objective information.[223] This is also shown by the testing conducted by Hanane Karimi (2021) in the French context, which compared the acceptance rates of the fictitious job applications of a woman from the majority society, a woman from the minority society and one with a headscarf. While the woman belonging to the minority society received 42 positive responses, so not significantly less than the majority society woman (50), the woman with a headscarf received only one positive response, whereas the woman belonging to the majority society and was not wearing a headscarf received 56.[224] The negative hijab effect is also confirmed by Patrick Simon's quantitative study.[225] Additionally, Karimi's qualitative study conducted in France also shows that it is not the lack of competence that is decisive for rejection. She sums up the reasons for the exclusion of the interviewed Hijabis from the French labour market with „*They are competent, but...*".[226] Karimi sees the strong intersection of racism, sexism and Islamophobia as the cause of discrimination, which ultimately leads to a „triple penalisation".[227]

The first part of this chapter addresses the disadvantage and exclusion experienced by Hijabis during the application process or when looking for a job, which has also been outlined in previous research. The results of the interviews show that this is particularly the case when looking for an apprenticeship or a job with customer contact. The second part describes the women's experiences after taking up a job, i.e. in the job itself.

[223] UNKELBACH *et alii*, « A Turban Effect, Too: Selection Biases Against Women Wearing Muslim Headscarves », *art. cit.*, p. 381.
[224] KARIMI Hanane, « Voile et travail en France : l'entrepreneuriat féminin en réponse à l'islamophobie », *art. cit*, p. 191.
[225] SIMON, « Le genre de l'islamophobie », *art. cit*.
[226] KARIMI Hanane, « The Hijab and Work: Female Entrepreneurship in Response to Islamophobia », *art. cit*, p. 191.
[227] *Ibid*.

5.2.1 „One refusal after the other"

> „Discrimination or not being welcome is something I felt very intensely in the recruitment process."[228] (Nalia)

The fact that discrimination occurs particularly during the application process is shown above all by the case of Menna. As a recall, she is the only interviewee who came to Switzerland in her adulthood and did not grow up here, which, as will be seen in the following section, exposes her to discrimination in an accentuated form. Menna is a trained police officer and has worked in factories, at the airport, and as a cleaner since her arrival in Switzerland. She had to quit her last job, where she worked as a cleaner in private households because the distance to her place of residence was too great. For a long time after that, she did not find any work, although she applied in a wide variety of sectors. She sees the problem mainly in the application process: „It is the beginning, the starting of a job, where the problem lies. After that, I never had any problems."[229] Despite her good references and her long work experience in Switzerland, her job search remained unsuccessful: „I looked for work very, very intensively [...] After I sent them my dossier, they call me or write me an e-mail saying that the documents and references are great [...]. And in the end I still get a negative answer."[230] In this regard, she describes how she applied for a job at a childcare centre and after a trial placement received very good feedback from the person in charge. The manager told her: „'You did very well. The whole team said [sic.] that you did very well, that you are very good with the children. Since the first day of trial, the little ones came to me, they sat on my lap [points to his knee], since the first lessons. And she [the manager] told me: 'You will get positive feedback, you did very well'. And today she calls and tells me: 'I'm sorry, we've chosen someone else. You were super, but there are others who are super super and-' [pause]."[231] Noura attributes the fact that she was not hired in the end to the headscarf: „I say, 'Maybe it's also because of the headscarf."[232]

The fact that discrimination also affects female students who have grown up in Switzerland can be seen in the case of Gizem, for example. The young woman is 27, a dual Turkish and Swiss citizen, and completed her Bachelor's and Master's degrees at the University of Basel. She already felt the rejection of Hijabis on the job market while looking for an internship at courts

[228] Gizem, p. 5.
[229] Menna, p. 7.
[230] *Ibid*., p. 6.
[231] Noura, p. 7.
[232] Menna, p. 7.

or law firms: „When I applied for internships, I realised: ok, one rejection after the other. Although I actually have a better average than certain others."[233]

This is exemplified by the fact that her application was the trigger for a ban on religious symbols in all cantonal courts in the canton of Basel Stadt.[234] She learned this from the media after she had submitted her application while still studying for her Master's degree due to the long waiting lists: „A year later when I had finally submitted the application dossier, I learned through the newspaper: headscarf ban at court. You are not allowed to wear religious symbols, in general. And the trigger was my application dossier. And then I thought: great. Look what the consequences of my application dossier are now. And I found out about it in the media, before that they hadn't even contacted me in any way."[235] In the end, a Swiss lawyer opposed the ban and took the case all the way to the Federal Supreme Court, where his case was rejected and the ban was declared valid. Although that ruling had passed, Gizem – who was still on the list of goods – was asked by the same court if she still wanted to do the internship after all but only under certain conditions. When she accepted, she was denied access to some areas because of her headscarf: for example, she was not allowed to sit next to the judges on the bench at public hearings, but only on the bench of spectators, or she was not allowed to participate at all in private hearings, which were not public: „In the background in the office I was allowed to write rulings. [...] And when all the people were outside and we were deliberating on the verdict, I was allowed to sit next to some of the judges - even though [as an intern] I didn't even have an advisory vote."[236] It is also interesting to see how ambivalent the newly enacted ban was and how it was received by the judges. For example, part-time judges working at the court had not been informed about it at all: „The judges told me that they were very, well, that they were negatively surprised when they heard about this ban. [...] Or there were clerks who said: 'Gizem, what are you doing there? Your place would normally be here'. So it was like not openly communicated either. Even at the court itself, people were not informed."[237] This also shows that the reactions of the staff to the ban were both ambivalent and dependent on the person. Lindemann's research also confirms that Gizem's case does not present as an isolated one. For example, experts report that companies sometimes develop written guidelines that prohibit the wearing of 'head coverings' in the workplace.[238]

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[233] Gizem, p. 3.
[234] SCHWALD Andreas, « Basel schert aus : Gerichte verbieten Kopftuch und Kreuz an Verhandlungen », *bz Basel, 23d May 2018,* available on: https://www.bzbasel.ch/basel/basel-stadt/basel-schert-aus-gerichte-verbieten-kopftuch-und-kreuz-an-verhandlungen-ld.1506128, consulted on 1st April 2022.
[235] Gizem, p. 4.
[236] *Ibid*.
[237] *Ibid*.
[238] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit*., p. 10.

5.2.2 Pretexts for refusal

Gizem sees the reason for the difficulties in finding a job in customer contact. With regard to law firms, she explains: „They don't like it when you have customer contact and wear a headscarf or any other religious dress code that can be assigned to a clear religion [...] when you work with the customers and have intensive customer contact, then that is an area in which they don't like it. And that was also [communicated] openly to me at the job interviews."[239] The latter was the case, for example, with a law firm that was present at a 'job fair' Gizem attended and where she was invited for an interview. The person in charge told her that she should take off her headscarf to avoid reducing her chances: „'You are obstructing your future. You are indeed very successful, one can see that from your grades. Don't do this to yourself'. [...] Yes, that was the case. Then in the application process, I really realised: you're not very welcome there as a headscarf-wearing woman or as a hijab-wearing woman."[240] The same potential employer also disclosed to her that her headscarf was a problem in relation to Jewish clients: „We could possibly employ you as a trainee. But then you wouldn't be able to be present when we would be working with Jewish clients, for example, because they don't like to see that as much."[241] This illustrates that discrimination in the name of secularisation is not a problem with all religious markers, but relates specifically to Islam and the headscarf. Moreover, it shows that the employer pretends that the problem is not with him and the Christian majority, but with the Jewish clients, another minority. Gizem also mentions the website of another law firm to which she had applied; it showed a photo of an employee who had been hired despite his kippah. Esma, one of the speakers at the event in Bern, also described the centrality of customer contact in job application rejections. She is originally North Macedonian and has lived in Switzerland since she was eight years old, she also attended school here. In the beginning, she had no problem finding a job because she did not wear a headscarf at that time and could therefore complete her apprenticeship in retail. She decided to wear the headscarf about twelve years ago. After she had her second child, she did not want to stay at home; after all, she had „two completed apprenticeships with good grades and super certificates"[242] to put forward and had also managed a shop for four years. However, because of the headscarf, she received one rejection after another, affirming: „I could have contributed something to the shops, I have

[239] Gizem, p. 4.
[240] *Ibid*.
[241] *Ibid*., p. 3.
[242] Esma, GGG-Fon.

references. But they won't let me."[243] In the beginning, she sometimes received feedback that she was too highly qualified. This sounded something like: „'Actually, you would be hired immediately, but you are overqualified. We can never give you the salary you deserve.'"[244] When Esma wanted to accept the job anyway, she was told that it was not possible. When she replied that they could tell her if it was because of the headscarf, „most of them said so."[245] She never got a job in retail, but now runs her own driving school – one of the only three in Switzerland run by a woman wearing a headscarf.

The situation was similar for 15-year-old Mayla and 17-year-old Farah. Both were looking for an apprenticeship as pharmaceutical assistants, among other things, but were unsuccessful. Farah describes an incident in which she was able to sniff around in a pharmacy. The person in charge told her that it had gone really well and that 90 per cent of the job would suit her; all she had to do was take off her headscarf. Other pharmacies also turned her down on the pretext that the customers had a problem with it.[246] She talks of a telephone conversation with a pharmacy where she had applied as a pharmaceutical assistant. The contact person there, however, argued with the hygienic incompatibility of the headscarf. She told Mayla that if she wanted the job, she would have to take off her headscarf for hygienic reasons. When she explained that she did not want to take it off, she received the first rejection, after which many more followed. Farah stresses that she never received rejections in writing because of the possible legal problems. Instead, she received rejections by phone, whereas at the pharmacy in question she was told directly after the trial session in person. Mayla also explains that with possible apprenticeships in banks, for example, there was often no problem with the people responsible for apprentices themselves and they did not think it was a big deal, but the problem lay with the superiors. They always told her that they did not know how the customers would react to a headscarf. While Farah eventually found an apprenticeship in the commercial sector in a municipal administration, Mayla was able to complete her apprenticeship in a bookshop in Zurich. Mayla says that her family „cried with joy" when she finally received an acceptance letter.[247]

Sara's statements are also illustrative of the centrality of customer contact in job application rejections. The 26-year-old is of Turkish descent and has lived in Switzerland since she was seven years old. She only recently completed her master's degree in pharmacy. In the course of her studies, she had to complete both a compulsory internship and an assistantship. Finding an internship was not a problem for her at first, as that work did not involve any customer contact:

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[243] Esma, GGG-Fon.
[244] *Ibid*.
[245] *Ibid*.
[246] Farah, GGG-Fon.
[247] Mayla and Farah, GGG-Fon .

„At that time I was accepted with a headscarf, as I was only working in the background. [I] had only worked in stock receipt and did things like cleaning shelves or restocking them [sic.].”[248] On the other hand, it was almost impossible to find a job for the assistance year, which involves working with clients. Since she had already heard from fellow students that they had to take off their headscarves during the assistantship year because they did not succeed in finding a job with the hijab, Sara started applying for assistantships very early and sent her dossier to all the pharmacies in the city. Nevertheless, she received one rejection after another. The fact that these were due to customer contact is illustrated by an interview at a pharmacy to which she was invited. She was asked on the spot whether she would wear the headscarf to work and when she said yes, the person in charge said: „’Ok, then we don't even have to keep talking. There are rules that we have to follow. We are just not ready for it. [...] We have a lot of customers coming directly from the station and we have other elderly people and so on, and we can't do that.’”[249] This shows that the employer contradicts herself by first citing regulations as a reason for refusal, but then admitting that as a company they would not be willing to hire a woman wearing a headscarf. Additionally, Sara underlines that the pharmacy is located in a very culturally diverse area of the city, where there are „so many women who wear headscarves”[250] which would speak against the pharmacy manager's argument. The fact that the refusals were prompted because of her headscarf is shown by the reasoning of one pharmacy, which informed Sara in writing that because of the „religious neutrality [of the business] no religious symbols would be accepted.”[251] Nevertheless, the person in charge offered her to attend if Sara decided to take off the headscarf: „’if you change your mind, if you take off the headscarf, you can come.’”[252] This clearly illustrates that it was not her qualifications that were decisive for her refusal. In the end, she found a job in a pharmacy outside the city, where she had already worked as an intern: „Because he already knew me and knew that I will work well, he gave me the chance to work for him.”[253] When her new boss heard from her that she had not been hired partially because of the headscarf, as justified by the potential employers, he assured her his support – even if he expected certain (negative) reactions from the customers. For her, the fact that she found a job relatively quickly after graduation is not due to a change in the mentality of the Swiss, but rather to economic pressure and a lack of resources: „I found a job quite

[248] Sara, p. 9.
[249] *Ibid*., p. 8.
[250] *Ibid*.
[251] *Ibid*., p. 9.
[252] *Ibid*.
[253] *Ibid*.

quickly right after graduation. Because there are so few pharmacists, it's really scarce. That's why they don't have the luxury of not taking a woman with a headscarf."[254]

The fact that women with a headscarf were often only employed or are still only employed when they work in the background and not directly with clients is also demonstrated by Marijana's experience. After completing her apprenticeship as a pharmaceutical assistant, she later decided to take her vocational baccalaureate (Berufsmatura). During this time, she continued to work as a pharmaceutical assistant in the same pharmacy at an employment rate of 20-30 per cent. When she finally decided to wear the headscarf in 2009, it was already clear to her that she would not be able to continue in her job. When she communicated to her place of work that she had to quit because of her decision to wear the hijab, her boss regretted the dismissal; nevertheless, she underlined Marijana's fear that the headscarf was 'incompatible' with customer contact: „'You can put on the headscarf. But just take it off again in here, since it is because of the customers- [pause] And I just have so many older customers and they won't understand.'"[255] This reaction of the boss is also illustrative of the fact that it was not the woman's competences but the hijab that prevented her from doing her job. Even though it was her own decision, her boss reiterated that Marijana could not continue to work as a pharmaceutical assistant on the pretext that the headscarf was incompatible with the older customers. However, as she regretted the dismissal, she offered her a job in the pharmacy office, i.e. in the background.[256]

In view of the women's descriptions, it can be stated that customer contact is a decisive factor for the rejection of women wearing headscarves. This is underlined by various studies. One example is the women interviewed by Adelt (2014) in Germany. The stories of those affected show that some were denied access to the labour market due to „customer acceptance". Thus, employers justified the rejection with imagined customers on whom the headscarf could have a deterrent effect.[257] This is supported by a study of the allocation of internships and apprenticeships in a southern German region, which found the strongest rejection of Hijabis in those sectors where appearance is considered important.[258] This centrality of customer contact is also demonstrated in the Swiss context. Of the women interviewed in Natalie Gasser's (2020)

[254] Sara, p. 11.
[255] Marijana, p. 12.
[256] *Ibid*.
[257] ADELT, Kopftuch und Karriere, op. cit., p. 285.
[258] SCHERR, Albert; GRÜNDER, René. Tolerated and disadvantaged: Young people with a migration background on the training market in the Breisgau-Hochschwarzwald district. *Results of a survey among training companies*, 2011, p. 28f.

study, many state the reason for refusing an application was often the possible reaction of the clientele. For the women, it was almost impossible to get a job in which „visibility is given in some form, e.g. in service professions or in sales."[259] This finding is also confirmed by Lindemann's research, which identifies the „medical sector, teaching, jobs involving direct contact with customers, work in cantonal administrative offices, and universities"[260] as the sectors most affected. Lindemann notes that „female students are unable to find internships in law or pharmacy [...] or are faced with the choice of either removing the *hijab* or quitting."[261] Gizem's, Sara's and Marijana's descriptions are examples of this.

Overall, the employers' pretexts described here can also be seen in the context of „colourblindness" and the concept of „public secrecy" used by Sarah Mazouz (2018) and going back to Michael Taussig (1999). „Colourblindness" describes indifference to skin colour and more generally to origin; but in this case also to religious affiliation. This goes hand in hand with the concept of public secrecy, which in the context of discrimination describes the fact that „racialisation processes are kept quiet, although everyone knows that they exist and that they have an effect".[262] In this study, the headscarf is openly mentioned as a reason for not employing women. However, the 'blame' for this is placed either on the (in this case Jewish) clients or (in pharmacies or retail) on the customers. In this sense, the racialisation process is not hidden per se whilst it is still pretended that the employers themselves do not see the headscarf as a 'problem'. They themselves thus appear to be 'colourblind', even though they are acting on the racialisation they have carried out. Again returning to Mazouz's definition of 'public secret', „the moment of acknowledging the question of racial discrimination [sic.] actually serves to bury the question of racialisation altogether [...]" or to pretend that „everything has already been done and that there is actually no reason to talk about racial discrimination or racialisation."[263] The existence of this public secret is also underlined by Lindemann, who points out that, according to the experts, employment was explicitly or implicitly refused in relation to the headscarf. Sometimes the women were rejected directly because of their hijab or there was „the usual argument" that clients or patients might be „'shocked' or 'worried'".[264]

[259] GASSER, Islam, Gender, Intersektionalität, op. cit., p. 276.
[260] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit.*, p. 9.
[261] *Ibid.*
[262] MAZOUZ, Républicanisme et altérité - sortir du « secret public », *doc. cit.*
[263] *Ibid.*
[264] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit.*, p. 10.

5.2.3 The number of applications

The number of job applications written by the women interviewed for this study is also representative of the clear difficulties in integrating into the labour market. Esma, for example, when she wanted to take up a job in retail again after the birth of her second child, but this time with a headscarf rather than without said that „out of the 87 applications I sent, only about 10-12 were not rejections."[265] The situation was similar for Sara, the pharmacy graduate from Basel, who contacted „all the pharmacies in Basel" to find an assistant position and sent „30-40 applications."[266] Marijana, who had previously worked as a trained pharmaceutical assistant and was looking for an internship in the social sector after her studies in sociology and law, also describes that she definitely wrote „30, 40, 50 per cent more applications"[267] to find an internship – although she already presented a lot of work experience and voluntary commitment. The same problem can also be seen in the area of finding an apprenticeship (Lehrstelle). This is explained, for example, by the interviewee Nalia, who lives and grew up in the canton of Bern:

> „When you were looking for an apprenticeship, [with hijab] it was obviously a big issue, where you just got rejection after rejection after rejection; So either you didn't get a reply at all or you got rejected. [...] I looked for an apprenticeship in the 9th grade, and in the 10th grade I looked for an apprenticeship; in both years I didn't find any apprenticeship. And I really wanted to do the commercial apprenticeship [KV] [...] and that didn't work out. And then I went to England for four months and thought to myself: ok, if I can't find anything in Switzerland, then I can at least learn the language instead of waiting there for a year. Then I did that and when I came back I still couldn't find an apprenticeship."[268]

The Hijabis participating in the panel discussion at the event in Bern also reported along the same lines. In order to find an apprenticeship, 17-year-old Farah sent 35 applications to pharmacies and opticians' shops, to which she received „about 35 rejections."[269] This led her to give up those sectors and apply in the commercial field instead. Mayla (15), who knew from acquaintances about the difficulties of finding an apprenticeship as a Hijabi began sending

[265] Esma, GGG-Fon.
[266] Sara, p. 8.
[267] Marijana, p. 5.
[268] Nalia, p. 8.
[269] Farah, GGG-Fon.

applications to various bookshops in the spring of her 8th grade year, and experienced a similar situation. „While I myself wrote about 50 applications and received one rejection after another, none of my friends wrote more than 30, and certain ones only five."[270]

Nalia sees the reason for the clear difficulties in finding an apprenticeship in the association of the headscarf with the stereotype that it is forced on women: „It's really, quite honestly, it's really, especially with apprenticeships it's extremely difficult. [...] I think many companies just feel that when someone is so young, it's like a compulsion, the headscarf – and with the compulsion, of course, comes the problems."[271] Because of the women's age, wearing the headscarf is even more likely than otherwise to be seen as a 'compulsion', which ultimately leads to the collusion of the young women's own decision-making. However, the high refusal rate can also be seen from the perspective of the exercise of power. On the one hand, young women are less likely to challenge a rejection. On the other, they are dependent on finding an apprenticeship due to their education and are thus particularly susceptible to abuse of power.

The study by Gasser on the educational paths of Muslim young women with a migration background also shows that the search for an apprenticeship is particularly difficult. Gasser identifies the headscarf as an „effective barrier to education" in the vocational training sector.[272] Thus, Hijabis are exposed to „considerable restrictions in the choice of occupation", have to „accept educational detours or completely renounce their intended educational goal and undertake a reorientation."[273] If the categories of skin colour and origin (migration background) are also included, access to education becomes even more difficult.[274]

Nalia sees the reason why applications from Hijabis are rejected in general and not only in relation to vocational training in the context of the experiences of acquaintances in various fields of work: „Even in nursing it is not very easy to find something. It starts with nursing and somehow ends with computer science. If you wear the hijab, you are just judged, and that would have been it."[275] Moreover, she sees this as a function of the recognition of professions in society: „My sister found an apprenticeship, but it's more, she worked more in a factory, it wasn't a problem there.[276] [...] If a Hijabi is a cleaning lady, nobody minds. But if she becomes a doctor or a lawyer [sic.], then it's a problem, that doesn't work at all afterward."[277] These statements show that women with headscarves are in lower social positions where they are only

[270] Mayla, GGG-Fon.
[271] Nalia, p. 13.
[272] GASSER, Islam, Gender, Intersektionalität, op. cit., p. 275.
[273] *Ibid*., p. 275f.
[274] *Ibid*.
[275] Nalia, p. 15.
[276] *Ibid*., p. 13.
[277] *Ibid*., p. 16.

accepted because of their social identity. Consequently, inclusion is only accepted in a lower status, which entails submissive and humiliating working conditions. Here, the power structure of stigmatised and marginalised persons mentioned by Mohammad and Hajjat (2016) must be included, which states that the minority is only tolerated as long as they are content with their low status.[278] Lindemann also underlines this finding since her research shows that veiled women who are overqualified, who have a doctorate, a master's degree or are qualified journalists and teachers, remain housewives due to the rejection of the headscarf on the labour market.[279]

5.2.4 The denial of being an integral part of Swiss society

In this section, various events are described in detail and at times the motives given by employers for rejecting female applicants are discussed. Among them figure the denial of linguistic and cultural competencies.

5.2.4.1 The denial of linguistic competences

„'I didn't know you spoke Swiss-German like that, otherwise I would have made a different decision.'"[280] (Statement of a federal employer in the field of migration) (Nalia)

Although it is only a dialect that is not essential for communication, mastering Swiss-German in German-speaking Switzerland is seen as crucial for 'good integration' and therefore as part of the 'we'. The centrality of Swiss-German is evident in all the interviews and especially in Nalia's account. Nalia is a Hijabi, Somali by birth, and dark-skinned. She grew up in the canton of Bern and trained as a legal specialist at the University of Applied Sciences. She had applied for a job with the federal government, for which she fulfilled all the requirements and was in fact overqualified. At the time she received a rejection letter, she sought to know the reason for it and called the person in charge on the phone. When she greeted him with her (Somali) name, the man answered: „Ah, is that you in the photo?"[281] When she answered in the affirmative, he explained: „I didn't know that you spoke Swiss-German like that, otherwise I would have decided differently."[282] As a result, Nalia verbally laid out her competencies by explaining that

[278] ELIAS Norbert in : HAJJAT, MOHAMMED, *Islamophobie*, *op. cit.*, p. 21f.
[279] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit.*, p. 9.
[280] Nalia, p. 11.
[281] *Ibid*.
[282] *Ibid*.

she grew up in Switzerland, completed her schooling here, and is a trained legal professional. When she asked him what he needed in addition to the already provided application documents, he tried justifying his choice: „Then he said yes, for him it was just hard when he saw my picture, that he compared it to someone who speaks Swiss-German, who knows our culture."[283] Consequently, Nalia's appearance (hijab, dark-skinned, Somali name) leads to her being seen as culturally „foreign" and the assumption that she cannot speak Swiss-German. This incident is also illustrative of the mechanisms of stigmatisation proposed by Link and Phelan[284], which ultimately leads to discrimination. In this case, there is multiple *labelling* based on assumed nationality („foreign" name), apparent religion (headscarf-wearing Muslim woman) and skin colour. This is *associated* with the idea that the person does not know Swiss culture, does not speak Swiss-German and consequently cannot be Swiss. The accompanying *distinction* between „us" and „the others" leads to so-called „othering", which in the final step ends with the *denial* of specific competencies and *discrimination* - namely the exclusion of access to the workplace. In these examples, the strong intersectional character of discrimination becomes apparent, as discrimination is generated through the interplay of xenophobic, racist and Islamophobic ideas, whereby the main cause of „othering" remains difficult to identify. In German-speaking Switzerland, however, the hijab seems to function as a marker of a foreign culture dissociated from German-speaking Switzerland, the Swiss-German dialect being unfamiliar and a symbolisation of foreign nationality. In combination, this led to even greater discrimination in the labour market.

The fact that the name itself leads to a high rejection rate for job applications is also shown by Fibbi et al. (2006; 2021), who study the access to the labour market of people with a migration background who were educated in Switzerland. The results show that young people from non-EU countries who grew up in Switzerland face massive discrimination in the labour market, even if they have the same linguistic, educational, and other skills as their Swiss counterparts. The rate of discrimination is even more accentuated in German-speaking Switzerland than in French-speaking Switzerland, which, although not identified as such by the researchers, could be seen as an indicator of a connection with the Swiss German dialect.[285] Consequently, the rejection could be because employers assume, based on the name, that the person does not speak

[283] *Ibid*.

[284] LINK Bruce G., PHELAN Jo C., « Labeling and stigma », in *Handbook of the sociology of mental health, 2nd ed*, New York, NY, US : Springer Science + Business Media, 2013, p. 571-587., p. 578f.

[285] FIBBI Rosita *et alii*, « Unemployment and discrimination against youth of immigrant origin in Switzerland: When the name makes the difference », *Journal of International Migration and Integration / Revue de l'integration et de la migration internationale*, vol. 7, nº 3, 2006, p. 351-366., p. 357. ; FIBBI Rosita et ZSCHIRNT Eva, « Ethnische Diskriminierung auf dem Schweizer Arbeitsmarkt », in *Ökonomenstimme*, 2021.

Swiss-German and is therefore not considered further, despite the proven competencies in High German. While the role of Swiss-German as a whole remains insufficiently investigated, no research could be found in connection with the headscarf. There is one existing reference, namely the bachelor thesis by Charlotte Acakpo (2020), which examines discrimination against refugee women. Individual reports show that the prerequisite of knowing Swiss-German plays an important role in the application process. In connection with the headscarf, Acakpo also recognises that applications in which „the headscarf, dark skin colour or residence status are clearly visible are often not considered because it is assumed that there is no knowledge of Swiss-German."[286]

5.2.4.2 The denial of cultural competences

„We [Hijabis], we live on the margins of society" (Menna).

Menna's remarks are a powerful narrative for the denial of being an integral part of Swiss society which is made visible in the application process on the labour market. Although she initially did not want to admit it and even her daughter had already made that assumption, she now sees the headscarf as the reason for the refusal of her application. As she explains, it is the hijab and her Tunisian origin, which is evident from her name, that (falsely) brand her as a foreigner: „For example, when I applied to the childcare centre, so did Monika Meier, for example. Of course: Monika Meier is a well-known name for the Swiss [ironic laughter]. Even if they don't know her face, she [sic.] is Monika Meier. [But] Menna Hammami* – even if she is a doctoral student and Swiss – she is unknown. That is the basis. You can't say that's not true. [...] It's perfectly clear." [287] At a later point in the interview, she elaborates on what exactly she means by this. Although she has lived in Switzerland for a long time, worked here, and speaks German, she is treated differently because she did not go to school here:

> „It's like us [first-generation immigrants with headscarves] live on the margins of Switzerland. Ok, my daughter will be further inside because she was born here and went to school here. But me, even though [sic.] I have the Swiss passport, I am here [pointing outside the Swiss border she marked on the table]. Why? Because I am a foreigner. And here [inside the border] are many foreigners – without headscarves, of course. That is

[286] Hochschule Luzern, ACAKPO Charlotte, Diskriminierung geflüchteter Frauen beim Zugang zum Arbeitsmarkt. Eine qualitative Fallanalyse aus intersektionaler Perspektive, 2020., p. 48, see also p. 62.
[287] Menna, p. 14.

clear. And I am here [on the outside] [...] and I don't find any other answer to it except because I wear the headscarf. I am convinced of that."[288]

That statement also shows that the rejection of applications is due to several factors. Menna is not only branded as a foreigner because of her hijab but also because of her name and her Tunisian origin, despite her being Swiss. This interaction ultimately leads to strong discrimination in the labour market. In addition, Menna elaborates on what makes employers reject an application when they see the headscarf:

„They have this idea that [the woman] with a headscarf maybe can't do that, maybe can't do that; maybe she didn't go to school...maybe, maybe, maybe. It's because of this 'maybe' that it's already over.[289] [...] I would so much like them to see more than just our headscarf. I want them to see us. Who are we? How are we qualified? What education do we have? What have we studied? What references do we have? [...] I am never against an employer asking for references. I am happy about that. Because I am confident and I know that I have good contacts and good references"[290]

These quotes are illustrative of the prejudices that weigh on Muslim women with headscarves, that they are reduced to their headscarf (essentialised) without seeing the person behind it and how these factors lead to a collusion of competencies. By comparing Monika Meier and Menna Hammami, it becomes clear that she is seen as culturally foreign not only because of her headscarf, but also because of her name and therefore receives a rejection, even though she has the same linguistic, educational, and professional qualifications as her Swiss colleagues. The denial of cultural competencies identified in this study and the resulting exclusion from the labour market has previously been demonstrated in the French context by Patrick Simon (2021). In his quantitative data collection, published in 2021, the disadvantage of Hijabis in the labour market is evident. There, women are excluded from the labour market because they are perceived as not belonging to the national community, which the author describes as the so-called „denial of frenchness."[291]

[288] Menna, p. 14.
[289] *Ibid*., p. 13.
[290] *Ibid*., p. 14.
[291] SIMON, « Le genre de l'islamophobie », *art. cit*.

5.2.5 Incidents at work

Finally, the effects of the headscarf are also evident in the exercise of professional activities. Even if the women eventually found employment, their competencies continued to be denied, albeit in a subtle form. In addition to the (non-)perception of the competencies, this led to restrictions on the women's well-being.

5.2.5.1 „I have to keep proving myself"[292] (Marijana)

The women interviewed mentioned that people often reacted surprised if they mentioned their studies. This becomes evident when looking at Marijana's experience: during her employment in the office of the pharmacy where she had previously worked as a pharmacy assistant, she had to write a letter. When her boss proofread it, he asked if a certain word was spelled correctly. Although she was sure and assured him, „he went down to the pharmacy (it was all a bit together) and asked the other [...] employee [with a typical Swiss name] if the word was right, if it was spelled correctly. And I thought to myself 'YOU!', I'm doing my Matura (school-leaving examination) and I'll soon be finished and you're just going to ask the other one just because she has a Swiss name? He never took me seriously." Marijana sees the headscarf as the reason for it: „He didn't think I could do it. And I already had the feeling that it had something to do with the headscarf because one simply has the stereotype. But I still have that feeling today, even in my internship."[293] The fact that the hijab is automatically associated with a low standard of education is also made clear by another of her statements: „Then [in such incidents] I always think to myself 'hey, I'm not that stupid'. And then you get tired because you think: I have to keep proving myself. It's certainly better than it was 10 years ago, as I said. But I still have that problem today."[294] In the same spirit, Gizem reports that she was given feedback at work regarding her language skills: „I was given good feedback at court because of the language. They said: 'we have been very surprised how well you know the comma rules'."[295]

The fact that racialisation is also accompanied by the assumption of a lower education of the categorised person and a lack of language skills is also shown by Sarah Mazouz's (2018) research into French naturalisation practices. In the interviews on linguistic assimilation,

[292] Marijana, p. 13.
[293] *Ibid*., p. 12.
[294] *Ibid*., p. 13.
[295] Gizem, p. 9

racialised persons from sub-Saharan countries where French is an official language were asked how well they spoke French. This question was even asked of a French-speaking writer from Congo-Brazzaville or other highly qualified interlocutors. However, if the counterpart was a white, Anglophone applicant from Canada, language skills were not asked.[296]

5.2.5.2 „The stares would not stop"[297] (Nalia)

In the workplace itself, the women described another, more subtle type of different treatment, which Nalia, for example, describes as follows: „I sometimes have to behave differently when I go to work; I would put on an abaya[298] during Ramadan [...] because it makes me feel a bit closer to my God when I have it on. But I could never imagine going to work wearing it because I know: the stares wouldn't stop. Because they wouldn't give me the opportunity to wear something like that. But a woman with a miniskirt in the summer, no one is interested in that either."[299] Thus, a standard that is not written out makes her not want to be even more open about her religious identity, even though she would actually feel more comfortable with herself in the abaya. This is unequal treatment based on religious affiliation, because even if women are allowed to dress as they wish due to the equality advertised in Switzerland, this only applies as long as they conform, in this example the minijupe, is given. However, if it is clothing that is seen as „foreign" or „not belonging to the culture", this is seen as inadmissible.

5.2.5.3 Customer: „'I don't want a headscarf'„[300] (Sara)

After 10 months of her employment as an assistant in the pharmacy, Sara reports one to two negative reactions in the workplace. Although she emphasises that she has had almost no bad experiences with customers, she talks about the following event. The pharmacy was full due to the many walk-in customers and all the cash registers were occupied. When she called out to a waiting elderly lady to be served, she initially did not respond. When she called her a second time, she answered: „'I don't want a headscarf'"[301], to which Sara replied that she would just have to wait longer. Otherwise, she reports positive incidents, such as the reactions of women who want to wear the headscarf but do not dare to do so because of the circumstances. This

[296] MAZOUZ, Républicanisme et altérité - sortir du « secret public », *doc. cit.*
[297] Nalia, p. 31.
[298] Specific praying robe.
[299] Nalia, p. 31.
[300] Sara, p. 12.
[301] *Ibid.*.

goes hand in hand with the statements of Mayla, who often receives compliments from customers during her work in the bookshop that she has chosen a beautiful headscarf and that this looks good on her.

Finally, it remains to be mentioned that three of the eight women did not speak of experiences of discrimination at the place of work or in the application process. Meray had not worn the headscarf at the time of her application, while Hayet still does not and is also a high school student. An exception is the case of Naima, a PhD student from Basel, who had encountered no problems finding employment in the university research sector. She explains this as follows: „I mean, I'm extremely lucky, I'm in research. Nobody cares what I look like. [...] I mean sure, I get asked about things. But I don't have the feeling that I wouldn't be accepted just because I wear a headscarf. That's what I meant by 'nobody cares what you look like'".[302] Since she babysat or tutored during her studies, i.e. worked in private places, the headscarf was „no problem there."[303] Nevertheless, she emphasises that as a researcher she is an exception: „Yes, actually almost all of my colleagues who wear the headscarf [...] when it comes to looking for work, that is always the issue."[304] She gives the example of colleagues who work in pharmacies: „Because they work at the counter and advise people, they always had problems finding something. Because a lot of them thought: no, I don't think that would go down well with the customers. And then they were simply not taken on, even though they are actually qualified. […] They would then ask for the reason. A few also said it directly [...] a few wanted to tell it a bit through the nose."[305] Sara sums this up as follows: „But it is still the case that women with headscarves are disadvantaged. I know a lot of female colleagues who can't find a job because of their headscarf."[306]

5.2.6 Summary

In summary, it is evident from the quotes that women are often denied their professional and linguistic competencies when applying for jobs and in the workplace because of the headscarf, their name, and their origin; especially linguistic and cultural understanding and the ability to be economically successful. In addition, it is implied that women may not be able to adequately

[302] Naima, p. 6.
[303] *Ibid*.
[304] Nadia, p. 5.
[305] Nadia, p. 6.
[306] Sara, p. 18.

separate religion from law and that their work outcomes may be influenced in specific ways because of their religious affiliation. Where competencies are recognised, women often do not get a job or their achievements remain hidden or are not made visible to the outside world. Although they live in Switzerland and (most of them) are Swiss citizens, many women are essentialised by being reduced to their headscarf, making them feel excluded from society or outside its borders.

The fact that women with headscarves are almost excluded from the labour market is also confirmed by the research conducted in French-speaking Switzerland by Ines Sayed (2018) and in the three linguistic regions of Switzerland by Lindemann (2021). Sayed emphasises that because of their headscarf, the interviewees had clear difficulties finding employment in the Neuchâtel labour market during and after their academic and/or professional training.[307] This is also confirmed by Lindemann's findings, which lead the author to conclude that the labour market „apart from low-skilled jobs and Muslim-owned businesses" functions, according to Erving Goffman's categorisation, as an out-of-bound place for Hijabis – i.e. a place that due to their open declaration to Islam becomes inaccessible to (stigmatised) Hijabis.[308] If the job involves customer contact, this categorisation is mostly but not entirely confirmed by this study. In rare cases, the interviews show that women obtain employment in their profession, but with reduced or no customer contact and sometimes even in other sectors. It should be taken into account that those women succeeded in finding a job when their economic situation allowed it and when they developed certain coping strategies (c.f. chapter on reactions and strategies).

[307] SAYED, *Etre musulmanes et voilées dans le Canton de Neuchâtel*, op. cit., p. 117.
[308] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit.*, p. 11.

5.3 Encountering prejudice and stereotypes

Based on the previously described experiences in the public sphere and in the labour market, different prejudices and stereotypes that the women are often confronted with can be screened out. On the one hand, the following interpretation shows which prejudices and stereotypes are in circulation in German-speaking Switzerland in the context of (inter-)national and public discourse.[309] On the other hand, this chapter shows how those stereotypes are reproduced by Swiss-German society and in particular how women find themselves confronted with them in their everyday lives. This chapter is divided into the four most frequently encountered stereotypes. First and foremost, the stereotype that is quite specific to the German-speaking part of Switzerland that (i) a Hijabi does not speak German/Swiss-German; followed by the ideas that (ii) women wearing a hijab are oppressed; (iii) a Hijabi has a low(er) level of education and (iv) the headscarf indicates a link to extremism or terror.

5.3.1 Stereotype: A Hijabi does not speak German/Swiss-German

> „So often I am asked if I understand German or if Swiss-German is ok, and it is a bit like that everywhere, also in these institutions."[310] (Naima)

This quote makes it clear that because of their headscarf, Swiss women are denied recognition of speaking German. In addition, each of the interviewed Hijabi reported that they were always addressed first in High German in public spaces, especially by authorities and institutions, although it's usually the Swiss German dialect that is spoken there. Meray noticed this from the time she decided to wear the headscarf at the age of 26: „And what was just a bit strange was that when you wear the headscarf, people have the feeling-, they talk to you in High German first. [...] They always assume that you don't know German. Or have no idea [...] They always find that a bit funny at the beginning, like: 'ok, you can speak German' [...]."[311] This circumstance is also described by Nalia, who emphasises that it is not the colour of her skin but her headscarf that is the reason for this: „But if you were somehow spoken to on the street or

[309] ETTINGER, Patrik (2018): Qualität der Berichterstattung über Muslime in der Schweiz. Eine Studie im Auftrag der Eidgenössischen Kommission gegen Rassismus EKR mit Unterstützung der Mercator Stiftung Schweiz. Hg. v. Eidgenössische Kommission gegen Rassismus EKR; fög – Forschungsinstitut Öffentlichkeit und Gesellschaft, Universität Zürich. Bern. Online: http://www.ekr. admin.ch/pdf/Studie_Qual_Berichterst_D. pdf (28.10.2020).
FACHSTELLE FÜR RASSISMUSBEKÄMPFUNG FRB, « Rassistische Diskriminierung in der Schweiz. Bericht der Fachstelle für Rassismusbekämpfung 2019/2020 », *doc. cit.*, p. 145.
[310] Naima, p. 15.
[311] Meray, p. 5.

somehow in the shop or something, you were of course spoken to in High German. And I always associated that with my headscarf. I never associated that with my skin colour but always with the headscarf, because it's symbolic of 'you are different'."[312] Gizem also talks about this, attributing it to the fact that her counterpart assumes that she is a foreigner: „Yeah, they probably assume that I am – I don't know – maybe an asylum seeker who can't speak German well and only understands High German."[313] Naima also underlines this encountered stereotype while specifically addressing the respective surprise with which her counterparts react when she answers in Swiss-German.

Consequently, in line with Galonnier's (2021)[314] observations in the US and French context, the process of racialisation becomes visible in all these cases. In this case, it becomes obvious that the headscarf is seen as a marker of Islam and especially of a person who seems to be 'foreign' to Swiss culture. It is often automatically assumed that Hijabis do not know German, cannot speak Swiss-German, and are associated with the status of asylum seekers. Thus, the prejudices of lack of language and cultural knowledge, low education, and lack of qualifications that weigh on asylum seekers are transferred to Hijabis because of the headscarf.

That women wearing a hijab in Switzerland are racialized because they are wrongly seen as foreigners and thus branded as 'foreign' is also pointed out by Lindemann (2021). She describes this as „double othering" because of religion and assumed origin, as Hijabis are „attacked for being Muslim and for being seen as 'other' or as not belonging to the country."[315] This manifests itself in the cases reported by the experts in that Swiss-born Hijabis are insulted, for example, for being 'different' or being told to 'go back home'. In correlation with the results of this study, Lindemann also speaks of „more subtle insinuations",[316] in which the women's counterparts reacted with surprise and asked „do you understand French?"[317] when a Hijabi spoke the national language. In this sense, due to the particularity of the Swiss-German Dialect, one could speak of a 'triple othering' since, in German-speaking Switzerland, women with headscarves are not only denied the competence to speak the dialect and to have grown up and be 'integrated' here, but also to be proficient in High German. In certain cases, this false othering is even associated with asylum seekers and therefore an indication of a 'lower' class and a lack of integration. The triple othering thus occurs because of the falsely assumed 'low' class, the assumed 'non-belonging' to the country and due to religious affiliation.

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[312] Nalia, p. 3.
[313] Güslüm, p. 10.
[314] GALONNIER, « Barbes et foulards », *art. cit.* ; SIMON, « Le genre de l'islamophobie », *art. cit.*
[315] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit.*p. 9.
[316] *Ibid.*, p. 8.
[317] *Ibid.*

5.3.2 Stereotype: Women with hijab are oppressed

Many of the women underline that they were often confronted with the stereotype of the 'oppressed Muslim woman with a headscarf', assuming the idea of a compulsory headscarf expected by the family or husband. Here, the intersection of sexism and Islamophobia in the process of stigmatisation and discrimination is particularly evident. Illustrative of the idea that a Hijabi wears her headscarf because her husband wants her to and not because she chooses is Meray's account of her wedding. She had decided to wear the headscarf shortly before she met her husband and after she had made the Hajj[318] (alone). Nevertheless, she was often confronted with the clearly present stereotype of the 'headscarf compulsion': „Many people also ask me whether I started wearing the headscarf after my wedding or before. [...] People then assume that he [my husband] forced me to wear it. Yes, unfortunately, that's the way it is. And I can always proudly say: 'no, I wore it before I even met him'. Yeah, it's just another thing that keeps coming up. Again and again."[319] This circumstance is also described by Menna, namely that as a woman with a headscarf she is not perceived for herself, but only in connection with her husband: „[They say] we live for our husbands, for our children. [...] and every time I meet a Swiss woman, she asks: 'How did you come to Switzerland, with your husband?' That is, she thinks that we always come second. In the back. We are never represented as ourselves."[320] Particularly illustrative of the idea that the headscarf is coercion on the part of the man is also Hayet's statement, the interviewee without a headscarf, which refers to situations with her mother. She reports on her parents' evening at school to which her mother came wearing a headscarf: „Two weeks later, [my] classmates suddenly started asking such strange questions. Where you notice that it simply came about because of the headscarf [sic.], that is, that wearing a headscarf raised the questions in the first place. For example, [questions] like: 'did your parents love each other at all or did your mother just want to go to Switzerland?' You know, things like that. At the same time, they don't even understand, my mother didn't even have a headscarf at that time when she came to Switzerland. Just things like that."[321] Hayet explains that she herself is perceived differently, or rather as a dependent, by her classmates because it is assumed that her mother did not come to Switzerland with a headscarf of her own free will.
In connection with the stereotyping of forced marriage, Meray tells of an incident in the health sector. When she sought out her gynaecologist because of pain during sexual intercourse, the

[318] Pilgrimage to Mecca, one of the 5 pillars of Islam.
[319] Meray, p. 23.
[320] Menna, p. 16.
[321] Hayet, p. 3.

gynaecologis immediately assumed it was due to a forced marriage: „She first assumed that I was forcibly married. And then she asked quite a lot of questions, whether I love my husband, whether he is a nice one, a violent one. Like this."[322] In this case, this stereotyping on the part of the gynaecologist led her to make the wrong assumption, and only „the second time had she ascertained [sic.] what she should have ascertained at the beginning."[323]

The prominence of the idea that women wear the headscarf at the demands of their husbands is also reported by Naima in relation to the marriage of her Moroccan father and her Austrian-Swiss mother. Her mother had come to terms with Islam after the marriage, eventually converted and now also wears the headscarf. In this context, Naima says: „I mean even then, nevertheless, from the outside you can say: 'yes, her husband certainly forced her.'"[324] She also describes that this imaginary coercion was often projected onto her: „Probably they also had in the back of their minds: now the poor girls have to put on the headscarf."[325] This idea of coercion also affects Naima's everyday life: „People often underestimate me [laughs] and get the feeling: ok, she has a headscarf on, she doesn't have a big say [...]."[326]

The fact that the headscarf is seen to be imposed by parents is also emphasised by Nalia: „Well, nobody asks me that now – but before they always said: 'are you only doing it because your parents want you to?' They never assume it coming from me. But it has to come from the parents, there has to be a compulsion behind it and not just that you decide it on your own."[327] She emphasises that it is not measured with the same yardstick when it comes to female converts without a migration background: „With her, people would say 'why do you have the headscarf?' But with her, it will probably not be a question of whether it is a compulsion. With female converts it is not, you just accept it."[328] This shows that the idea of the oppressed woman is also strongly associated with the (assumed) origin of the person wearing the headscarf and that this leads to a declassification as a typical Swiss woman, thus a triple othering takes place due to the intersection of gender, religion and origin. Finally, Marijana also underlines the presence of this stereotype, emphasising its accentuation in the course of the minaret initiative in 2009: „At that time [when I started wearing the headscarf], it was quite extreme: 'you have to free women from the headscarf.' [...] That was the anti-minaret initiative, exactly. And you saw veiled women everywhere and those mosques [illustrated as rockets]."[329]

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[322] Meray, p. 21.
[323] Meray, p. 21.
[324] Naima, p. 7.
[325] *Ibid*., p. 7.
[326] *Ibid*., p. 5.
[327] *Ibid*.
[328] Nalia, p. 29.
[329] Marijana, p. 4.

Overall, it can be stated that the image exists in society that girls and women with hijabs are forced to wear headscarves by their husbands or families. In the course of this, they are perceived as lacking independence and are underestimated, they are assumed to be in an arranged or forced marriage, and a relationship for love is questioned, while at the same time Muslim men are assumed to be violent. All this leads to a large part of Swiss society feeling that women are oppressed and that they should be freed from the headscarf. Here, the prominent role of gender and the accompanying interaction of Islamophobia and sexism in the production of stigmatisation and discrimination become apparent. At the same time, the stereotype implies an asymmetry of power and the racist notion that Western culture is considered superior to that of the East and especially to the cultures grouped as 'Islamic', which are considered backward.[330]

5.3.3 Stereotype: A Hijabi has a low(er) level of education

The stereotype of the 'uneducated headscarf-wearing Muslim woman' is also often present. This can also be seen in connection with the image of 'archaic' and 'backward' Muslims that is widespread in public discourse. For example, Naima says: „People often underestimate me [laughs] and have the feeling: ok, she has a headscarf on, [...] she doesn't know much."[331] This was also brought home to her during a visit to the doctor, for example, who assumed that her „level of education is not that high."[332] Gizem also notes this: „They are often surprised when they hear that you have a university degree"[333] and Meray: „they are also amazed when they get to know you and you somehow say you are studying, you have worked for the government – and even with pride [...] They always find that quite funny at first, like 'ok, you are studying, you are doing something'."[334] This quote not only shows that a Hijabi is perceived as being low(er) educated but also as not seen eligible to work for or represent Switzerland by working for the government. Thus she is not perceived as being Swiss or part of 'Swiss culture'.
Another example of the presence of this stereotype is Sara's experience, in which a person addressed her directly. She was in a waiting room of an insurance office with her father reading a book. „And then someone walked by, one of the employees in this office. And then he looked at me briefly and said 'ah, you can read?' And then he just kept walking. Exactly [laughs]."[335]

[330] EL-TAYEB, *European Others*, *op. cit.*, p. 91-120; GALONNIER, « Barbes et foulards », *art. cit.*
[331] Gizem, p. 10.
[332] Naima, p. 5.
[333] Gizem, p. 10.
[334] Sara, p. 5.
[335] *Ibid*, p. 3.

The incident at the workplace described earlier by Marjiana also shows that her employer considers her level of education and competence to be lower than that of her 'typical' Swiss colleague, despite the fact that she has been working with her for a long time. In addition, some women reported that in health institutions they were often spoken to as if they did not accurately understand complex processes, whilst this could also be due to the assumption that Hijabis do not know the language.

Overall, it can be stated that the Hijabis interviewed are often underestimated: they are denied knowledge, activities, university degrees and jobs in institutions representing Switzerland. In this context, they are even assumed to be illiterate. The presumed lack of education consequently implies an attribution to lower-class membership.

5.3.4 Stereotype: A Hijabi is associated with extremism or terror

As has already been pointed out in relation to the (inter)national context and in the women's experiences in public spaces, terrorist attacks have clear influences on the perception of women wearing headscarves. This was shown, for example, when Meray listened to recitations of the Quran with wireless headphones, which suddenly lost the connection and thus their sound could be heard loudly: „And then you just heard prayers like that, so just loudly coming out of the mobile phone. And really just for a few seconds. And people looked like this [imitates shocked face] [...] Suddenly people just turned away, really, they went away as fast as they could. I was like, hey guys, I'm not a terrorist. I mean, just because you heard the Quran once- [pause]."[336]

As Gizem illustrates, the attacks carried out by the Islamic State (ISIS) or Al-Qaeda lead her, as a Hijabi, to have to distance herself from the actions and organisations: „I find it so tedious that I then always have to defend myself. As if I had done something. ISIS is present, Al-Qaeda has done something. And then I always have to defend myself. I haven't done anything! [laughs]. I always have to distance myself."[337] In doing so, she underlines how polarised the debates are and how, when there is an attack, Islam is always directly presented as the reason: „But when it's discussed how it came about, what-, well then Islam is in the foreground and not all the other problems that this person had."[338] In connection with this, it also becomes clear that the feeling of constantly having to defend oneself creates a pressure of internal suffering: „I mean, we suffer the most because of these groups. We get picked on, we have to listen to the

[336] Meray, p. 8.
[337] Gizem, p. 14.
[338] *Ibid*.

comments, and we have to somehow put the whole thing in perspective. We, Muslims, are the ones who suffer the most because of these governments."[339]

In short, the women are associated with ISIS and Al-Qaeda because of their headscarves and are perceived as extremists and potential terrorists. The women are picked on and spoken to stupidly, and people turn away from them when they hear recitations from the Quran. Since Islam is often equated with terror[340], lacking a systematic analysis of the personality of the attacker and instead focusing only on Islam, women have to distance themselves from the attacks and groups. This is also confirmed by the Racism Report of 2019 which states that Muslim people „are repeatedly asked to justify themselves and explain what they are doing against the terrorism of ISIS [sic.] and other groups, although both Muslim organisations and Islamic scholars repeatedly distance themselves from terrorism, this is ignored by the majority of the public."[341]

5.4 Impact on the women

> „I really felt like sh**. I didn't understand it. Because I've always been a person who wants to believe in the positive, in the good. [...] I felt like shit and I didn't understand the world either, because I assumed: a simple piece of cloth can't trigger such aversion. And personally, I was the same person. I acted exactly the same, I moved the same way."[342] (Meray)

This citation shows how a positive thinking woman who behaves appropriately is treated differently after she has decided to wear the headscarf. Although she does not change herself or her way of acting, the negative reactions of her peers make her feel very bad in some cases. In this sense, this chapter will address the impact of the experiences on the women themselves, focusing first on the public sphere and then on the labour market.

[339] Gizem, p. 14.
[340] MARFOUK, « I'm neither racist nor xenophobic, but », *art. cit.*
[341] BAYARD *et alii*, « Ich spreche für mich. Erfahrungen von muslimischen Jugendlichen mit Vorurteilen », *doc. cit.*, p. 12.
[342] Meray, p. 7.

5.4.1 Effects of the experiences in public space

The constant staring triggers various reactions on a personal level among the Hijabis interviewed. Overall, it appears that the stares – especially in the younger years – were hurtful. In addition, the women felt discomfort and, in some cases, fear.

Whilst being especially strong in her younger years, the sense of discomfort and the disruptive effect that come with it are described by Nalia, for example: „[The gazes], that was very unpleasant for me when I was younger, [then] it bothered me a lot [...].”[343] For Marijana, the remarks generated by the headscarf in public space triggered, among other things, a feeling of violation: „Yes, there have actually not been many incidents [pause]. Such bad ones [pause]. But for example, someone says something and then you think to yourself: Thank God I didn't understand, otherwise I would have- [pause]. Exactly. Depending on the situation it just hurts.”[344] Furthermore, the incidents led her to doubt her decision about wearing her headscarf, not because she herself doubted it but because it meant having to continue to deal with such situations: „Not that I have had a few experiences that simply made me think: well, see. I rather shouldn’t [wear the headscarf].”[345] Naima also expresses these doubts: „I mean, never having taken off my headscarf again doesn’t mean that you don’t sometimes play with the idea. Meaning it’s not easy.”[346] While some of the interviewees expressed these doubts and explained that they had only decided to wear the headscarf at a later stage because of the circumstances, Menna is the only one who actually made the decision to take it off for a period of about a year. Since these thoughts and decisions are also considered a strategy, they will be dealt with specifically in the following chapter (c.f. strategies).

The experiences also triggered fear in some of the women interviewed. Marijana, for example, mentions this by attributing their emergence mainly to contemptuous looks: „I was honestly scared a lot too. But mainly because of the looks.”[347] Sara also reports on the fear generated by stares and remarks. While they generally make her feel uneasy, they turn into a feeling of threat in the evening: „I wouldn't necessarily dare to walk around alone at night with a headscarf. Above all, we lived near the train station. [...] If you walked through the station at ten o’clock or so with your headscarf on, you are looked at strangely.”[348]

[343] Nalia, p. 4.
[344] Marijana, p. 5.
[345] *Ibid*., p. 7.
[346] Naima, p. 20.
[347] Marijana, p. 5.
[348] Sara, p. 16.

The verbal aggression and remarks also had an effect on the respondents while it becomes particularly evident during the first years of wearing a headscarf. Naima, for example, explains: „When you put it on, you were still a bit in the teenage phase and then it gets mixed up with the identity crisis. That's where it really hit me, I have to admit. I think I also, yeah, it just made me feel unsure."[349] Marijana also reflects on this insecurity due to everyday consequences: „There were a lot of ups and downs. I often went home and thought: why did I do it? Before, I was just someone [laughs] [...] While I am now- [pause]. Also, I had already made a few experiences that just pushed me back even further, so to speak, after which I thought: 'well, you see. You should rather not [wear the headscarf]."[350] In Marijana's case, it should be noted that she had already felt insecure and out of place to some extent before wearing the headscarf because of her northern Macedonian origin and was often reduced to her origin. She describes the interplay of this and the accompanying effect of the headscarf as follows: „By the fact that I already had the background, somehow never a real identity, it wasn't so bad. It was just a bit worse [laughs ironically]. [...] Society didn't make it easy for me."[351] Consequently, the effects of the intersections of her headscarf, her age, and her northern Macedonian origin make her feel like she's not accepted in Swiss society.

The incidents experienced can also lead to sadness and disappointment. This is shown, for example, by Meray's description of a reaction triggered in her when a cyclist stopped for her for once, contrary to what would otherwise be her everyday reality: „I just started crying when a cyclist just gave me priority. It was actually something positive. But at that moment I just had to cry. Because that's when I understood: [...] sh**, I'm just happy about that but before it was just normal to me."[352]

5.4.2 Effects of rejection in the labour market

The rejection in the labour market affected the women's personal level and life course in different forms. For many of the women interviewed, the incidents first led to hurt, disappointment and despair and in a second step to questioning the system and the institutions. If the women finally found a job, then it led to an affirmation of themselves and increased self-confidence.

[349] Nadia, p. 3.
[350] Marijana, p. 7.
[351] *Ibid*., p. 4f.
[352] Meray, p. 4.

When Nalia was rejected by an employer because he assumed, based on her appearance, that she could not speak Swiss-German, the employer's reasoning both shocked her and made her feel hurt and humiliated at the same time: „That hurt me a lot. Because that was actually... [a place that] supports migrants. That is really an experience that I still carry with me. I will never forget that."[353] Sara also describes similar feelings when she did not expect the headscarf to be a problem since she had already received an invitation to a job interview at a pharmacy. It was only on the spot when she was confronted with the reality: „When I was about to leave, I then realised that it had hit me hard after all. Because she [the employer] had invited me and I was left thinking that it [the headscarf] shouldn't be a problem."[354] After the feeling of being affected and hurt, feelings of despair and loss of strength also set in: „Because I mean it is, a pharmacy in Gundeli[355] [...], there are so many women who wear a headscarf. And, yeah, exactly. At that moment I was desperate."[356]

Gizem described similar feelings after the ban on religious symbols was issued by the courts of the canton of Basel Stadt. She describes how, in addition to the feeling of disappointment and despair it also lead her to doubt the Swiss legal system: „I was really disappointed in the legal system. I had studied law. I was really looking forward to the practical experience and now something like this happens to me. I was a bit desperate."[357]

Nalia felt perplexed and began to lose confidence in the principle of equal opportunities: „And then I realised: I can do what I want. I will always be reduced to my image and my headscarf. These prejudices, they still exist [...] People look at your image and that's it."[358] This shows that a system that claims to be a guarantor of equal opportunities for all does not follow this principle in practice and instead acts based on appearance based prejudices. With regard to Swiss institutions it triggers a loss of trust in Nalia when realising how the intersections of origin and religion affect her perception amongst employers: „I thought: [...] if even this place [that supports migrants] feels that it can't be that I talk like this and look like this and wear a headscarf, that- [pause] yeah."[359] The loss of trust in institutions is also illustrated by Nalia's description of her search for an internship during her training as a legal specialist. After she had an interview with the federal government, she was shortlisted together with a Swiss man from the canton of Bern: „And of course I was already mentally concluding, thinking: ok, he's Swiss,

[353] Nalia, p. 11.
[354] Sara, p. 8.
[355] Dicstrict in Basel
[356] Sara, p. 8.
[357] Gizem, p. 4.
[358] Nalia, p. 11.
[359] *Ibid*, p. 11.

he's not Muslim and he's a man. You've lost, Nalia, you won't stand a chance."[360] Although Nalia finally got the internship and this time it was her competencies and not the stereotypes attributed to her because of her appearance that counted, it is also interesting to mention the reaction of her classmates in this context: „The whole class had already given up on me and said: 'you won't get that anyway, you can forget it. Because when he's there, you just have everything negative on you already and he's just the man or the Swiss.'"[361] Consequently, this passage impressively shows that the disadvantage in the labour market often resulting from the intersection of gender, religious affiliation, assumed nationality and ethnicity is not only a reality known by those affected but is also perceived by the majority of society.

In a further step, however, it also became apparent that the setbacks strengthened the women in their determination to wear the headscarf. Marijana's statement is illustrative of this: „When I apply now [...] it is quite clear to me [that I am applying with a headscarf]. Because now I already have very great trust in God."[362] Over time, the setbacks therefore also seem to strengthen the women's religiosity. Marijana describes this as a process in which the beginning is very difficult because of the 'new' reactions but afterward becomes somewhat easier because of growing self-confidence: „You become more self-confident over time."[363] She underlines that she now only accepts work where she is accepted as she really is: „And I don't want to go anywhere at all where they don't accept me as I am."[364] Gizem also emphasises this goal-oriented attitude: „They [Hijabis] are very self-determined. And I think that's also because they've had to face so many difficulties."[365] Finally, Mayla's statement shows that despite the setbacks, it was worth fighting because she finally managed to find an apprenticeship: „It was worth fighting. To see that they really want me the way I am."[366]

In summary, the events experienced by the women in public spaces and in the labour market lead them to question whether they can continue to endure the consequences of wearing a headscarf in everyday life. They report fear of disturbing glances and of going out alone in the evening. They feel hurt, disturbed, insecure, sad and disappointed, hit, helpless, and desperate. They almost lose hope and doubt the institutions and the system. A piece of cloth consequently leads to the women partly having difficulties in continuing to believe in the good side of people. In a further step, they counted on their trust in God and developed perseverance or

[360] Nalia, p. 9.
[361] *Ibid*, p. 9f.
[362] Marijana, p. 13.
[363] *Ibid*, p. 7.
[364] *Ibid*, p. 13.
[365] Gizem, p. 20.
[366] Mayla, GGG-Fon.

reinforcement in accepting only a job where the employers accepted the women as they are, which strengthened their self-confidence. This made them feel proud of themselves and strengthened their assertiveness and will.

The impact of discrimination was also studied by Allen et al. (2014) in British public spaces and Nette Sijtsma (2011) in the Netherlands in relation to Muslim women's leisure activities and goes in line with this study. In this sense, Sijtsma states that „relatively minor forms of discrimination can affect women's level of enjoyment" of leisure activities and that the experiences made them „feel uncomfortable, made the activity less carefree and negatively affected their mood at the time of the discriminatory act."[367]

Allen et al. also report that the women interviewed felt „angry, shocked and upset, but also humiliated, isolated, ashamed and sad"[368] as a result of their experiences, with the incidents making a large proportion of the women interviewed feel increasingly vulnerable and anxious.[369] It was also found that the incidents experienced by the women often led them to question their role and place in British society and to feel less of a sense of belonging. The same questioning process was also evident in this study, where the feeling of not belonging was particularly triggered among the women interviewed in the wake of the burqa initiative and the associated SVP campaign, but also due to the experienced rejection in the labour market.

[367] SIJTSMA, « Negotiating the Oppression of Discrimination Encountered in Outdoor Leisure: A Study of Muslim Women in the Netherlands », *art. cit.*, p. 38.
[368] ALLEN *et alii*, Maybe we are hated, *cit.*, p. 28.
[369] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

5.5 Reactions and strategies

This chapter illustrates how the women react to experienced discrimination and which strategies they develop in consequence. Moreover, it remains to be noted that strategies are also always dependent on the women's well-being, the situation as well as the context, and can change over time or be (newly) developed. Nalia describes the importance of self-confidence in relation to the constant stares as follows: „If you are having a good day, you kind of feel like a queen because you feel like you look really good because everyone is looking at you. If you have a worse day, then it hurts you a little."[370] Overall, it should be noted that the women interviewed for this work and encountered at the events are very self-confident and determined women who, despite the many setbacks, do not passively accept the experiences of stigmatisation and discrimination but decide to react to them by confronting their counterparts, acting in a determined manner and actively demanding their rights (even if they are sometimes denied). Their strength of will is represented by their determination and how they keep pursuing their goals despite the resistance and restrictions encountered. This can be illustrated by Menna's statement: „I want respect. Because I am an educated woman, a well-educated woman. And I won't be looked down upon by anyone."[371] The women's self-confidence also becomes apparent in the fact that when looking for a job, they only accept employers who value them as they are, i.e. with their headscarf.

Based on the women's narratives, it can be seen that they react differently to stigmatisation and discrimination. There is often a fluid transition between reactions and strategies, with reactions being mostly quick and unconscious, while strategies are considered as rather reflective experiences and consciously considered actions. As can be seen from the interviews, after a reaction, conscious strategies often develop after a period of reflection. This chapter is therefore firstly devoted to cases which mostly count as reactions, i.e. in which women do or don't confront their counterpart as well as do or don't report stigmatization or discrimination. The following sections will then discuss the different strategies which can roughly be summed up into coping strategies, adapting and negotiating strategies.

[370] Nalia, p. 5.
[371] Menna, p. 13.

5.5.1 Confronting or not confronting

The following section will address incidents in which the women interviewed decided to confront the aggressor as well as cases in which they decided not to do so due to shock or because they considered a confrontation to be useless.

5.5.1.1 Confronting verbally

Many of the interviewees confronted their counterparts directly. Naima, for example, explains that in situations where she is seen as a foreigner because of the hijab, she points out to the person that she's prejudiced and that Hijabis belong as much to Switzerland as everywhere else. So in case someone asked her – as happens more often – „'is that how you wear it [headscarf] in your country?'" she answers: „in Switzerland, yes, there are already people who do it like that in Switzerland."[372] Gizem applies the same strategy when people speak to her in High German automatically associating the headscarf with the 'foreign' and therefore with a person who is not from here and therefore cannot speak Swiss-German: „I then answer back in Swiss-German and say: 'I understand you, you can speak Swiss-German with me.'"[373] Marijana took the same approach to an incident at the checkout in the supermarket, where her hijab led her counterpart to assume that she did not speak Swiss-German: „For example, I had an incident at *Migros*[374] at the checkout. And [...] there was a woman in front of us and I don't know, I think I let her go first, I don't know. And she says: 'You know German so well. And I answered: 'yes...?' [Then she said] 'Yeah, one doesn't know that'. And I said: 'No, you have the feeling that you don't know it. There are more than enough people who know German well.'"[375] She explains that although the woman had „just annoyed her with her reaction, she still stayed nice."[376] This could be explained either by the fact that she does not want to get in a fight since she doesn't consider it to be worth it or that she keeps it low key because with her hijab he also represents other Hijabis and does not want to reinforce the already existing prejudice. Nalia also chooses direct confrontation: „Sometimes I also confront people straight up [when they stare] and say 'is there something wrong, do I have something on my face?'. So that everything becomes a little bit less fraught."[377] Menna is also not afraid to answer directly and defend

[372] Naima, p. 4.
[373] Marijana, p. 5.
[374] Swiss supermarket.
[375] Marijana, p. 5.
[376] *Ibid*.
[377] Nalia, p. 5.

herself: „I answer because I have something to say."[378] In doing so, she emphasises that she consciously adapts her behaviour to her counterpart: „If I have to speak to someone at a very low level, I do that, if I have to shout, I shout. And if someone is rude, I say it directly to their face."[379] This direct confrontation at eye level is also illustrated by her reaction to the incident on the bus, where the driver accelerated and then immediately hit the breaks: „I didn't even think about running away. No. I stood behind him [the bus driver] and said: 'You're an asshole, you can't drive. [...] I said that three times, he didn't say anything. He didn't react because he knew what he did was wrong. If he hadn't done it on purpose, he would have said 'what, what did you say?' But I called him names and he acted like he wasn't hearing anything."[380] Menna herself attributes the strength to confront her counterpart to her police training: „I am strong because I worked with the police. [...] I'm not afraid of anyone [...] If I think someone is treating me unfairly, I react."[381] At the same time, she underlines that this kind of response also requires a lot of strength which many lack due to past experiences: „But there are women who wear headscarves, they are very weak. [...] 80 per cent of women are afraid."[382]

Overall, it can be stated that the women interviewed often decide to confront the aggressor. The verbal expressions range from a nice speech to irony to shouting or name-calling, although the women are sometimes afraid or annoyed. This was also confirmed by Sijtsma's study, showing that more than half of the women decided to confront their aggressor by responding with „a verbal counterattack", emphasising that if they were treated unfairly they would „approach the person and enter into a discussion."[383] They did so when they considered discrimination as unfair they would enter into a discussion making clear that „they won't let abuse themselves or get walked over."[384]

5.5.1.2 Not being able or not wanting to confront

It often happened that the interviewees described situations in which they were so surprised by the reaction of their counterpart that they were initially unable to react due to a state of shock. This is for example the case with Sara as she wanted to react to the fact that the man in the insurance building told her in surprise that she could actually read. However, she was

[378] Menna, p. 11.
[379] *Ibid*., p. 28.
[380] Menna, p. 8.
[381] *Ibid*.
[382] *Ibid*.
[383] SIJTSMA, Negotiating the Oppression of Discrimination Encountered in Outdoor Leisure: A Study of Muslim Women in the Netherlands, *doc. cit*., p. 35.
[384] *Ibid*., p. 35.

„completely shocked" by his reaction[385] and therefore was unable to react at first. Moreover, the man walked straight on without her having a chance to respond to his statement. Although her father, who was sitting next to her, wanted to respond, Sara decided it was not worth it, telling her father to „just leave him, he's going on now."[386] Meray also experiences surprise and a sense of bewilderment when the verses of the Quran playing on her player were suddenly heard loudly from her mobile phone due to a lost connection to her headphones and people turned away from her. „I mean, just because you heard the Quran once-. I was thinking, this is just too much now. This really just can't be true."[387]

On the other hand, some women explain that they do not confront their counterparts about certain incidents because it won't be worth confronting them. In relation to the insults Naima suffered because of her wearing the burqini at the Rheine, Naima explains: „And with comments like that I usually just don't say anything because there's no point in discussing with people like that anyway."[388] She explains that, unlike in the past, she has given up discussing with certain people who say something about wearing a headscarf just „to provoke" since it „only frustrates" her.[389] „I've slowly given up on it. When I was 17, 18, 19, 20, I was still fighting a bit, really often I entered into discussions sometimes going on for hours. But now it's just like: I just want my peace, leave me alone."[390] This shows that the everyday incidents, despite their subtle nature, such as the glances, weigh heavily on and are perceived as something disturbing in everyday life. In order not to let such incidents get to her, she tries to accept the new reality and not let it affect her by saying „ok, whatever."[391] This is illustrative of how a decision of not reacting can simultaneously evolve into a strategy.

In sum, the women are sometimes unable to respond because they are shocked, stunned or because they do not have the time to react in the respective situations. That individuals often don't act due to being shocked or surprised was also found by Lamont et. al. For example, in the Brazilian context, more than half the respondents did not confront their counterpart because „they were taken by surprise, they were shocked, or they could not do anything about it."[392]

As reasons for not wanting to respond, the women cite frustration and toughening up over the years. They seem to make a conscious decision not to spend energy on demanding rights that

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[385] Meray, p. 13.
[386] *Ibid*.
[387] *Ibid*., p. 8.
[388] Naima, p. 2.
[389] *Ibid*., p. 8.
[390] *Ibid*.
[391] *Ibid*.
[392] LAMONT *et alii*, *Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel*, *op. cit*., p. 177.

should be granted to them, such as living in peace and not being harassed. Sijtsma's findings also confirm that confrontation is sometimes considered as useless and thus leads to a decision of not confronting the aggressor.[393] In line with the findings in the Swiss-German context, the Dutch women also showed that their self-confidence was not (any longer) influenced by experiences of discrimination.

5.5.2 Reporting or not reporting

This section illustrates incidents in which and reasons for the women's decision not to report an incident. Secondly, it will address how some of the women decided to report and file complaint.

5.5.2.1 Not reporting

The women's narratives indicate that they often did not seek help from institutions or organisations. Despite the existing anti-discrimination law, almost none of the women reported incidents of discrimination because of their headscarf. The women interviewed for this study said that they often did not seek help from the institutions or did not report discrimination because, as Marijana puts it, it was „nothing major, just things you can't report"[394], indicating that there is often too little evidence for a (successful) report. This also manifests itself in the labour market. Most women did not turn to any institution when their job applications were rejected, but sought support from their family or friends. Gizem, a trained lawyer, explains this as follows: „The problem with such cases is that you never put it in writing. Then you can't present any evidence, you can't do anything about it. And they [the employers] do that consciously. Or, they will offer you the classic standard formulation: 'you know, there were better candidates.'"[395] This statement is also confirmed by Sara referring to the aforementioned situation with the pharmacist who had verbally communicated that she was not hired because of her headscarf: „She probably didn't want to provide any proof that she didn't want me because of that."[396] The same is described by Menna: „They will never tell you. [...] If someone tells you 'it's because of the headscarf', then there is a problem, so they will avoid telling you."[397] These statements show that seeking justice for those experiencing discrimination is

[393] *Ibid*., p. 35.
[394] Marijana, p. 6.
[395] Gizem, p. 7.
[396] Sara, p. 8.
[397] Menna, p. 7.

often impossible as the victims lack the written evidence required by Swiss anti-discrimination law as discrimination is not usually evidenced in this way.[398]

On the other hand, the decision to report or not to report also depends on the risks involved. The fact that, for example, a challenge on the part of the affected person can often be very difficult is illustrated by the ban on religious symbols at court described by Gizem: „I could have, theoretically, defended myself [against the judges decision]. But I didn't want to, I didn't want to be present with it. I already have a hard enough time, I don't have to deal with that too. And the chances are really, really slim that the Federal Court will see it differently."[399] So Gizem decides against legal action because, on the one hand, she thinks her chances of success are low and, on the other hand, she has to consider possible negative effects on her career. Sara also decided not to take legal action when she unusually received a written rejection from a pharmacy because of her headscarf. The pharmacy explained to her that due to the „religious neutrality of the company"[400] no religious symbols would be accepted. Even though Sara did not think the chances of success of a complaint were impossible, she refrained from reporting the incident.

5.5.2.2 Reporting or filing a complaint

On the other hand, there were also incidents where the women decided to report to the police and filing charges. Most of the women interviewed had not yet come into contact with the police. The ones who had not yet reported a case to the police or had not had to file a complaint would report possible cases, such as Meray, Nalia, Gizem and Naima, though mentioning that this did not necessarily mean that they would be understood and taken seriously by the police. Nevertheless, it is clear that the women are determined to report injustice if they feel there is sufficient evidence. Two of the seven women wearing headscarves, Menna and Gizem, described interactions with the police. As mentioned in the previous section, Gizem and her friend were verbally assaulted and insulted at the university library. As a result, they reported this to the police to file a criminal complaint. However, their first attempt turned out to be disappointing: „We called the police, they arrived, and we described the facts to them. They said: 'Yeah, you know, it is known to the police, but there is nothing we can do.' In the sense of: that is not a criminal offence."[401] But since Gizem still wanted to do something about the

[398] EKR Eidgenössische Kommission gegen Rassismus, « Strafrecht », *Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft*, https://www.ekr.admin.ch/rechtsgrundlagen/d154.html, consulted: 29.05.2022.
[399] Gizem, p. 4.
[400] Sara, p. 8.
[401] Gizem, p. 19.

injustice suffered by her, she turned to a public prosecutor she knew from her studies and asked her whether it was not an insult (as fascists and Nazis) and therefore a criminal offence. After the professor confirmed her suspicions and encouraged her to file a complaint, Gizem and her friend went to the police again. This time they were treated appropriately: „We went again and said 'that's the way it is.' [...] And then we returned and then he took us seriously and [sic.] logged everything."[402] From this, Gizem concludes that incidents of discrimination should be reported and that such actions are also worthwhile: „Then he [the abuser] received a fine. I think that's also important, that you're not afraid to go and file a complaint. Because someone has to confirm that such behaviour is not okay."[403]

While Gizem's complaint had consequences, this was not the case with Menna. On the one hand, this is true with regard to the woman who had beaten Menna in the tram. Menna explains that the police already knew of other Hijabis having been victims to the same violence: „The police know this. Because many of the women have filed a complaint."[404] When she wanted to file a complaint herself, the police officers on the spot gave her a discouraging answer: „The people there told me 'yeah, it is not perfect, it has happened many times before.' The case was well known."[405] Nevertheless, to her knowledge, nothing has been done so far.

The inactivity of the police is particularly striking in relation to the previously mentioned two years of harassment she was subjected to from her neighbour. Although she reported the property damage and harassment incidents repeatedly from the beginning to the police, they took no action: „I called the police when he [the neighbour] was banging on the door and my daughters were still little. They [the police officers] listened to me and left."[406] She acted the same way in the cases of damage to property when her neighbour had poured oil all over her clothes in the basement: „I called the police, they came, they take pictures. And then they leave."[407] The same scenario repeated itself after the neighbour had poured water over her winter clothes: „The police came. They took photos. And they left."[408] She also reported the incidents of the dates on which the neighbour had urinated before giving them to her, and the one in which the neighbour wrote „fuck you" on her door, but: „Each time I called the police. And they did nothing, NOTHING to him."[409] Not even when her neighbour sought out her daughters in the after-school care centre and threatened to suffocate them, the police did nothing; and this

[402] *Ibid*., p. 19.
[403] *Ibid*.
[404] Menna, p. 11.
[405] *Ibid*.
[406] *Ibid*., p. 10.
[407] *Ibid*.
[408] *Ibid*.
[409] *Ibid*.

time it was the supervisor of the after-school care centre who reported the incident to the police. So after the woman possessing both the Tunisian and the Swiss passport endured two years of harassment, abuse, and property damage at home while her daughters' lives were threatened by her neighbour, the police remained inactive. It was only when the same neighbour damaged the caretaker's property that the management decided to terminate his contract: „It was only when he broke the caretaker's car. When he did that that they terminated his contract. But when he did all that to me, for years. Nothing. Nobody reacted. No one."[410] Menna remained stunned: „Where are my rights? As a Swiss woman? As a mother? Where ?!! Nowhere. Nothing [they did], nothing, nothing."[411]

These interactions of the two women with the police show that despite the fact that offences had taken place, in Gizem's case only at the beginning, but in Menna's case frequently and recurring reports of damage, harassment and threats, both the police and administration remained inactive. Menna was denied her rights not just as an individual but also as a Swiss citizen.

In sum, some women wanted to report but couldn't due to a lack of evidence or witnesses while in other cases, they calculated the risks and estimated legal chances of success as too low or did not want to be exposed additionally. In other cases they do report unfair treatment or file a complaint. They do so despite the fear of not being taken seriously by the police and even though their action sometimes remain without consequences. This finding is also reflected in the actual racism report, conjecting a high number of unreported cases.[412] Furthermore, non-governmental experts interviewed by Lindemann (2021) also state that many discrimination cases are not being reported because Hijabis consider a positive outcome unlikely and know about the complexity of a legal procedure. To 'prove' discrimination, several criteria must be met, including the existence of witnesses and that the incident must take place in public. Cases involving insufficient valid evidence or witnesses are often closed and have a traumatising impact on the victims. This would explain, as Lindemann points out, why 'only' two of the 52 cases of direct discrimination against Muslims since 1995 involve Hijabis.[413]

Lindemann's study also provides insight into when women wearing headscarves report stigmatisation or discrimination to (non-)government organisations. First and foremost, the government experts confirm that there is a significant under-reporting of incidents, as only a minority of victims of discrimination report to government institutions. They cite ignorance,

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[410] Menna, p. 10.
[411] *Ibid*.
[412] FACHSTELLE FÜR RASSISMUSBEKÄMPFUNG FRB, « Rassistische Diskriminierung in der Schweiz. Bericht der Fachstelle für Rassismusbekämpfung 2019/2020 », *doc. cit*.
[413] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit*., p. 12.

fear and shame as reasons. However, the non-governmental experts list other possible causes: First and foremost, they identify a sense of fatalism. Hijabis often do not report experiences of discrimination to state institutions because they do not believe they can achieve anything. They also state that incidents are not reported because there is a fear of being blamed rather than supported. One indication of this could be that the women represented in this study sought help in their own friendship or family network because, as Nalia explains, they were sure that they would be understood and supported there. In this sense, one of the non-governmental organisation experts working in a Muslim organisation also explains that the women refer to them because they do not judge them but rather understand what they have experienced since they „have experienced it themselves."[414]

5.5.3 Coping strategies

In order to deal with the experiences of stigmatisation and discrimination, the women interviewed developed different strategies. This section will address the ones that the interviewed seem to have developed as coping mechanisms.

5.5.3.1 Accepting, thinking positively and toughening up

Some of the women explain that after the difficult initial phase in which they noticed the looks and comments that were suddenly new to them very strongly, they moved into a certain stage of acceptance of the new living circumstances. Naima describes this in the sense that she no longer even notices gazes and comments anymore. „It's little things like this in everyday life that sometimes I don't even really notice."[415] This ignoring or accepting the 'new' circumstances is also illustrated by her following statement where she speaks of inurement and becoming stronger: „When I hear a comment like that [like the one at the Rhine] on the street, I actually have to laugh. Because well, I've heard it so often that it doesn't really bother me anymore. It's like I've toughened up in a way."[416] Gizem's statement also shows that the women are learning to deal with the new reality: „But I think you then also learn to deal with it [the everyday reactions of others to the headscarf]. You just have to not take it personally and look at it from the perspective of others."[417] Similarly, after the initial period of wearing the headscarf during which the stares offended her, Nalia has now even adopted a positive attitude towards it: „And

[414] LINDEMANN, « Discrimination against Veiled Muslim Women in Switzerland », *art. cit.*, p. 12.
[415] Güslüm, p. 10.
[416] Naima, p. 4.
[417] Gizem, p. 10.

now I have to say, now: I embrace it. I really don't care that much, I take it as a compliment."[418] The fact that Gizem also sees the positive side of the situation is shown by the following statement in relation to the regular addresses in High German instead of Swiss-German: „In the meantime, I find it cute when they address me in High German."[419]

The acceptance identified was already defined by Joe R. Feagin (1991)[420] as „resigned acceptance" in relation to discrimination against dark-skinned people in public spaces. In regard to Hijabis, acceptance was also found in Sijtsma's study as a strategy developed over the years. Her research also indicates that women living in the Netherlands begin to accept discrimination as part of their lives and as they grow older and gain self-confidence; they still find it „troublesome, but accept it in a way."[421] In this regard, however, this study also identifies the positive acceptance applied by Nalia, i.e. the decision to perceive the looks as positive or as compliments by embracing them.

5.5.3.1 Resisting, remaining objective and repressing

In addition to resigned acceptance, comments or inquiries can also have the opposite effect of what the stigmatiser was hoping for. This was the case with Naima's class teacher, who explicitly asked her whether she really wanted to wear the headscarf: „But this teacher had the opposite effect. I just wanted to wear it all the more."[422]

Regarding the setbacks in the labour market, Gizem tries to understand the rejections. Although she tries to look at the rejection objectively and independently of the headscarf, this remains impossible because the discrimination was so clearly linked to the headscarf: „I always try to look at it objectively, [...] I don't like to be in the victim role. I had a 5 average in my Bachelor's and 5.5 in my Master's. If my grade point average was the reason, then I would have understood. But I have really heard of people [sic.] who maybe have a 4.5 average and got an [...] internship at the court. Then I don't find that honest and open when people tell me: 'We have people who have better grades.' Or in the law firms, people who really have a worse average, that they found a job."[423]

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[418] Nalia, p. 3.
[419] Gizem, p. 10.
[420] FEAGIN Joe R., « The continuing significance of race: AntiBlack discrimination in public places », *American Sociological Review*, vol. 56, nº 1, American Sociological Assn, US, 1991, p. 101-116., p. 103.
[421] SIJTSMA, « Negotiating the Oppression of Discrimination Encountered in Outdoor Leisure: A Study of Muslim Women in the Netherlands », *art. cit.*, p. 33.
[422] Naima, p. 4.
[423] Gizem, p. 9.

One can also identify a strategy of suppression. In order not to despair and to find strength, Marijana suppressed the fact that her applications were rejected because of her headscarf: „For example, I never thought: 'no, they won't take me'. I repressed that. I didn't want to think that they wouldn't take me because I had a headscarf."[424] Nalia also uses the same tactic in relation to the headscarf while not explicitly referring to the job market: „Sometimes it might depend on the character of a person, I start to think that; that my headscarf shouldn't prevent something or something."[425]

The women cite their family, friends or colleagues as a very encouraging factor in dealing with their (everyday) experiences, as it is them who offer support or understanding. The importance of family support is particularly evident in Nalia's statements: „I've got the courage to say something, I can defend myself well. But I also have parents who really stand by me and a family where I really know that if there was a problem I could go to them and say, 'hey, I've got this and this and this issue.'"[426] This support was particularly important to her in the course of looking for a job:

> „And of course you needed help, people who motivated you to do it or who told you 'it's just because of society that you're not accepted'. And there I simply sought the help of my parents and my siblings, not from strangers. Because in my circle of friends when I was younger, there weren't many Muslims, there were many Swiss or Swiss women or Italians and so on. But of course I couldn't seek help there, or, because they don't have these experiences like me. Then I went to my family and sought support there, sought encouragement, sought understanding."[427]

5.5.3.2 Understanding

The fact that the women were able to build up this certain kind of acceptance also seems to be connected to the fact that many show understanding for their counterparts. The statements of Nalia, Marijana and Gizem are illustrative of this. Marijana, for example, says that „in a way" she also has „absolute understanding" for the fact that „the [headscarf] is just not part of the basic values of 60s/70s Switzerland [...] or 70s/80s Switzerland"[428] and that she can therefore understand when people look at her strangely because of her hijab. Gizem also shows understanding and discusses, for example, being addressed in High German: „But I don't think

[424] Marijana, p. 5.
[425] Nalia, p. 3.
[426] *Ibid*., p. 8.
[427] Qaali, p. 9.
[428] Marijana, p. 8.

it's so bad. I also understand why they want to talk to me in High German. Maybe he doesn't have contact with Muslims. [...] But yes, stupid comments like that.[429] [...] They probably also never had the opportunity to really come into contact with us. We are not present in the media either."[430] Nalia also often shows understanding to her counterpart by emphasising that people don't know about the headscarf and that's why they react that way, even though they don't have bad intentions: „I just see that they don't mean any harm, that they are just curious, like 'what's that.'" The fact that she perceives comments and looks in this sense helps her to deal with it and not to find it disturbing as she did when she first started wearing the headscarf, and to no longer see the gazes as an attack on herself but as motivated by curiosity: „That's why now it doesn't bother me at all."[431]

This strategy can be observed in relation to women wearing headscarves in the Dutch context. As Sijtsma points out, the women she interviewed do not let discrimination oppress them in their leisure activities and thus „retain responsibility for their own lives."[432] It is interesting to see that Sijtsma identifies understanding the other person as the strategy most often used. Thus, the women she interviewed often tried „to justify discrimination by remarking that they somehow understand why the other discriminates."[433] Here, she distinguishes between a justification that can be found in one's own group on the one hand – such as the fact that the headscarf can already be conspicuous –, while on the other hand the reason lies with the other person. The researcher attributes the former mainly to the public discourse, which portrays Muslims in a negative light and this consequently affects the women's self-perception and they perceive themselves as conspicuous. If the reason is found in the other person, the women interviewed in the Dutch context state that the aggressors do not know other cultures, that they are having a bad day, or that they are uneducated.[434] In Sijtsma's opinion, the strategy of understanding the other also shows „that, even in the face of discrimination, these women maintain their humanity and recognise the humanity of the other."[435] In the Swiss context, this could be related to the fact that seven of the eight women had been familiar with two cultures since childhood and consequently were sometimes confronted with different views. At the same time, they could be drawing on Switzerland's cultural repertoire, always being present as to wanting to respond to conflict resolution with diplomacy and dialogue. With regard to the cause

[429] Gizem, p. 10.
[430] *Ibid*.
[431] Nalia, p. 5.
[432] SIJTSMA, « Negotiating the Oppression of Discrimination Encountered in Outdoor Leisure: A Study of Muslim Women in the Netherlands », *art. cit*., p. 38.
[433] *Ibid*., pp. 32.
[434] *Ibid*.
[435] *Ibid*.

of discrimination residing in the other person, this study also presents similar results to the one found by Sijtsma as the women interviewed also show understanding through citing for example the polarising media or the lack of contact with the Muslim community. However, some of the women also see the responsibility of discrimination with the other person, as they often also speak of people's „ignorance", intending that nowadays everyone can inform themselves and access neutral and truthful information, that is in case the person is actually willing not to simply blindly follow the polarised media discourse and instead inform themselves.

5.5.3.3 Seeking support in the personal environment

Knowing that Nalia's family was supportive was essential for her to be able to cope with the situation, because she found encouragement and especially understanding from them, which her circle of friends could not offer her. Naima also emphasises the encouraging effect her parents had. While her mother who also wears a headscarf was „like a role model"[436] for her, her father in particular „always offered her the support" that she needed: „We discuss everything. And that's why I did not feel like I was lost."[437] Nevertheless, she emphasises that as a Hijabi growing up in Switzerland here, she needed willingness and strength: „But I had to make my place in society. Because my father can't model that for me, he wasn't born here."[438]

In relation to incidents of discrimination, the women interviewed for this study also emphasise the importance of the network of acquaintances. Sara, for example, explains: „I have two colleagues who are now lawyers. And, [...] I would first ask them what I could do [and] what rights I have."[439] This is also emphasised by Gizem: „I kept approaching people or acquaintances or certain lawyers and asking them what I should do."[440] Marijana also emphasises that she could especially count on the support of women who were born in Switzerland, knew the language, and were self-confident: „Over time, Hijabis became more self-confident and stood up. And somehow-, I also sought out people like that. I wanted to meet people [...] who knew the language for sure and who had grown up here. And I found a lot of people like that. And that also gave me strength."[441]

The fact that the majority of the women mainly rely on resources from their network, friends or family should also be seen in the context that most of them do not really feel represented by

[436] Naima, p. 2.
[437] *Ibid*., p. 12.
[438] *Ibid*.
[439] Sara, p. 15.
[440] Gizem, p. 8.
[441] Marijana, p. 7.

any institution they know. In this sense, Gizem, for example, explains that during the application process she sought support from an organisation in Basel and sent in her documents, but never received a reply: „It was some institution that supports people who are university graduates, [but who] have difficulty finding something on the labour market because of their origin, religion. I also applied there, but after that nothing much really happened. I sent my documents and then I heard nothing more."[442] In addition, most of the women do not know of any specific institutions that would adequately represent them and offer assistance. This is illustrated by Sara's statement: „I don't really know many institutions [...] that could explicitly support me in matters of the headscarf."[443] Nevertheless, she explains that she would certainly go to the police if she were threatened: „But if someone were to threaten me now, of course, I would go to the police."[444] This lack of trust in institutions seems to mainly be due to experiencing daily incidents of stigmatisation and sometimes discrimination. This is particularly crucial seen in the context of the fact that these young women grew up here but are on a reoccurring basis made to feel as if they didn't belong. This is accompanied by the feeling or falsely represented in politics, media, and culture, while the lack of representation turned out to be particularly accentuated at the religious level. For example, a large number of the women interviewed pointed out that there are often no German-speaking Imams in the mosques instead lectures are held in the languages of different countries, which in return, as Naima explains, also bring „their politics"[445] , their „different mentality"[446] and their „problems"[447] with them; things that the women who grew up here do not identify with. As a result, Naima, for example, found „no connection in the mosque"[448] and therefore often exchanged views on everyday events or religious issues with her „father and with female colleagues."[449]

5.5.3.1 Acting preventively

Furthermore, some women act preventively by anticipating certain scenarios. For Sara, this started at school in relation to swimming lessons. Since she would not have felt comfortable in a bikini and with the (negative) reactions of the others, she always pre-emptively redeemed her half-days'[450] at school or planned a doctor's appointment when swimming lessons took place.[451]

[442] Gizem, p. 8.
[443] Sara, p. 15.
[444] Gizem, p. 8.
[445] Naima, p. 10.
[446] *Ibid*.
[447] *Ibid*.
[448] *Ibid*.
[449] *Ibid*.
[450] High school students in Switzerland have 8 half-days per year at their disposal, which they can use freely.
[451] Sara, p. 15.

Marijana also applied a preventive approach at school. In order to prevent the prejudice of 'headscarf compulsion', which was even more present in the wake of the minaret ban, she told her Matura High School Class on the first day why she now wears the headscarf: „I went to class and we just had physics with the teacher responsible for my class. And I said to him: 'Listen, I have decided to wear the hijab. But I would like to explain it to the class.' And then I stood in front of the class and told them: 'I have decided to do this [...] because I am convinced and not out of any constraints. [...] and please, if you have any questions or whatever, come to me. I'd much rather you come to me than discuss anything behind my back.'"[452] Due to the political climate, Marijana therefore anticipated negative reactions and possible slander leading to her justification for her decision to wear the hijab publicly in front of the class. This strategy could therefore be situated in between adapting, prevention and negotiation since it shows how the women anticipate certain reactions but take back their agency by speaking up beforehand and trying to eliminate stereotypes or prejudice.

Finally, it is important to note that a prevention strategy is highly context-dependent and can or must change with the (inter)national climate[453], as also shown in this study. In order to avoid escalation, the will to discuss can change into a strategy of walking away. Nalia illustrates this by describing the situation after a terrorist attack as follows: „It's really the stares, where you notice that they almost don't stop, people just focus on you, really, for 20 minutes you're just the focus."[454] It is this situation that finally makes her change her normally applied strategy of confrontation: „Then I always get up and sit down somewhere else when I see 'oh, this situation is not good'. Then I move away rather than start any discussion. And that's really just when something happened before. [...]"[455] Her example consequently shows that a response and confrontation strategy can turn into a non-confrontation strategy due to a terrorist attack. In addition, she mentions that in those cases, a confrontation strategy could lead to her taking too much of a risk.: „If that happens, then I have to pay attention again". Furthermore, international terrorism results in her having to worry about her family members: „Then I have to tell my mother to pay attention. [...] That's where I then hold back."[456] This case, therefore, is also illustrative of how Muslims in general but especially Hijabis are targeted by in society reproduced and acted on hostility, making them feel at risk of possible aggressions due to their visible religious affiliation.

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[452] Marijana, p. 3f.
[453] LAMONT *et alii*, *Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel*, *op. cit.*
[454] Nalia, p. 8.
[455] *Ibid.*
[456] *Ibid.*

5.5.4 Adapting

This section discusses cases in which the women respond by adapting their behaviour in order to avoid incidents of stigmatization or discrimination. In the following cases, women therefore not only use preventive strategies to protect themselves but in addition go beyond self-protection and take a from the outside perceivable action.

5.5.4.1 Avoiding places, media and politics

As some women describe, their experiences also led them to feel uncomfortable in certain places and to stop visiting them temporarily. In Marijana's case, for example, the constant stares led her to avoid certain public places: „In the beginning it was definitely feeling like having to cautiously approach this and at the beginning, I forbade myself to do things or I decided not to do them because I just thought 'oh well, now they'll see her with the headscarf.'"[457] This was the case at the cinema or in a coffee shop: „At the very beginning, I didn't even dare to go to the cinema. Then going for a drink, I found that really horrible at the beginning.[458] Only when she became more self-confident did she decide not to limit herself in her leisure activities anymore. Sara also says that she no longer dares to be out alone in Basel at night because of strange looks and comments from people at the station: „For example, I wouldn't necessarily dare to walk around alone at night with a headscarf. Yes, walking around alone at night with a headscarf, I don't know if that's a good idea [laughs]."[459]

At the time of the vote on the burqa ban and due to her sensitivity of the issue Gizem avoids the media and the political debate and generally tries to distance herself to protect her mental health: „And this time [with the burqa campaign] I tried to distance myself from the whole thing, because it's not....it's not very good for me myself as I get too involved with the issue."[460]

The findings of Allen et al. (2014) also show that women with headscarves no longer visit certain places as a consequence of experiences of discrimination. One of the women interviewed for their study reported that she no longer dared to go shopping because of previous experiences. Other women also report that they felt at risk when going to public places „for a walk alone or in the evening."[461]

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[457] Marijana, p. 7.
[458] *Ibid*.
[459] Sara, p. 16.
[460] Gizem, p. 13.
[461] ALLEN *et alii*, Maybe we are hated, *cit*., pp. 20.

5.5.4.2 Wearing a turban, taking off the hijab or not wearing one at all

Although some of the women sometimes doubted their decision to wear the headscarf because of the negative experiences they had, they never took it off again – except for Menna. However, Esma, for example, a speaker at the event on the headscarf in the labour market, described that she used a certain strategy after deciding to wear the headscarf; after all, she was aware that her „new look will certainly not please everyone [employer]." Consequently, she prepared application documents with two different photos. One showed her with a classic headscarf, the other with big earrings, make-up and with a turban „with a lot of style and a pattern." Esma hardly received any rejections for the applications with a turban and was almost always invited for an interview, to which she appeared with a „classic headscarf", i.e. the hijab. In the interview, however, it was often explained that the turban was „better" than the hijab and that it would actually be „best not to wear it at all." Since „the turban does not look so typically Muslim", the feedback was more positive. She was willing to wear a turban for work instead of the traditional headscarf, but „that was not an option for any of the employers."[462]

With regard to the decision to wear the hijab, it should be emphasised that the women began to wear their headscarves later than they actually wanted to because they knew about the consequences and feared the structural consequences. The situation of 19-year-old Hayet, the only interviewee without a headscarf, is also illustrative of the social hardship of wearing a headscarf. When considering „how society is structured now and the people, and especially with anti-Muslim racism" are prevalent, she describes wearing a headscarf as an „idealistic wish." In her case, her experiences as a Muslim at school, the social pressure, and her perceived experiences of her mother led her to not dare to wear the headscarf: „Because I don't want to not be addressed because of that [the headscarf] or not be able to somehow completely fit into social structures just because I wear a headscarf. And [I just] don't want to be judged even more."[463]

As already described, with the exception of Menna, none of the interviewees took off their headscarf. Menna decided to take off her headscarf for a period of „maximum one year."[464] In this case, it must be emphasised that she did not do so out of a change of attitude towards her religion or the headscarf in general: „Of course I always knew in my head that I would return [to the headscarf]. I cannot not return, it's impossible."[465] In her case, it was her private and economic situation that forced her to take it off temporarily: „At the end of 2009, I was divorced.

[462] Esma, GGG-Fon.
[463] Hayet, p. 2.
[464] Menna, p. 29.
[465] *Ibid*.

I didn't speak German well, not like I do now. I had the feeling of being alone in a desert. Lost. And I suddenly had a very big responsibility weighing on me – that of three children. I knew about social subsidies but not how everything worked. It was the first time and I was very scared to be alone everywhere."[466] Consequently, due to the divorce, the responsibility of three children, and the economic pressure of having to find a job, she felt compelled to take off the headscarf: „And I took off the headscarf because I didn't know [sic.] the possible reaction [of people]. I didn't know how it works, how it goes, how I must be, how I can't be."[467] This illustrates the role that her lived experiences of stigmatisation and discrimination play in Menna's decision to take off the headscarf and how dependent such decisions are on the social and economic situation. In this case, she can no longer take the risk of being rejected or discriminated against because of the headscarf due to her financial hardship and takes off the hijab. This fear of economic consequences and of discrimination due to the hijab became true as soon as she decided to wear the hijab again and was in the process of receiving social aid, i.e. subsidies. At some point, the woman in charge of her case called her saying that she had „something very important" to tell her but that she could „not say it on the phone" but rather „make an appointment", emphasising that the thing she wanted to tell Menna was „something offered to her by the canton of Zurich."[468] Before Menna got to make an appointment, her consultant left for holidays and was afterwards replaced by a new employee. It was during that time where Nalia had decided to wear her hijab again that met with the new responsible: „and she saw me with my hijab and we met for the first time. And before I left I told her that Mme. X* [the previous consultant] had told me that something was promised to me by the canton of Zurich [i.e. subsidies]. She replied: 'no, I have no clue, I have never heard of that'. I understood very well in that moment, in that time, that it was because of my hijab that they stopped some kind of process. And I am sure. They stopped something because of the headscarf."[469] Regardless of this occurring discrimination due to her hijab, Noura did not take off her headscarf again.

In sum, the reasons for the decision of either tying a turban, taking off the hijab or not wearing it at all include fears of not being accepted or judged, of being too typically Muslim, of not fitting into society, and the anti-Muslim racism that is present in society. Lack of language skills, family responsibilities, unemployment, and financial hardship also contribute to such a decision. That economic insecurity and high unemployment have a major impact on the

[466] Menna, p. 29.
[467] *Ibid*.
[468] *Ibid*., p. 30.
[469] *Ibid*.

response to discrimination and stigmatisation is shown by Lamont et al. (2018) who argue that these conditions promote a „pragmatic attitude" by changing the response behaviour of those affected as they calculate their personal consequences.[470] In this study, there can be less talk of pragmatism, as it becomes clear that having to take off the headscarf or other actions due to prejudice and discrimination go far beyond pragmatism. As was shown by the women, an altered or removed headscarf is a clear and hurtful interference with their identity, personal freedom, and rights.

5.5.4.3 Changing profession or re-orienting oneself

In relation to the labour market, the setbacks experienced lead either to the choice of a different educational path, further training, or having to choose a different profession. For example, when Gizem despite excellent qualifications does not get a job under the pretext of not being sufficiently qualified, she asks herself whether she should change her orientation: „Should I perhaps take a different path?"[471] Here one can see that the women are considering having to take a different career direction if necessary even if they finally succeed in finding a job.

Esma on the other hand was forced to change her career. Since working in „sales was actually impossible"[472], she decided to do a new diploma and become a migration specialist. But one day, her brother-in-law said to her: „You like driving and you are communicative - why don't you open a driving school?".s Esma then put this into practice and set up her own driving school, which she has now been running independently for six years and has even employed one member of staff last summer.[473] Other women, such as Mayla and Farah, also reoriented themselves professionally by opting for a different apprenticeship than originally planned. Sara, on the other hand, continued to try to find a job in the same sector.

Even if the women eventually managed to find a job, this still led in some cases to a slight reorientation with regard to the target profession. For example, Gizem finally decided to work in the federal administration instead of as a lawyer or in a law firm since her actual job involves much less customer contact and her previous aim was rendered impossible due to structural restrictions. None of the women interviewed decided to take off their headscarves 'only' because their applications were rejected.

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[470] LAMONT *et alii*, *Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel*, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
[471] Gizem, p. 4.
[472] Esma, GGG-Fon.
[473] Esma, GGG-Fon.

How women respond to essentialisation in the French and Italian labour markets has also been studied by Anne-Iris Romens (2021), while her study focuses on migrant women. She too has identified retraining or acquisition of cultural capital as a category „between acceptance and resistance strategies", as it accepts the superiority of native cultural capital, but proves the opposite to those who deny migrant women skills.[474] Natalie Gasser (2020) also identifies the fact that Hijabis opt for further vocational training due to structural restrictions – as Nalia did – as a strategy in the Swiss-German context. She calls this a „tactic of appropriating the meritocratic principle" through which the women concerned gain more agency.[475] Karimi (2021)[476] shows in the French context that discrimination in the labour market leads women with headscarves to become independent, as was the case with Esma. She describes this strategy as one that leads to women gaining more agency as it allows them to make their own rules. This mechanism was also identified by Gasser in the Swiss-German context and described by the author as a „tactic with which women use (religious) self-representation as emancipated Muslims to position themselves socio-politically", also possibly happening through an alternative career in addition to self-employment.[477]

5.5.5 Negotiation strategies

This last section is devoted to actions or strategies with which the Hijabis try to actively act against persisting stereotypes and prejudice by either seeking interpersonal dialogue or by taking a step in the public sphere to combat social inequality.

5.5.5.1 Seeking a dialogue with the counterpart

Almost all of the women interviewed for this study emphasised that interpersonal dialogue is very important to them. Menna's explanation is illustrative of this. In order to prevent prejudice, she relies on friendly dialogue with her peers and actively seeks contact. She emphasises her openness towards her fellow human beings in everyday life or at work, for example: „When I work, I always try – because they all have that specific idea about a woman with a headscarf that she's always sad, she doesn't want any contact – I prevent that! I start with the greeting. That's me. I laugh, I bring things to my girlfriends, I invite them to my house, I always do that.

[474] ROMENS, « "Don't let people walk all over you": Migrant women with tertiary education coping with essentialism in Italy and France », *art. cit.*, p. 256.
[475] GASSER, *Islam, Gender, Intersektionalität*, *op. cit.*, p. 269.
[476] KARIMI, « Voile et travail en France », *art. cit.*
[477] GASSER, *Islam, Gender, Intersektionalität*, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

[...] I am not a woman who is always sad, I talk a lot, I discuss a lot, I like discussion a lot [...] I am integrated."[478] She also considers socialising in institutional settings such as school as really important: „I also greet. And I have a lot of contacts. I know how [sic.] to get in touch with people. [...] And even with the schools, my daughters' teachers, I make contact and invite them. That's how it is, I like that, I like doing that. Because where I find love, I throw myself in there [laughs]."[479] Gizem also relies on interpersonal dialogue, which she illustrates for example by dealing with the political climate or with institutions: „I was always in conversation with the institutions. If you also seek the conversation and are willing to talk about it, then you will find a solution."[480] She emphasises that she does not influence or harm anyone because of her religion, which also reflects on the constantly present prejudice of „dangerous" Muslims: „I live in Switzerland, I abide by the legal system here, I abide by the rules. But I also practice Islam and I don't harm anyone either."[481]

In relation to the vote on the veiling ban, Gizem also tried to distance herself from the media and political debates and instead decided on seeking objective, interpersonal dialogue: „I tried to remain objective, I went to the polls, I talked to people in my environment."[482] Focusing on dialogue where it can be fruitful is also Marijana's strategy. Even though she emphasises that the educational work has been done „in abundance"[483] and has also been made accessible to everyone because of the internet, she is willing to educate interested fellow human beings: „I am absolutely in favour of education. I don't get tired of it!". However, she admits that not everyone is willing to open up at all: „But as I said, people don't come. Those who are ignorant are just like that."[484] In these cases, she also uses the strategy of accepting the situation: „There are those people who don't want to accept it. And they will have their objections, their accusations, their prejudices every time. They will always exist. No, I just think [pause] it's okay."[485]

5.5.5.2 Going public

In order to also fight against the inaction of the police, Menna turned to a Swiss-German newspaper to publicise the case of domestic harassment already described and the injustice suffered: „This is not the first interview I have given. I have already done two interviews and I

[478] Menna, p. 6.
[479] *Ibid*., p. 8.
[480] Gizem, p. 19.
[481] *Ibid*.
[482] Güslüm, p. 13.
[483] Marijana, p. 10.
[484] *Ibid*., p, 8.
[485] *Ibid*., p. 10.

told them about the incident."[486] In this sense, she also addresses the fact that women wearing headscarves are not represented in the media or are misrepresented. For example, the media only showed them in the following light: „The idea is always that we come second, in the back. [... That] we live for our husbands, we live for our children"[487] while we are never represented as women „who want to do something."[488] Menna wants to change this idea: „Inshallah, one day it will happen that we will introduce ourselves as women, as Swiss women. Because we can do a lot for society, a lot. And YES, we are well educated [sic.]."[489] In order to contribute to a more positive and, above all, real coverage of women wearing headscarves, she would like to appear in the Swiss free newspaper 20-Minuten, which the Swiss read „everywhere and every morning"[490] and with her appearance in the media „shed a little light on us."[491] That's why she already contacted a journalist she knows to ask her for an interview: „I said to her: 'Why don't you write an article for 20 Minutes? It is the most famous newspaper. [...] You can even use my photo, that doesn't matter."[492] From such representation, Menna, therefore, hopes for broader representation and acceptance of women with headscarves: „They will find the headscarf in the newspaper and associate it with peace. They will accept us, directly, as a base. [...] Because for them we are unknowns. We have never presented ourselves like this before."[493] That such articles remain rare is also underlined by Nalia. In this sense, she reports on a positive article by a Hijabi who had opened a shop in eastern Switzerland and started her own collection, but this was followed by a lot of negative comments.[494]

Nalia also reports that Hijabis are not (positively) represented in public space. To counteract this and especially the misconceptions about Islamic headscarves that were circulating in the public space in the wake of the 2021 veiling initiative, she engaged on social media during the vote to educate and motivate young people in particular to vote: „I also tried really hard on social media to encourage people to vote."[495] She chose social media for this because she believes it has a high value, as the platforms reach a broad audience and can have „a positive impact on society."[496] With regard to Islam and its representation, she hopes that by means of

[486] Menna, p. 11.
[487] *Ibid*., p. 15.
[488] *Ibid*.
[489] *Ibid*.
[490] *Ibid*.
[491] *Ibid*.
[492] *Ibid*.
[493] *Ibid*.
[494] « Modest Fashion - Ein Hijab kann so hip sein », *Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen (SRF)*, 21.09.2021, https://www.srf.ch/kultur/gesellschaft-religion/modest-fashion-ein-hijab-kann-so-hip-sein, consulted 03.06.2022.
[495] Nalia, p. 17.
[496] *Ibid*., p. 9.

education people through social media, people who are „manipulated" by the media „might also see the good sides and not just what the media says."[497]

Anne-Iris Romens (2021) also identifies this strategy among migrant women, who „visibly challenge essentialism through individual or collective action."[498] While on the individual level she talks about challenging the stereotype by responding to negative comments, on the collective level she talks about, among other things, wanting to project a positive image of their group. While other researchers such as Eijberts and Roggeband (2016) list this as a possible solidification of the difference between natives and migrants, Romens rightly emphasises that this collective strategy, however, constructs counter-narratives and makes it possible to assert oneself in the political arena.[499]

5.5.6 Summary

In sum, the women interviewed in this study react by changing thoughts, feelings and their attitude. Firstly, reactions can be identified. They include confronting, not confronting, not reporting or reporting and filing a complaint. In some incidents, the interviewed women confront their counterpart directly. They do this in public incidents by directly addressing their counterparts by (sometimes) confronting them with their own prejudice or with the injustice they had just committed. In other situations, the women wanted to respond but couldn't due to a lack of evidence or witnesses. In other cases, they also calculated the risks and estimated legal chances of success as too low or did not want to be exposed further. In other rarer cases, they reported discrimination which in some cases did have consequences but in others didn't.

Furthermore, the women seemed to apply different strategies. On the one hand, these include coping mechanisms. These can encompass that the women do not take the reactions of others personally, accept them or even see them in a positive light, show understanding for the other perspective, find the reaction sweet, laugh about it or resist and toughen up. On the other hand, they also seek their friends' and families' support to cope with their experiences. With turning to their network instead of institutions, they find encouragement, understanding, motivation and help, especially in their family and friends. This support is particularly important in view of the fact that the women do not feel represented by the Swiss-German religious institutions, as these import their language, politics, and problems of the respective countries.

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[497] Nalia, p. 9.

[498] ROMENS Anne-Iris, « "Don't let people walk all over you": Migrant women with tertiary education coping with essentialism in Italy and France », *International Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. 10, n° 20, 2021, p. 231-263., 256.

[499] *Ibid*.

Another set of strategies could be summed up as adaption strategies whilst it should be noted that they are often situated in-between adapting and gaining back their agency. In other cases, they no longer trust themselves to do certain things because of past experiences, forbid themselves things or distance themselves in order to protect themselves. These strategies comprise that a Hijabi would decide to prevent escalation, for example in the case of international changes by leaving. In some cases, adaption can also express itself through the women feeling constrained to take measures such as wearing a turban, taking off their hijab or not even wearing it at all, while the reasons for this include fears of not being accepted or judged, of being too typically Muslim, of not fitting into society, and the anti-Muslim racism that is present in society. Lack of language skills, family responsibilities, unemployment, and financial hardship also contribute to such a decision. Another strategy which seems to figure in-between adaption and negotiation is the re-orientation on the labour market. This study found that discrimination in the labour market led the women interviewed to choose a different educational path, pursue professional training or a new orientation or continue looking for a job in the same sector. Although the women eventually managed to find a job, in certain cases this still led to a slight reorientation with regard to the target occupation (e.g. with significantly less customer contact), situating this strategy in-between adaption and gaining back agency.

Lastly, one could speak of negotiation strategies in which Hijabis try to change the status quo and to counteract the prevailing stereotypes and prejudice. They do this by either seeking interhuman dialogue or by speaking up in the newspaper or on social media.

In sum, Hijabis mostly actively and self-determinedly decide that the experiences of stigmatisation and discrimination will ultimately not limit them in their everyday life and choices and therefore enabling them to gain back their agency.

6 Conclusion and outlook

For the first time, this study deals with the everyday experiences of hijab-wearing women in German-speaking Switzerland. By focusing on those affected, their realities and experiences could be explicitly highlighted and summarised. By focusing not only on discrimination, e.g. restricted access to resources but also on stigmatisation, e.g. all incidents and subjective experiences in which the women experienced disrespect and had their dignity, honour, status, or self-image questioned, this work was able to look at the range of everyday experiences of headscarf-wearing women in German-speaking Switzerland. It becomes clear how, because of their hijab, the women interviewed are particularly affected in the public sphere and in the labour market. By identifying the incidents of stigmatisation and discrimination, it was possible to find out which of the stereotypes reproduced by society were the most significant for these women. In particular, the effects of the experiences in the German-speaking part of Switzerland on them, their diverse reactions, and strategies for dealing with all these incidents in everyday life were addressed, paying special attention to the role of the Swiss-German dialect and in what sense it becomes particularly significant.

6.1 The public space

In comparison to existing research such as Chris Allen's (2014); Juliette Galonnier (2021); Anaïd Lindemann (2021), this study was able to show how prominently Hijabis are exposed to every day, non-normal stares from the moment they started wearing headscarves. The glances range from gazes to stares and are described as strong, disturbing, or nasty. In addition, the women report regular comments and some verbal abuse, while one Hijabi was subjected to physical violence, damage to property, and threats in her own living space. Glances, comments, or insults occurred especially in public transport and on the street, but also in cinemas or coffee shops.

While the effects of discrimination and stigmatisation overlap with previous studies, this study was able to demonstrate the influence of political campaigns and the propagation of enemy images in the public sphere on Muslim women wearing headscarves, even if the women themselves are not directly affected by the new law. The effect of the campaign provoked a feeling of not belonging to the society in which they grew up (except for one interviewee) and made them fear for their future as free women in Switzerland in view of further possible restrictive measures.

6.2 The labour market

Both the statements of the women interviewed as well as the Hijabis present at the event in Bern display strong discrimination in the labour market. As various research studies such as Svenja Adelt (2014); Natalie Gasser (2020); Hanane Karimi (2021); Patrick Simon (2021); Lindemann (2021) have already shown, the application process proved to be particularly difficult. Not only did the women have to write decidedly more applications but regardless of their professional competencies, they were mostly implicitly but sometimes also explicitly rejected because of their headscarf. Entry into the labour market was particularly difficult when it came to jobs with customer contact. This 'lack of client acceptance' was often used by employers as an excuse to shift the reason for discrimination from themselves to the clients. In combination, the intersections of xenophobia, Islamophobia, racism, and sexism can either lead to the women being excluded from the labour market or only accepted in the background. Thus, the significance of this study also lies in the fact that it shows how Hijabis are to a certain extent 'hidden' in the labour market and their cooperation is thus made invisible.

Overall, the labour market can be categorised as an almost out-of-bound place, as Lindemann (2021) puts it in the Goffmanian sense, from which women wearing headscarves in German-speaking Switzerland are almost excluded.

6.3 The Impact of stereotypes and the role of the Swiss German dialect

In addition, the women's statements showed how stereotypes about Islam reproduced in the media and political debates, and in particular, the discourse about Islamic head coverings, affect the women's everyday lives. For example, the women reported being perceived as foreign, oppressed by their husbands or families, uneducated or less educated, extreme, or associated with terror because of their headscarves.

Due to its concentration on the German-speaking part of Switzerland, this study highlights for the first time the particular effect of the Swiss-German dialect on Hijabis. It clearly shows that woman wearing the headscarf are perceived as foreigners, a process already shown in other research by Patrick Simon and Liviana Gannettoni (2021). However, the Swiss German dialect seems to be playing a particular role. Even though it is spoken everywhere, it is not essential for communication and is not used in written language. However, the dialect often functions as a kind of 'confirmation of integration' and is often considered synonymous with 'Swiss culture'. In this sense, Hijabis are not 'only' labelled as 'foreigners' but also as 'foreign to culture'. In this sense, Hijabis are denied the ability to speak the Swiss-German dialect, in consequence leading to a denial of being familiar with 'Swiss culture' even though the women

speak fluent and accent-free Swiss-German since they grew up in Switzerland. In the specific case of the German-speaking part of Switzerland, one can therefore speak not only of a as by Lindemann or Chris Allen (2020) proposed „double othering" based on religion and origin, but of a „triple othering" in which class in association with the Swiss-German dialect also plays a role. This denial of having 'Swiss cultural competence' was shown to affect Hijabis' experiences in all the life domains investigated in this study, namely in public space, in institutions and particularly on the labour market. In public space and institutions the Hijabis are usually addressed in High German because the headscarf leads to them being labelled as foreigners or even asylum seekers. Since asylum seekers are (wrongfully) perceived as people from a 'lower' class, the interviewed women find themselves being associated not 'only' with being 'foreign' and 'foreign to Swiss culture' but also with having a low level of education. This becomes evident in institutions, where the women are constantly addressed in High German and often treated as if they weren't smart enough to for example understand medical procedures. The consequences of this specific „othering" became particularly apparent on German-speaking Switzerland's job market. Since the women are denied not only professional and linguistic competencies but also cultural competencies, it lead to a Hijabi not being hired because it was assumed from her appearance that she did not speak Swiss-German anyway and was therefore also foreign to 'Swiss culture'.

6.4 Reactions and strategies

This work has also focused on how Hijabis living in the German-Speaking part of Switzerland deal with and respond to stigma and discrimination. It should be noted that responses are highly dependent on the context and how women feel, and strategies can evolve or change. While in most cases especially the initial phase of wearing the headscarf turned out to be stressful and the women often report recurring doubts about wearing the hijab due to negative experiences, they develop more self-confidence over time. They actively decided either not to take incidents personally, to ignore them, to show understanding for the other person, to laugh about it, or to interpret the reaction positively. As a consequence, most of the women established a certain acceptance of the everyday experience of stigmatisation and discrimination, sometimes consciously choosing to accept it without reacting to it or letting it affect them and therefore gaining back their agency. One participant even speaks of positive acceptance in this regard.

In many cases, the women chose to respond to stigmatisation and discrimination. Thus, contrary to the stereotypes of 'shy', 'oppressed' and 'individuals without a will of their own' circulating in the public discourse, the Hijabis interviewed in this study showed themselves to be very

determined women with a high level of self-confidence and a will to speak up if needed. They either directly confront their counterparts with their stereotypes and prejudice, seek interpersonal dialogue or use existing resources such as a filing complaints to take action against discrimination. In some cases, they also act preventively and proactively by deciding to avoid certain places or situations due to context and time. Most of the strategies used have already been identified by previous research. For example, Feagin (1991) speaks of resigned acceptance, withdrawal, verbal confrontation, or, in later cases, a complaint. Nette Sijtsma (2011) also identified ignoring, prevention, and understanding the other person while Michèle Lamont et al. (2018) also speak of self-management, ergo the energy to spend on a reaction, and self-improvement through work or education.

As an important strategy, which is only marginally or not at all identified in other studies, this study shows the importance of seeking help from one's own family or network, offering the women security, comfort, and courage. In addition to resigned acceptance, it also identified another form of acceptance, namely positive acceptance, and shows that seeking interpersonal dialogue is a strategy that is very useful and desired by the majority of women. In addition, the wearing, taking off, or not wearing the hijab could be identified as a specific strategy as one woman was forced to take off her headscarf for a certain period of time due to social and economic pressure, while another decided not to wear it at all for the same reasons. The fact that Hijabis feel forced to take such measures impressively shows their high level of suffering due to the strong presence and reproduction of Islamophobia in the German-speaking part of Switzerland.

6.5 Outlook

This work showed that there is little to no research on the everyday life of women with headscarves in German-speaking Switzerland. As this is only a Master's thesis, it was not able to show the broad range of the topics discussed with the women and had to focus on the main domains of public space and the labour market, which were the most apparent. Since the majority of the women interviewed here are Hijabis, seven out of eight of whom grew up in German-speaking Switzerland and went to school here, it became clear that schools also represent a domain in which Muslim women and especially women with headscarves are exposed to strong stigmatisation and, in part, discrimination. This was particularly the case on the part of those in authority, i.e. the teachers. Lindemann's expert survey also underlines this finding. In this sense, it would be fruitful if future research examined stigmatisation and discrimination in Swiss(-German) educational institutions, especially in primary and secondary

schools and at the Gymnasium. For this, ideally, a qualitative study should be conducted with Hijabis who grew up here. Furthermore, it would be interesting to investigate the importance of the Swiss-German dialect and how it affects Hijabis, especially in the labout market. Finally, it would also be worthwhile to investigate to which extent Muslim women in Switzerland (don't) feel represented by religious institutions and how these can be changed, thus creating a more inclusive and open community for all.

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