Bachelor Thesis Cultural Anthropology
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In the Eye of the Beholder

Media representations and its effects on Muslim identities in New York City

Abstract:

9/11 has changed the Western World and the fear of terrorist attacks is widespread. The Western world has seen an increase of security measures and invasions of privacy. In New York City, the heart of the 9/11 attacks, Muslim communities have to deal with racial profiling and infiltrates of the NYPD. Moreover, Muslims and the Islam are often depicted by the mass media in a very negative light. This research focuses on the influence of media representations on the identity of Muslims in New York City.

Key Words: Media; Islam; Media Representations; Identity; New York City; 9/11; War on Terror.

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Preface

1. Introduction

Authors: Josje & Silke

Many will argue that after September 11, 2001, the Western world has changed. The Al-Qaida attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City as well as the Pentagon in Washington D.C. were the incentive for the United States to start the "War on Terror". Moreover, it caused a spread of fear and a feeling of being unsafe. As the 2000s have been marked by more terrorist attacks on Western metropolises such as London and Madrid, governments have taken action to prevent such attacks, creating a world full of security measures where the invasion of privacy is not eschewed. In New York City, Muslim communities have to deal with racial profiling and spying of the NYPD. This included mapping, photographing, and infiltration into Muslim communities and organizations (Namjotka 2013).

It can be argued that the consequences of these attacks for Islamic communities in Western countries are sometimes overlooked. For instance, there is a continues media coverage on wars in the Middle East and terrorism. This was recently shown when four (Muslim) men were wrongly accused of being the perpetrators of the Boston Bombings. Two of them were the 17-year-old Salah Eddin Barhoum and a 21-year-old Saudi student. Some media companies, for example *The New York Post*, wrongly accused these young men of having planted the bombs at the finish line of the Boston marathon (Gayomal). Moreover, Louise Cainkar (Jamal and Naber 2008:38-39) argues that "the US government's domestic legislative, administrative, and judicial measures implemented after September 11th have included mass arrests, secret and indefinite detentions, prolonged detention of 'material witnesses,' closed hearings and use of secret evidence, government eavesdropping on attorney-client conversations, FBI home and work visits, wiretapping, seizures of property [and] removals of aliens with technical visa violations." According to Cainkar (Jamal 2008:39), "at least 100,000 Arabs and Muslims living in the United States have personally experienced one of these measures" and "of 37 known US government security initiatives […] 25 either explicitly or implicitly target Arabs and Muslims in the United States." The example of the Boston bombings shows that some American television networks and online and print media depict Muslims and Islam in a very negative light, often portraying Muslims as supporters of terror.

This research will try to contribute to the Anthropology of Islam by giving new insights on these media representations and the identity of educated and analytical second generation Muslims in New York City. As will be discussed in the next part, the Anthropology of Islam focuses for the greater part on the traditional Islam, which means that most of the researchers study pious Muslims and their practices. Therefore this research will try to show that the study of Muslims and the Islamic faith can have a different approach. Moreover, in the Anthropology of Islam, not many researchers have focused on the media (Marraci 2008:65). An example of an Anthropological study is the analysis of Varisco of blogs on Islam or blogs written by Muslims. Furthermore, he researched how these blogs can influence Muslim identities in general (Varisco 2010). However, this research will mainly focus on the mass media representations, and it will try to clarify how these media representations influence the identity of second generation Muslims in New York City.

1.1. Social and Academic Relevance

With this research, we will make an attempt to build a more broad and in-depth empirical underpinning of this subject and we will try to gain new insights in the Anthropology of Islam. The research project is reflective, as it mainly seeks to record the present situation as clear as possible. As mentioned above, we have focused on the effects of media representations after 9/11 and the influence it has on the identity of second generation Muslims. Our research has led to some unexpected conclusions. It seems that our informants perceive being Muslim in a very educated and analytical way, one that fits in the American society, partly due to incorrect media representations of the Islamic faith and Muslims after 9/11. This led to the desire of our interlocutors to learn more about their religion. In spite of the general assumption that New York City is a tough city after 9/11, they had very few negative experiences while living in New York City, despite the negative representations of Muslims in the media.

In the Anthropology of Islam, most of the research is done about pious, keenly practicing Muslims. This kind of research is therefore focused on traditional Islam. Gabriele Marranci (2008:5) argues that the Anthropology of the Islam seems to hold on to "a nostalgic exoticism." Hereby the author means that Anthropologists focus on the 'Other' in non-Western societies. According to Marranci (2008:63), almost all publications regarding Islam and Muslims, published in the years after 9/11, mention

the terrorist attack. However, not many of these studies have focused on the aftermath or the consequences of 9/11. Moreover, the discourse does not go into details when it comes to the effects on the identity of second generation Muslims. It can be argued that this research shows that there is another approach to this discourse, since our research is focused on being Muslim in a very modern and intellectual way in the contemporary world and the influence of media representations. Our research will strive to create a clearer picture of the social implications that have arisen in the American society due to the issues of 9/11, the War on Terror and media representations. During the research, we were asked to write a report for one of the organizations were we worked as volunteers about the media representations in the US. This was helpful for the organization to collect what kinds of media representations exist and to counter these representations.

This research indicates that the media representations have an influence on the identity of our interlocutors and that the representations cover a large part of their life. Therefore, it is important to conduct research on how this influences their identity. Due to the specific angle, the identity of educated and analytical Muslims in a Western society influenced by media representations, we try to contribute to this specific discourse within the Anthropology of Islam.

1.2. Research Objective

We have conducted our research in New York City from February 4th until April 19th. Our research objective was to look at the media representations of Muslims after 9/11 and the War on Terror and how this affects the identity of second generation Muslims in New York City. By second generation South-Asian Muslims, we mean people who were born in the US after their parents moved to the US from South-Asia. During the research, we met South-Asian Muslims by doing volunteer work. These people introduced us to their colleagues and friends who were second generation South-Asian Muslims. Therefore, due to the snowball effect, our group of interlocutors consisted of second generation South-Asian Muslims. Therefore, the central question of our research was:

How does the (media-) representation of Muslims after the event of 9/11 and the War on Terror affect the identity of second generation Muslims in New York City?

During our research, we used these three sub questions:

1. How do second generation Muslims in New York City experience their religiosity and how is this influenced by (media-) representation.

2. How do second generation Muslims in New York City think they are portrayed in the media and what do they do with this kind of information?

3. Do second generation Muslims in New York City have the idea that they are being treated in a different way than non-Muslims in New York City due to the media representations and what kind of role does New York City plays in this?

1.3. Methods and Techniques

We have used several qualitative research methods, such as semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and participant observation. Semi-structured interviews consist of a few questions that are made prior to the interview assuring that we would ask every informant the same topics. This way, there are no shortcomings in our data. Due to the semi-structured interviews we gained information about the religiosity of our interlocutors, their life in New York City and their opinions about the media representations of Muslims and the Islamic faith. The method informal conversation implies that the informant takes control over the conversation and we, as researchers, simply ask some questions to focus more on or to clarify a certain topic. Participant observation consists of taking part "in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011:1)". Using the methods informal conversation and participant observation resulted in establishing rapport and trust. This was very important, since the topics we covered were sensitive. Moreover, due the NYPD scandal, as mentioned above, Muslims and Muslim organizations were wary of researchers. Due to establishing rapport and trust, our interlocutors could convince other people to get involved in the research.

Volunteering at a Muslim organization in New York City taught us much about the American media, the Islamic faith and Muslims. Living in the city and participating in the New York way of life enabled us to get several affirmations about what our interlocutors told us, such as the diversity of New York City. The media and the NYPD scandal were often important topics during our volunteer work and since we established the rapport, it was easier for our informants to talk about it and to give us more information as well.

1.4. Chapter Outline

Our thesis will begin with a theoretical framework, which will cover theories about identity, media representations and Muslims in Western societies. Second, the thesis will focus on the context of our field. Hereafter, the data of our research will be described in four empirical chapters. The first empirical chapter will focus on the religiosity of our interlocutors and how the American media influences this. The second empirical chapter will discuss the data about how our interlocutors see themselves portrayed in the media and what they do with this information. The third and final empirical chapter will focus on how the second generation South-Asian Muslims experience New York City after 9/11 and the War on Terror. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss how young Muslims in New York City are being treated. All empirical chapters will be linked to the theories mentioned in the theoretical framework and the context. The conclusion of this thesis will provide an answer to our research question as it combines the theories, context and empirical data.

2. Theoretical Framework

Authors: Josje & Silke

2.1. Introduction

This chapter will give the theoretical underpinning of this thesis. In the pages that follow, key concepts such as identity, media and representations will be elaborated on. Moreover, this chapter attempts to show the relevance of these concepts for this research. The theories discussed in this framework will be used later on in the empirical chapters.

2.2. Identity

Identity is a very broad and much explicated concept. The concept is also complicated since there are more meanings ascribed to it, particularly between different fields of study. In this chapter, an attempt will be made to set out different uses of the term identity. According to Reginald Byron (1996:292), there are two major anthropological uses which will be elaborated in this section. The first definition is identity explained as "the self", coined by Erik Erikson and polished by Anthropologists to fit the discourse. As part of this definition, religious identity will be elaborated. The second use of identity is a common identity also known as ethnic identity. All will be explained in the following chapter.

2.2.1. The Self

The first definition of identity is drawn from the theory coined by Erikson; a Freudian psychoanalyst (Berk 2003:17). Erikson's theory describes identity as something "located deep in the unconscious as a durable and persistent sense of sameness of the self" (Byron 1996:292). Lauren Leve adds to this definition by stating that identity is "a reflexive construct or experiential modality through which one knows oneself and claims recognition" (2011:513). This recognition can be found in many different aspects, such as age, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, language and/or social status (Robbins 2006:229). One's identity and its corresponding aspects are formed in a process that every adolescent has to go through. According to Laura Berk (2003:456); "Constructing an identity involves defining who you are, what you value, and the directions you choose to pursue in life". Wim Meeus describes that there are a few stages in this process. The

two most important are exploration and commitment. In the exploration phase, an adolescent searches different identity domains to consider his or her choices (Meeus 2011:75). Domains can range from religion and political ideology to personal book interests. The other important stage in identity formation is commitment. In this stage, the adolescent will make a choice in a particular domain, fixing his or her identity on this subject (Meeus 2001:75). The next part will focus on such a particular domain; religion.

2.2.1.1. Religious Identity

According to Baumeister's (Adams and Marshall 1996:434) work, identity is based on meanings and values, which can be either assigned or selected. Many societies present different levels of choice, which can be used in the construction of the self. At one end, there might be a social structure in a society whereby identity is assigned by lineage or gender and is primarily determined by imitation and identification. At the other end, a society may also require a choice. This is often between opposed alternatives (e.g. motherhood vs. career). However, there is still much variation between these two ends. In Western societies, it is often thought that identity is selected, since there are many available choices in these societies. Also, societal institutions might assign a set of goals and these are learned through identification and imitation. Thereafter, the individual will establish this set of goals through the construction of the self (Adams and Marshall 1996:434).

As said before, within the construction of the self, one of the available choices or identity domains is religion. Lori Peek (2005:236) argues that religion is of great importance as a basis of personal and social identity. The author (Peek 2005:218-219) gives four reasons why certain individuals and communities highlight and develop religious identities. The first one concerns immigration. Peek argues that most of the time, immigrants tend to react to alienation and confusion by turning to religion. Since the focus of this research lies on second-generation immigrants, this does not directly apply to the interlocutors. However, it is an important factor in the lives of their parents, and therefore influences the interlocutors. The second reason Peek describes is related to the functions that religion plays in society. Besides spiritual needs, religious organizations offer many non-religious materials as well as psychological and social benefits. Third, religious identity and expression help the individual to overcome social isolation, caused by migration. The final reason states that individuals become more

conscious of their traditions as a result of the pluralistic and secular conditions of the West. As stated before, when people feel threatened, they will stress the traditions that belong to their culture more (Erikson, 2007:104). Therefore, it can be said that the development of a strong religious identity involves an enhanced reflection and self-awareness, individual choices, and the acknowledgement of others. Internal conflicts and choices and external pressures and rewards drive identity formation and relate to religious boundaries and meaning, which have been constructed both from within and without (Peek 2005:236).

Peek (2005:223) also researched the importance of religious identification with Muslim university students. Religion as an ascribed or chosen part of identity, are two major stages of religious identity development. Most of the Muslim university students viewed religion as an ascribed characteristic. They stated that they engaged in very little reflection when they were children because their religion was taken for granted as part of their everyday lives. They simply did what their parents told them to and imitated their behavior (Peek 2005:223-24). However, as the students matured, they began to view religion as a chosen identity (Peek 2005:226). According to Eriksen (Peek 2005:226), it is normal that people become more introspective and aware of values, goals, and beliefs, since it is part of human development. In every society and culture there are rites, rituals, institutional expectations or regulations that cause individuals to reflect on their behavior and identity. One of Peek's interlocutors focused on one important factor of this stage of religious identity development: entering college. The majority of Peek's interlocutors agreed that beginning college marked the most critical period of reflection and identity transition. This is related to meeting new people and peers (Peek 2005:227-228).

2.2.1.2. Objectification of Religion

The above described tendency to become more introspective and aware of values, goals and beliefs within a religion is part of the objectification of religion. This objectification has, according to Samuel Preus (1977:186-187) nothing to do with being objective, but is signified as the enablement to distance oneself from their religion, to be able to consider, analyze, reflect, and criticize it. The consideration of a religion as an 'object' can consequently lead to different interpretations. Classic examples of the objectification

of religion in history are the Reformation and the Renaissance, after which a drastic change in religious practice can be distinguished.

According to Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori (1996:38), objectification of the Islam can be seen from the late 1980's onwards. They state that this objectification "increasingly shape[s] the discourse and practice of Muslims in all social classes, even as some legitimize their actions and beliefs by asserting that they advocate a return to purportedly authentic traditions." In addition, they argue that the objectification of Islam can differ from other religions in the sense that "being Muslim acquires more political significance in the modern world than participation in other religious traditions because of the self-conscious identification of believers with their religious traditions"(Eickelman and Piscatori 1996:39).

2.2.1.3. Believing without Belonging

Adding to this theory of the objectification of religion which, as explained above, can lead to a change of the religious practice, Grace Davie (2008:167) states that one of the possible changes is 'believing without belonging', referring to religious people who are not attending religious communal practices, such as church. Important to note here, is that this theory is mostly based on European data and only covers Christian believers. However, it can be argued that aspects of the theories derived from this quantitative research may also apply to this research, as some of the interlocutors clearly stated to belong to the Islamic community, without being a practicing Muslim. Moreover, others claimed to be practicing Muslims without belonging to the traditional Muslim communities.

According to Davie (2008:168), at this point, the future is most likely to show "looser forms of belief [that] will go on existing alongside more secular understandings of life." Moreover, she argues that "this relationship will be long term and complex, rather than one simply replacing the other". Adding to this theory, Davie (Storm 2009:703) also describes people who are "belonging without believing" or the concept of vicarious religion. This describes "the continuing demand for religion in the public sphere even in relatively secular societies in Europe." Davie (Storm 2009:705) suggests that belonging without believing is associated with pride in one's national identity and heritage. As said before, this study is focused on European Christians. However, as

explained above, theories of believing without belonging and belonging without believing will be used in this thesis.

As can be seen and is argued by Thomas Eriksen (2002:59) (not to mix up with the earlier mentioned Erikson), identity can be regarded as a feature that only plays a role within the individual. Moreover, it is in some discourses thought to be fixed and unchangeable, a constant factor that had to be taken into account without the ability of changing it. As part of the anthropological debate on identity, which is focused on the self being influenced by social and cultural surroundings (Byron 1996:292), Leve (2011:514) argues that identity can merely be seen as something which is socially constructed, and can therefore be shared and altered. Seemingly, identity can also be perceived as something open, or even *public*, and is completely negotiable (Eriksen 2002:59). This shared identity will be discussed in the next part.

2.2.2. Common Identity
The second use of identity is a shared identity and is generally known as common or ethnic identity[1]. Robbins (2006:196) states that people need to categorize others (and themselves) in order to define the world and find the proper way of behaving and interacting with others. According to Byron (1996:292), this also means that families, groups, communities, classes and nations can have identities. Since identities seem to be firmly linked to groups such as societies, identities also tend to change with them. For example, when societies became increasingly mobilized, people started to feel not only connected to their village, but to their city or even country (Eriksen, 2002:62). It can be argued that globalization is accompanied by a more individualistic society, mainly in Western countries (Robbins, 2006:198).

Eriksen (2007:104) argues that identities are perceived to be increasingly important when they are felt to be under pressure or threatened. This effectively means that people will have the urge to carry out the characteristics that traditionally belong to their culture. An example can be a minority using visual identity markers to clarify their background, like an Islamic woman wearing a veil or a Jewish man wearing a kippah.

In our thesis, both definitions of identity will be used; self-identity and common identity. Self-identity will be used to explain the construction of the identity of our

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[1] *Common* identity and *ethnic* identity are often said to be the same. However, to avoid misinterpretations, we will use *common* identity, since our population's ethnicity is not of crucial importance for this study.

interlocutors, with the emphasis on their religious identity. The common identity will be used for the treatment of the Islamic community in New York City, as well as the strengthened identity when under pressure.

2.3. Media Representation after 9/11 and the War on Terror

On September 11, 19 Muslim men hijacked four airplanes (Johnson and Frombgen 2000:649). The attacks were claimed by the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda and nearly 3000 people lost their lives[2]. By September 12, 2001, "the event" was given a name: *9/11* (Robben 2010:26). According to Alexander Hinton (Robben 2010:26): "9/11 was scripted like a cinematic or historical drama, a story with victims and survivors, heroes and villains; firefighters helping others and evil terrorists slaughtering the innocent." On the night of September 11, "Bush told the nation that the country was confronting an 'evil' enemy that had attacked '*our* way of life' and that, in the battle to bring 'them' to justice, 'they' would make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them (Robben 2010:26)". Words like these played a role in the nation's use of the language of fear and terror. This language was molded in binary oppositions of good and evil and civilization and barbarism. The country also started using a new vocabulary with words such as anthrax attacks, Taliban, disaster kits, Ground Zero, and the War on Terror (Robben 2010:27). The next part will show how media representations lead to a changed society, such as a different use of language. Moreover, the role of the media after 9/11 and the War on Terror will be discussed in depth.

2.3.1 Media Representation of Islam

The building of images can chiefly be ascribed to the mass media. According to Elfriede Fürsich (2010:113), the media have the power to control which issues are discussed -- and with what intensity-- and as a result the consequences for the shared cultural and political public opinions. To build such an image, it is important to look how people (groups as well as individuals) are represented. According to Eagleton (Fürsich 2010:115), we are able to construct our world using representations of groups and individuals. These representations can then become the basis of cultures and ideologies.

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[2] BBC News: US & Canada, 2011, 9/11 Anniversary; Sombre US Honours Victims 10 Years On. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-14869230, accessed December 20th, 2012.

A possible consequence of representation is what Edward Said calls *Othering*; when there is made a binary opposition between *us* and *them* (Plumwood 2011:505). Representation connected with Othering can thus create a negative shared cultural meaning, and has a negative effect on the image of cultural diversity within nations (Fürsich 2010:115-116). Moreover, this can lead to the false assumption that "the other" societies represent *one* culture, *one* political trend and in addition are perceived to be *fixed,* as can be seen by many descriptions of *the* Islamic society. According to Said:

> "[In] no really significant way [there is] a direct correspondence between the "Islam" in common Western usage and the enormously varied life that goes on within the world of Islam with (...) its dozens of societies, states, histories, geographies, cultures (Said, 1997:l)."

Already in 1997, Said described a rise in focus on Muslims and Islam in the American and Western media (Said 1997:xi). One of the most well-known examples of this is Samual Huntingon's *Clash of Civilizations* (1992)*.* In this article, Huntington argues that with the end of the Cold war, the emphasis was put on the interaction between Western and non-Western civilizations (1992:23-27)*.* Since civilizations are differentiated between history, culture, tradition, and most of all religion (1992:23-27), the ongoing conflict between the Western and Islamic civilizations will, instead of declining, become more vicious (hence the *clash*) (1992:31-32), mainly due to the 'bloody borders' of Islam (Huntington 1992:35). Huntington's article has proven to be controversial and is refuted by many. Shahid Alam (2002:383) argues that the identification with groups will not always generate conflicts. Rarely does attachment to any groups need to be reinforced by hatred toward other groups. Moreover, Alam and Fox do not observe any dramatic rise in Islam's share of conflicts since the end of the Cold War. In addition, Alam argues that the geography of different civilizations reveals that the length of civilization's borders varies strikingly and that Islam's share of such borders is disproportionately large, and concludes that Huntington's argument puts the Islamic borders in a prejudicial perspective.

Due to Huntington's article, as well as the extensive coverage of the media on the Islamic society [sic], the public is under the impression to *know* Islam and understand Islam, whereas most of the material distributed is quite subjective and incomplete (Said

1997:li). This can consequently lead to false assumptions and false representations of entire groups (or entire "societies") in the media. An important concept that goes with these media representations is framing. According to James Druckman (2001:1041), frames are very influential in public opinions, and he strengthens this argument by using the term *manipulation*. Druckman (2001:1042) defines a framing effect as a "[description of] an issue or event, [where] a speaker's emphasis on a subset of potentially relevant considerations causes individuals to focus on these considerations when constructing their opinions". Obviously, framing is very influential on the formation of group images. It can be argued that culture talk, a concept described by Mahmood Mamdani (2002), is an example of framing. Mamdani argues that culture talk; "the predilection to define cultures according to their presumed "essential" characteristics, especially as regards to politics" (2002:766), is something that came into being after 9/11. Culture talk has the "the tendency to think of culture in political – and therefore territorial – terms." This is problematic since only "political units (states) are territorial; culture is not" (2002:767). The problem lies in the religion made to be something political; depicting an entire community as a homogeneous political collective, only because they share a similar faith. This can lead, for example, to the conclusion that all Muslims are potential terrorists. This is something that is perfectly illustrated by Huntington, who indicated a whole civilization as "Islamic". Culture talk shows an Islamic society that is unchanging; pre-modern; fiercely religious and formed by old customs. Exactly these (false) images, argues Mamdani, is what hits the headlines (2002:767), especially since, according to Said, journalists increasingly act as scholastic sources, making rash statements that are instantly picked up by the media (1997:xvi). Mamdani criticizes culture talk because of its lack of historical considerations, as well as its underestimation of individual political identities, since, according to Mamdani, individuals are *not* influenced (or, moulded) by an unchanging, monolithic society[3]. Culture talk about terrorism should particularly be considered very carefully before entire countries will be generalized with the act of terror; resulting in the case of Afghanistan in a "[justified] punishing war against an entire country" (Mamdani, 2002:767).

As can be seen, the combination of representation and framing can lead to (often negative) stereotypes that mostly affect minority groups who are portrayed as the

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[3] That, as said many times before, does not exist.

"Other in a nation" (Fürsich 2010:116). As Mamdani shows, this applies as well for the representation of Muslims after 9/11 and the War on Terror. It can be argued that these stereotypes have an effect on collective identities and, as discussed earlier, can lead to an increase of the perception of the importance of identity, for example leading to more visual identity markers, or the need to *reinforce* the notion of the collective.

2.3.2. Media representations after 9/11 and the War on Terror

Since the 9/11 attacks levels of Islamophobia have risen (Vertigans 2010:29). Stephen Vertigans (2010:30) argues that Arabs, and Muslims today generally, are portrayed in Western media to be exotic, uncivilized, a constant threat to freedom and democracy, oil suppliers and terrorists. "Orientalists argue that the *West* is a dynamic, complex, and ever-changing society, whereas the *Orient*, and in particular the Islam, is static, barbaric, and despotic, and therefore in need of Western intervention to bring about progressive change" (Kumar 2010:263).

After 9/11 five discursive frames developed by the Orientalists have been employed to represent Muslims, Arabs, and the Muslim World in the media. First of all, they claim that Islam is a monolithic religion. However, as said before, a wide range of people who differ along ethnic, linguistic, national, cultural, political and economic lines, practice the Islamic faith (Kumar 2010:256-261). Second, Islam is a uniquely sexist religion (Kumar 2010:263). According to Vertigans (2010:30), there are cultural stereotypes such as the veil. The veil is seen by the West as a symbol of Muslim women's oppression (Kumar 2010:262). Third, the *Muslim mind* is not capable of rationality and science. Fourth, Islam is inherently violent. The association of Islam with violence just after the attacks of 9/11 was established in ways similar to earlier Orientalist constructions (Kumar 2010:264-267). Tunku Varadarajan (Kumar 2010:267) argues that "Muslims are like ticking time bombs programmed by their religion to inevitably turn to violence". Costas Panagopoulos (2006:611) research showed that between 2002 and 2003 the percentage of people who believed that the mainstream Islam encouraged violence against non-Muslims grew drastically and almost half of the American population felt that the 9/11 attacks represented the *true teachings of Islam* to some or greater degree. The final frame claims that the West spreads democracy, whereas Islam spawns terrorism. According to the classic Orientalists, Islamic civilization is not capable of democracy and it can only produce despotism. As noted before, the Orientalists claim

that the Islamic world is static and an unchanging society, and therefore it is the burden of the West to civilize, modernize and democratize[4]. This argument has been used by many European powers in the past and now the U.S. has deployed it as well, first in the case of Iraq and then Afghanistan (Kumar 2010:270). Consequently, it can be stated that the Orientalists see "the *West* as a beacon of democracy and enlightenment and the *Muslim* world as mired in backwardness and intolerance" (Kumar 2010:255).

According to data analyzed by Panagopoulos (2006:609), Americans were more informed about, tolerant of and sensitive to Muslims and the religion directly after 9/11. Interestingly, months later the data showed them being less informed and more cautious towards Arab and Muslim Americans. The respondents of Panagopoulos (2006:610-611) also claimed to know little about the Islamic religion. They indicated that they did not understand the teachings and beliefs within the Islam, though they deemed it highly different from their own religion. This is what Panagopoulos (2006:610-611) calls "hypocrisy in American sentiment". The reason for the almost binary opposition between these two time frames was not given, although seemingly the media must have had a vast influence on Panagopoulos's participants.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter has given an account of the most relevant theoretical concepts of this research. First, the relevance of identity was laid out. In this thesis, the theory of 'the self' will be used, so we will be able to indicate the identity formation of the interlocutors. Moreover, common identity will be used to look at their identities within the community of New York City. Interestingly, common identity is said to be open, shared and negotiable, and can seemingly be directly influenced by the (mass) media. The media plays a key role in this research. This chapter has shown how the media is able to frame certain representations, in this case often in relationship to Othering. Moreover, it has shown the mutual influence the media and 9/11 have on each other.

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[4] Note the reference to Kipling's *The White Man's Burden*, 1899.

3. Context

Authors: Josje & Silke

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will focus specifically on New York City. In the first part the immigration history will be briefly outlined as well as the ethnic diversity in the city. Also the media outburst related to the Islamic Cultural Center will be explained. The second part focuses on South Asian Muslims in New York City. Thirdly, a brief overview of the American media system will be given. The final part will focus on the two organizations, The Interfaith Organization and American Muslims for Improvement (AMI), were we conducted our research[5].

3.2. Diversity in New York City

New York has experienced a terrorist attack by religious extremists; an anthrax scare; the rise of hate web sites and more. However, today, it can be stated that New York is a very tolerant city (Levin and Amster 2007:319). According to Nancy Foner (2007:1000-1001) New York is not comparable to other parts of the US, due to its ethnic diversity and immigrant history. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries New York was considered to be a port of entry for immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. In the case of Muslims, the 1960s particularly saw a large wave of Muslim immigrants who came from all over the world (D'Agostino 2003:292). Former Mayor David Dinkins frequently called the city a gorgeous mosaic, because of the mixing and mingling of ethnoracial groups (Foner 2007:1009).

Foner (2007:1015-1016) argues that members of the second-generation immigrants do not identify themselves to be Americans, however, they do see themselves as New Yorkers. In some places, New York City shows much ethnic diversity, such as in the borough Jackson Heights where Indians, Pakistanis, Mexicans, Dominicans, Chinese, and Irish people are living together. According to a study done by sociologists (Foner 2007: 1009-1010), "New York may serve as a positive model of creative multiculturalism and inclusion for the rest of the country."

However, many of these second generation youngsters live in some ethnic enclaves where just two or three ethnic groups dominate the neighborhood. This means

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[5] The names of the organizations are changed to maintain anonymity.

that the majority of the people in this neighborhood consist of these dominating groups. Furthermore, New York City is not a racial paradise. Prejudices, discrimination, tension and conflict between racial and ethnic groups still exist. Especially people of color experience these issues (Foner 2007:1010).

3.2.1 The Islamic Cultural Center near Ground Zero

An example of tension and conflict in New York City is the Islamic Cultural Center near Ground Zero. A new media outburst happened in the late summer of 2010 due to the proposal of an Islamic Cultural Center near Ground Zero. This community center, proposed by two non-profit organizations, was meant to, for example, promote interfaith dialogue. Opponents of the Cultural Center saw it as "a monument to the Islamist terrorists," whereas supporters saw it as "a testament to American multicultural inclusion (Bowe 2013:181)". Moreover, President Obama declared to be in favor of the Islamic Cultural Center and said that: "[A]s a citizen, and as president, I believe that Muslims have the same right to practice their religion as anyone else in this country (Bowe 2013:189)." Eventually, after almost a year, the story ceased to dominate the news. It can be argued that this controversy showed that even after almost a decade, 9/11 can still be a powerful symbol in the American society (Bowe 2013:181-187).

3.3. South Asian Muslims in New York City

According to Melissa D'Agostino (2003:286), New York City is the place where the worldwide Muslim community is fully represented and is therefore "a location like no other place in the world." The Muslim community is one of the fastest growing religious communities in New York City. In 2009, there were more than 700,000 Muslims in the city[6].

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, many second generation South Asian Muslims in New York City view their religion as more than just following their parents blindly (Ali 2008:403). This means they do not just occasionally pray or read the Quran, moreover, the second generation has a desire for knowledge about the Islamic faith. Therefore, Syed Ali (2008:403) argues that most of these South Asian Muslims in New York City are more religious than their parents, since they know more about the Islam.

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[6] Center for religious understanding, 2011, Muslims and Islam in the United States; Fact Sheet. https://www.tanenbaum.org/sites/default/files/Muslims%20and%20Islam%20in%20the%20 US%20Fact%20Sheet%20FORMATTED.pdf, accessed on May 27th, 2013.

Due to the media coverage after 9/11, South Asian Muslims and Arabs in New York City and around the US were associated with terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism, whether or not they had the American nationality (Bhatia 2008:29-37).

3.4. The American Mass Media

According to David Schultz (2000), the media in the US is based on private ownership; private owners of media companies "have their own corporate, economic, and political agenda, using their vast wealth and media power to support that agenda[7]." The media networks want to maximize their audiences and will look for stories and news items "that are most likely to generate readers, viewers, listeners, and profits[8]." Therefore, Schultz (2000) points out that the media in the US is not always politically neutral.

According to Chip Berlet (1998), there is the right-winged/ conservative media and the left-winged/ liberal media. Sara Diamond (Berlet 1998:250) defines the right wing as supporters of "the state in its capacity as enforcer of order and to oppose the state as distributor of wealth and power downward and more equitably in society. […] [T]o bolster capitalism, militarism, and moral traditionalism." Conservative critics are convinced that many journalists are liberal and Democrats. These journalists are, according to the critics, "pro abortion, racial quotas, and gay rights, and they are anti business, capitalism, the military, Christianity, and the Republican party (Lee 2005:43)."

3.5. The Interfaith Organization and American Muslims for Improvement

Due to the NYPD scandal, as described in the introduction, it proved to be hard to contact Muslim organizations. Eventually, two organizations were willing to offer a volunteering position that enabled us to conduct our research. These organizations were The Interfaith Organization and AMI. These organizations were the starting point for conducting this research, since most interlocutors were found through co-workers. The goal of AMI is to promote the surroundings wherein Muslims can develop themselves and to uplift the conversations about the Islamic religion. The Interfaith Organization operates in the same office as AMI. They are focused on improving the relationships between Muslims and the West. The goal of this organization is to communicate about

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[7] Schultz, D. 2000, excerpt p. 20
http://faculty.uml.edu/sgallagher/culturalcon.htm, accessed on May 26th, 2013.
[8] Schultz, D. 2000, excerpt p. 17
http://faculty.uml.edu/sgallagher/culturalcon.htm, accessed on May 26th, 2013.

Islam in the US and make the voices of moderation stronger by fighting and responding to extremism. In addition, the Interfaith Organization wants to create an American-Muslim identity and fight Islamophobia.

In total, seven people work at the office; the majority of them are women. Some of the people who work at the office practice the Islamic faith and others do not. Both organizations also rely on many volunteers and interns. As mentioned before in the introduction, we wrote a report for AMI about the media representations about Muslims and the Islamic faith. This was our volunteer work and consequently, it meant we could be at the office several days a week.

As mentioned above, the names of the organizations and interlocutors have been changed to maintain anonymity. To respect this anonymity, we cannot go into details any further about the nature of these organizations.

3.6. Conclusion

It can be argued that, although the people in New York City have experienced many negative issues such as the anthrax scare and 9/11, the city is still very tolerant and ethnically diverse. This is especially due to the immigrant history of New York City. An important note to make is that people of the second-generation in New York City do not see themselves as American, but as New Yorkers. Partly due to these two factors, the city is very different than other parts of the US.

The construction of the Islamic Cultural Center near Ground Zero caused many different reactions in the city. Supporters called it a tribute to multiculturalism, where opponents, including some media sources, called it a tribute to terrorism. Asian Muslims in New York City were associated with terrorism by the media after 9/11. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that discrimination and prejudices still exist in New York City. The next chapters will focus on the empirical data and will be combined with the theories that were mentioned in the theoretical framework and context.

4. Empirical Chapters

Chapter 1 – Religiosity and Media

Author: Josje

This empirical chapter will answer the first sub question: How do our interlocutors experience their religiosity and how is this influenced by media representation? First, the interlocutors' background and education will be elaborated on, to show how their religiosity came into being and changed over the years. This will be connected to the earlier described theories on identity. Second, both the effects that the media in general and the media after 9/11 have on the interlocutor's religiosity will be laid out. In this section, theories of Orientalism, Othering and the media in general will be used.

> "I think I do pray, but I don't pray five times a day in that typical way. It doesn't affect me if I pray that way. So I pray my own way. In my head. I pray… I pray a lot. I'm always saying my own prayers in my head but I don't pray that way[9]." - Zara

As mentioned before in the theoretical framework as well as in the context, many second generation Muslims in New York have a different way of perceiving their religion than their parents. Their desire for knowledge makes for this generation to have more knowledge about the Islamic faith than their parents had, and they do not follow it blindly "like a puppet trick[10]". Amina, a Pakistani[11] woman in her fifties whose son is part of this second generation explains the differences:

> "We, the parents, were born in Muslim country. We didn't know anything about our religion; we just knew that we were Muslims, and that that was great. We were taught Arabic, to read Arabic, and would read the Koran in Arabic, but we would never try to understand it, that's just how it was practiced. All you had to do was know how to read Arabic and to read the Koran from beginning to the end

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[9] Zara, interview, March 11th 2013
[10] Zara, interview, April 5th 2013
[11] Pakistan's official language is Urdu. Many other languages are spoken, but none of them is Arabic.

that was all. If someone would have asked me what it meant and I would have had no idea. And it wasn't important.

My children know more than I know, because they went into colleges here in America, they took courses in Islamic studies, in comparative religion, so they know so much more about what Islam is all about, through proper education. That is so important, that is an advantage we never had. It makes them confident, comfortable, at ease with their identity. With their peers, they are expressing a new kind of Islam[12]."

Amina's observations can be put in the discourse of the Islamic objectification of religion. She clearly describes the way this new generation educates itself religiously, analysing and scrutinizing the Islamic faith. As can be seen in the theoretical framework, the objectification of the Islam can differ from other religions in the sense that it often sees the return to authentic traditions and a more political significance of being Muslims than is seen in other religions. As will be shown, many of the following quotes will entail evidence of this theory, and they will be reflected on in its light. Seemingly, the education needed for this objectification has more consequences.

Zara, a feisty thirty-two-year-old rights activist and lawyer found her religiosity in her master's program. She has a fast and ready mind, and sometimes it seems that she has a theoretical underpinning for every claim she makes. Although her speech is mindblowingly fast, it is always dense with information. She describes herself as being very religious, but not in the traditional way. Moreover, she feels she is an *Islamic womanist[13]*, and sees it as her responsibility to speak up. Her religious path is an interesting one.

Zara grew up outside New York City. Her parents, Indian, moved to the United States before she was born. "That first generation; they always try to hold on to their culture. So growing up, the face of Islam was kind of anxious". She describes the role of Islam in the first years of her life as something static, something she did not understand. "I was raised in this immigrant, conservative community and I rebelled against it. Not going to mosques and all that. I was forced to do Ramadan as a young child, but I always cheated." She found her religion in college, meeting Muslim peers and feeling normal.

[12] Amina, Interview, February 8th 2013
[13] Zara does not like the word feminism

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"So it wasn't until I was 25 that I found it for myself. And 25 was in 2005, so that's four years after 9/11, right? I think a lot was based on 9/11."[14] This quote seems to be very significant for this research, but it leaves us with a question. First of all Zara's story perfectly fits Peek's theory; which claims that college and meeting new peers usually marks an identity transition and more specifically found data to state that Muslim students changed their idea on religion from an ascribed feature to a chosen feature of identity during this stage. However, Zara's quote suggests that 9/11 also played some role in her transition, and it can be argued that with 9/11, the media played a crucial role. This will be elaborated later in this chapter.

From college onwards, Zara started to research Islam. "You have to do your own research and actually, to be really Muslim, you have to be very analytical, dissect everything, and be able to question everything." It can be argued that Zara's story fits the theory of the objectification of religion like a glove. She reflects, analyzes and thoroughly criticizes her own faith. "I can speak Arabic fluently, but I don't understand it. That's what most Muslims do, that's why it's so messed up. They teach you how to read it, but not to understand it[15]." She describes herself as very religious, the study of her faith being evidence for that. It is not a surprise that Zara eventually would like to go into academia; "I just want to screw with people's minds!" she says laughing. "I don't think I ever really know the truth about things. I love when things that I thought were true change". Since the American media covers extensively and continually on Islam, it can be argued that it picks Zara's brain time and time again, unconsciously stimulating her to reflect, analyze, and critique not only the messages that the media send out, but her own religion with that as well.

With the objectification of her faith, some might even argue that Zara drastically changes her faith to a version that is moulded to her own personality. She fasts in the Ramadan month, but always for a cause, and with success. Last year she fasted for a job, this year for love[16]. She got both. Zara is engaged to a Hindu man and says "Thank God I had my own faith and convictions that I thought: 'I'm bringing this guy home, he doesn't have to convert'"[17]. "We actually feel like we have the same religion. I can image my

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[14] Zara, interview, March 11th 2013
[15] Zara, interview, April 5th 2013
[16] Zara, informal dinner party, March 20th 2013
[17] Zara, interview, March 11th 2013

husband fasting with me or me meditating with him"[18]. Moreover, Zara incorporates her womanist views in her religion. When we talk about visiting a mosque, she answers that she does not like to go to mosques, and rather prays in her own ways. "I just can't sit behind men, I'll advocate for that until the day I die. In Mecca, in Medina, men and women aren't separated like that. That's the holiest place in Islam and they sit side by side." She also refutes that the obligation to wear the *hijab* is written in the Koran, and takes it up with people who think otherwise[19].

> "You know, I'm a lawyer. Let's play a game of telephone and sit around the room with 50 people. Start with one person until the end and the message will be changed. Some Hadiths[20] are stronger… Some Muslims have this kind of arrogance saying: the Quran is the word of God! Everything is this, but they trust humans too much, and I don't trust humans. So I believe in the Spirit, and that's it. And if you expect me to trust these men from a time when women had no property rights and all those things, well, I'm not going to trust that. So, you know."[21]

As can be seen from these quotes, Zara sets great store by the true teachings of Islam. These true teachings of Islam seem more holy to her, especially since they do more right to the women issues she addresses every day. Zara's faith is one without gender separation. Since the structures of her religion, the mosques, the Imams, are not adhering to this principle, she will not be part of it. The above adheres to Davie's theory on believing without belonging. Zara is a practicing Muslim without belonging to religious[22] Islamic community.

At first sight, Alisha, a thirty-one-year-old student in media has much in common with Zara. Just like Zara, she grew up outside of New York City. Her parents moved to the United States from Kashmir (India) before she was born. She grew up with traditional Islam and feels like she does not know much about her faith. "I also

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[18] Zara, interview, April 5th 2013
[19] Zara, Participant Observation, March 14th 2013
[20] Islamic traditions, derived from the life, customs and sayings of Muhammed. They can be seen as examples or lessons.
[21] Zara, interview, March 11th 2013
[22] The word *religious* is crucial in this sentence. Zara is part of an active Islamic community; many of her friends are (traditional) practicing Muslims. She simple does not belong to the religious community, for example the mosque.

remember being a kid to be scared of God sometimes, it doesn't have to be but that is how old world Islam is"[23]. As opposed to Zara, Alisha never found her true faith. However, she is still part of the Muslim community and has many thoughts on the subject. "I wish there was more independence sometimes. When we[24] pray we pray in Arabic, and I don't speak Arabic. That's one of the reasons why we need a Reformation."[25]

As probably already can be seen, Alisha is a very interesting person as well. She says she would definitely describe herself as a Muslim, but not observant. Further in the conversation, she uses two interesting terms to describer herself. The first is culturally Muslim, which in her words means: "I grew up as a Muslim, but I don't practice. It's also in other religions; you're not Muslim if you don't do these things. But you could be culturally Jewish or Christian. Celebrate Easter and Christmas and stuff." Not practicing appears to be something more complicated than it seems. Alisha eats bacon "because it is delicious!", but feels genuinely guilty afterwards. She does not pray but asks her mom to do it for her if something or someone in her life needs it. Seemingly, without being and *feeling* a practicing Muslim, Alisha's terminology of a cultural Muslim is well-defined. Alisha's story therefore fits well in Davie's theory of belonging without believing. It could even be argued that Davie's claim that this is often associated with pride in ones national identity and heritage could stand in Alisha's case, mainly if we take Alisha's words *politically Muslim* into account. She says that

> "I think I'm political in general and I don't know how strongly I would feel about things if I were not a Muslim. But my parents are from an occupied region and I was always in tune with political injustices. And I think there are a lot of political injustices and human rights violations against Muslims in the world."

We want to be very careful with the terminology at this point. Alisha told us she is part of a political organization, however, due to the racial profiling and the recent NYPD spying-scandal, Alisha did not confide in us on the specifics of this organization. We are therefore reluctant to use the term political Muslim on academic ground, not causing any injustices ourselves. That being said, Alisha's words suggest that she is unsure she

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[23] Alisha, Interview, March 26th 2013
[24] Note the use of 'we'
[25] Alisha, Interview, March 26th 2013

would be as politically engaged as she is, *were she not a Muslim.* It can be argued that the media plays a crucial role here. Due to the information Alisha acquires through the media, she keeps informed on wars, human rights violations and how this affects Muslims around the world. This particular information and representations that are given through the media might actually be one of the reasons why she is part of a political organization, and why she holds on to being *culturally* and *politically*[26] Muslim. Furthermore, it shows how Alisha's common identity is strengthened the moment that this common *Muslim* identity is under pressure. The violations against Muslims in the world are violations against the people she identifies with. This stimulates her to take action.

Very different than Alisha is Fizzah. She considers herself to be "a practicing Muslim and a conservative one at that". She explains: "For me, conservative means that I always try to dress modestly, I don't wear t-shirts, I don't wear short skirts, and I don't expose any part of my body."[27] She is wearing a long-sleeved pink chiffon blouse that is loosely fitted, something many girls in New York can be seen wearing. "I actually feel this is a little too short, I usually try to cover my butt!" Furthermore, Fizzah feels she is conservative in the way she practices her faith because "I never drink, I never did drugs, the most wild thing I've ever done was trying a cigarette![28]" She also tries to pray five times a day,

> "When I leave you guys I'm going to the mosque and I'm going to pray. I really like the concept of praying, because on the Day of Judgment, when God is deciding my faith, the question will be; did you pray? And the lights where your forehead touched the ground of the earth will sprout out, I like the image of that.[29]"

Just like Zara, she is very intent of knowing her faith, and feels her choice of being a conservative Muslim was founded on her growing knowledge. Remembering her religious background, Fizzah says: "I don't feel that I grew up with the proper amount of... or a good amount of religion. The religious education I got was from my mom, and

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[26] Again, this term is used by Alisha, and we do not use this term as it is mostly used in Academia.
[27] Fizzah, Interview, April 9th 2013
[28] Ibed.
[29] Ibed.

some of the things she taught us were not correct. When I say that, she ignores it."[30] Her religiosity changed when she moved to New York. "Moving to New York is what made me conservative. I feel like NYC is what made me more practicing or religious, because NYC has such a great access to scholars." Like Zara, and as Peek argues, Fizzah's faith strengthened when she chose to be religious and started to educate herself. Still, she uses the sources New York is giving her to become more knowledgeable:

"There is something going on this weekend at NYU, where there is going to be an intensive weekend course about the meaning of prayer, and it's by a very well-known scholar. Sometimes I don't know why I do certain things that I do but I do it. So I have a great opportunity this weekend to learn; why do I do this? What is the reason behind these movements?[31]"

However, not only did Fizzah become more religious after moving to New York, 9/11 and its media coverage was a very important turning point in Fizzah's religiosity. She describes her worries after 9/11, and how this was a true turning point in how she experienced her religion:

"When 9/11 happened there were like five billion experts on Islam on TV, talking about how horrible the religion is, but how many of them were actually Muslim? At that time, I wasn't being an expert of my own religion, I didn't know much about my religion, I just knew what my mom and dad told me, what not to do. So I was listening to it, and I thought, this is wrong. This is wrong and I don't even know enough about it. And I though, wait, let me read about it and find out, and that's when my curiosity peaked for religion. I just started to read more about it."

As said earlier in this chapter, it can be argued that Zara went to something similar as well, since she claims that "a lot was based on 9/11". This contributes to the claim Mamdani makes regarding the depiction of Muslims after 9/11, when he argues that it is the culture talk, the false images that hit the headlines. Moreover, Said argues that journalists often act as scholastic sources that are picked up by the media. Seemingly, it

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[30] Fizzah, Interview, April 9th 2013
[31] Ibed.

are exactly these kind of representations that made Fizzah want to strengthen her understanding of Islam, learning the truth about the claims that were made by countless people through media channels after 9/11.

Conclusively, it can be argued that the stages of the Self identity are neatly followed by our interlocutors, making a choice on religion at the time of college. However, it also seems that another stage of commitment came into being after the events of 9/11. The (often false) media representations that followed on Islam and Muslims in general made them rethink their religious being, and their own status within the religious community. Therefore, the media seemingly influenced their identities in how they perceive and carry out their faith.

The next empirical chapter will go further into detail about the American mass media and its representations on the Islam. Furthermore, it will look further into the opinions of our interlocutors in this respect and how they interpret and cope with these media representations.

Chapter 2: Muslim representations in the American mass media

Author: Silke

In the previous chapter, the focus lay on the religiosity of our interlocutors and the influence the media has on it. Many representations of Islam were depicted in the media, however these were not always correct. This caused our interlocutors to learn more about their religion, since they were confused about the Islamic faith due to the media representations and they wanted to refute these representations.

This chapter will focus on the opinions of our interlocutors on the American mass media and the representations of Muslims in the American media. The argument of this chapter is that our interlocutors do not trust the media, since they state it is incompetent and the representations of Muslims in the media are stereotypical and negative. These representations influence the identity of our interlocutors as they all have different ways of dealing with it. However, we have found out that there are some positive representations as well.

Opinions on American mass media:

All our interlocutors have a strong negative opinion about the American mass media. Zara, one of our interlocutors, says: "I know it's skewed and I know it's wrong." She also argues that the American media outlets are not analytical and critical. As mentioned in the context, the media in the US consists of conservative and liberal news angles. However, our interlocutors do not even trust the liberal media. In general, our interlocutors think the media is an untrustworthy institution. Alisha explains:

I think that's like the larger problem of, we have like really incompetent media. I wouldn't know either if someone would be lying on the news if I didn't know anything about that specific subject. If it's on the news, you assume it is right, you know. Why should I fact check the news? But I think both sides, liberal and conservative, can be perpetuating [lies][32].

When we ask Zara about her media preferences, she answers:

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[32] Alisha, Interview, March 26th 2013

"There are progressive media, like, *commondreams.org*, I look at things online. I just don't subscribe to, like, some people are like "I watch *CNN* every night." "I watch *MSNBC* every night." I don't watch anything every night. I don't watch anything all the time. I will just look through things and blogs, but I don't go to something all the time. I think that's the difference. Because it's an ideology. [...] if you watch *Fox News*, you're a conservative right-wing. If you watch *MSNBC* you're more to the left. So you know the type of person just by what channel they are watching. And that person becomes brainwashed, because they think that people from that channel are similar to them, and it's all coming to their mind. They're being taught what to think. Also, on the left and the right. It doesn't matter. So they're not using any of it, like logical reasoning.[33]"

Due to the distrust our interlocutors have in the American mass media, they do not follow just one media network. Most of the time they use several media sources, such as *commondreams.org*, *The Huffington Post* and *Al-Jazeera*. They use the latter, since it does not broadcast news from an American perspective. What we also have come to know is that our interlocutors use social media as well, such as *Facebook* and *Twitter*, to get news information; since they get the information from people they can trust. However, Alisha ads to this that "you still need to look at it with a critical eye[34]."

Muslim Portrayal in the American mass media

Negative Portrayal

In general, our interlocutors feel that Muslims are portrayed in the American media in a very negative way. We meet with Fizzah at a Starbucks in a bookstore. We ask her how she feels about the representations of Muslims in the media after 9/11 and the War on Terror. Without a doubt, Fizzah says: "The thing that's annoying is the portrayal of Muslims in the media. [I]t's one hundred percent negative," and "in the media, Muslims are portrayed as monsters, especially the men, they are sex crazed, obsessed monsters[35]." This corresponds to the theory of Vertigans (2010:30), who argues that the representations of Muslims and Arabs today are very negative.

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[33] Interview, April 5th 2013
[34] Interview, March 26th 2013
[35] Interview, April 9th 2013

As written before in the previous chapter, some of our interlocutors wanted to learn more about their religion after 9/11. However, this applies to non-Muslim citizens of the US as well. According to Alisha, the media tried to inform these people. Nevertheless, there was also media coverage on Muslims by Islamophobics, such as Robert Spencer, administrator of the *Jihad Watch* blog and author of many Islamophobic books. As we have experienced during our stay in New York City, these authors get a huge amount of media attention from the conservative media. Thus, according to Alisha, not everything in the media about Muslims is true. Fizzah points out that media networks always invite Islam experts. "But," she asks, "how many of those experts are Muslim[36]?" These opinions of the interlocutors can be linked to the argument of Fürsich. The author argues that the media have a huge influence on what the audience learns about certain issues due to their power. Said even argues that people think they understand Islam due to the information the media distribute. However, he states, that this information is biased and incomplete. Fizzah even has a very negative opinion on the non-Muslim American public:

"And I overall don't have very much confidence or faith in the American public to differentiate between what makes sense and what doesn't make sense, what's overhyped, what's exaggerated, because I don't think the average American is very educated in matters like this; Middle-East politics, politics in general, what even goes on in their own country, I don't find them to be very educated[37]."

There are many TV shows, blogs, websites and newspapers that express themselves in a negative way about Muslims and the Islam. For instance, during an informal conversation with Samah, head of one of the organizations, about the media, she told us about people who try to put the Islamic religion in a negative perspective. The first person Samah mentioned was Pamela Geller, who owns the blog *Atlas Shrugs[38]*. The second and third persons were David Horowitz and Brigitte Gabriel. In 1988 Horowitz founded the *Center for Popular Culture*, in 2006 renamed to the *D. Horowitz*

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[36] Interview, April 9th 2013
[37] Ibed.
[38] Website of Geller: http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/

Freedom Center. Brigitte Gabriel founded *ACT! for America* in a response to 9/11. Both have a website where they spread Islamophobic messages[39].

By the end of 2012, anti-Islamic advertisements were placed in the New York City subway by Pamela Geller. For example, one of them showed a picture of the World Trade Center in flames and next to it was a Quran verse written: "Soon shall We cast terror in the hearts of the Unbelievers (3:151)[40]." In our interviews with Alisha, Raza and Zara, Geller and the advertisements were mentioned:

Alisha: I believe in free speech, but then you see what happens with Pamela Geller and the ads, you know. Those ads went up in October, and somebody was pushed to his death in December.
Silke: Because they thought he was a Muslim, but he wasn't, right?
Alisha: Yeah, that's the worst part[41]!

Raza, a 28-year-old, male journalist, states the following:
I think [Florida] was the first site they did that and then it spread to New York and lots of cities now. I think they should be allowed to put those ads up, I don't think that's illegal, or that it should be. [...]But you know you think it is wrong, and mean and vile and all that sort of things, but, there has been lots of good response to that as well. Here in New York there has been the United Methodist Women, a group that has put up ads to counteract those[42].

Zara: Oh, it's ridiculous!! If they were writing about Judaism, it would NOT fly. That just go to show how Islamophobia has infiltrated the public[43].

Geller, Horowitz and Gabriel have turned the Islamic faith into something political, since they state that the Islam is a monolithic religion, as Huntington did in his Clash of Civilizations theory. This is what Mamdani calls culture talk, "the tendency to think of

[39] Website *Act! for America*: http://www.actforamerica.org/ , Website *D. Horowitz Freedom Center*: http://www.horowitzfreedomcenter.org
[40] The Huffington Post, 2012, Anti-Islam Subway Ads By Pamela Geller Feature Exploding World Trace Center, Quote From The Quran. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/12/13/anti-islam-subway-ads-pamela-geller-mta-disclaimer_n_2295864.html, accessed on May 20th, 2013.
[41] Interview, March 26th 2013
[42] Interview, March 22nd 2013
[43] Interview, April 5th 2013

culture in political [...] terms (2002:766)." According to Mamdani, considering a community wherein people share a same faith, as a homogeneous political collective, is a problem. However, this is exactly what Geller, Horowitz and Gabriel do.

Not only are our interlocutors negative about the news media and advertisements, they also have criticism on American TV shows and movies, such as *Homeland* and *Zero Dark Thirty*. Both are about terrorism, 9/11 and the War on Terror. *Homeland* and *Zero Dark Thirty* are great examples on how Muslims and the Islam are represented in the media after 9/11 and the War on Terror. Especially Fizzah and Alisha could not understand why this TV show and movie had to show Muslims and Muslim countries as subordinated.

We are still sitting at the coffee shop in the bookstore, and when we ask Fizzah about *Homeland*, she sits straight up and says: "Oh my god, thank you, that's a good one, it pissed me off! That pissed me off so much, [...] have you seen everything? Okay, let me talk to you! [...] So I feel like I am much more sensitive about these things. But the third episode is this scene where the main character, the red-headed guy goes to the garage and pulls out a prayer mat and prays. He did it incorrectly, he said the wrong things, everything was done wrong, and I've never seen in my life, whether you're Sunni or Shia, no one prays like that[44]." Alisha admits she does not watch Homeland anymore. She explains that she does not agree with the way Lebanon is represented in the TV show: "[T]hey portrayed a street in Lebanon as very backward, like it's somewhere in the [shanty towns] in Pakistan or something like that, when it is this very urbanized city[45]." Alisha and Fizzah both feel that this TV show and movie are using very stereotypical representations of Muslims and Muslim countries: "For any stereotype for any race, any nationality, there is a reason behind it, I understand that, but to always portray that same thing in the media, that's what everyone's going to think that those [Muslim] men are [crazy]. So that's why I get so upset[46]."

The opinions of our interlocutors about the advertisements and *Homeland* and *Zero Dark Thirty* can be linked to an argument of Kumar (2010:255); the West considers the Muslim countries as "mired in backwardness and intolerance," a theory developed by Orientalists. This can be combined again with culture talk; considering Islamic societies as unchanging and pre-modern. Moreover, it can be linked to a theory of Said

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[44] Interview, April 9th 2013
[45] Interview, March 26th 2013
[46] Interview, April 9th 2013

as well: Othering. Said (1997:xvi) argues that the West focuses on the "Islam" being straightforward and simple, however, the Islamic world consists of many different countries and people who have, for example, their own traditions and languages. Something that is often wrongly portrayed in the media, according to Fizzah:

"Arabic is not a language spoken in Pakistan, it's Urdu. Urdu, Punjabi. Any other language or dialect I would understand, but you're seeing scenes saying Yalla! Yalla! And I'm like, no one says that over there! I've been there! I mean, that's not even in their vocabulary, I'm fluent in Urdu, things like this… It's just the American audience knows the word Yalla, they know it's Arab, they know it's like "Al-Qaida", whatever you want to call it, it just means let's go or hurry up or something like that[47]."

Positive Portrayal

One day, a group of 12 Pakistani Muslims visits the office. They are invited by the Interfaith Organization and AMI to come listen to a presentation regarding the interfaith dialogue in the US. Accompanied by Amina, the group enters the conference room where the presentation will take place. The conference room is rather small, and therefore, everybody sits close to each other at the table. In front of the group of visitors, Amina starts the presentation. She talks about the terror attacks on the World Trade Center in 1993 and 2001 and the values of the Islamic faith. Moreover, one of the important things Amina tells the visitors is that the media has been very cooperative with the organization: "[T]he media also cooperated. Whenever there was a groundbreaking story about terrorism or something like that, they would call us and say: 'What do you have to say?'" "However," Sabeeha adds, "the media doesn't always highlight the moderates[48]."

In the final week of the research, an event occurred that was worldwide news: The Boston Marathon Bombing. While saying goodbye to the employees of the organizations it is, of course, a hot topic. At first, we are making small talk about us leaving New York City and returning back home. However, all of a sudden, the conversation gets more serious, since we asked them about the bombings and the

[47] Interview, April 9th 2013
[48] Observation at The Interfaith Organization, March 14th 2013

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media. "I think they handled it pretty well," the employees of the organizations are satisfied with how the media dealt with the media coverage of the Boston Bombings. A few moments later, another woman joins us: "You know who I had on the phone yesterday," she asks us with a slight accent, "Homeland Security!" She explains. The woman tells us that Homeland Security asked for her help on how to deal with the representations of Muslims during a press conference[49]. This means she helped Homeland Security, for example, on how to use the right terminology regarding Muslims and the Islamic faith.

The interviews and with our interlocutors show us that the media coverage in the US on Muslims is negative, however, due to the conversations we had with the employees of AMI and the Interfaith Organization and the observation, we found out that there are also institutions, such as Homeland Security, who want to bring more unbiased and critical news items about the media coverage on Muslims.

Taking action?

What is very interesting about the media aspect of this research is that most of our interlocutors do not want to do something actively about the negative and untrue representations of Muslims and Islam in general. They would like to see a better world for Muslims in general, but improving the media is not high on their priority list. Our interlocutors deal with it in different ways. Fizzah, for example, talks about it with her friends:

So for instance in terms of media, I feel like… I watch it, I tell my friends when I get upset or when I get annoyed, well I'm not watching it anymore and I hope that they don't too, but no one ever listens to me. We'll definitely have conversations and it's very interesting, the type of conversations we have[50].

Alisha, on the other hand, works in the media industry and told us she worked at some places that were racist. Alisha said she was not able to do anything about the representations in the media in fear of losing her job. However, Alisha thinks of making an independent movie about the stereotypes of Muslims in the media in the near future:

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[49] Observation at the AMI office, April 19th 2013
[50] Interview, April 9th 2013

And I work in, you know, documentary films, and I hope to create one independent film that is like illuminating in that sense and hopefully uhm, be like, my own form of activism. But yeah, I would like to have part of my life to or my job to be overturning stereotypes and such. But I don't know how deep that will go[51].

Nazima, a 24-year-old, Bangladeshi Muslim, who wears a head scarf, has specific ideas on how people should deal with the negative representations, however, she admits that these ideas never happen:

"[I]t has been an interesting journey, and I think with Muslims or with any other person who is gone through hardship, you'll always have 9/11. You'll always have people comparing before and after 9/11. I think the best what you do is saying, it happened, and let's make sure we try to change the image. Let's make sure that we try to empower people. But you have to work together. […] Let's say for example what happened with the whole cartoon of Muhammad and then the documentary that happened, on YouTube, with the prophet and it drew so much attention. […] My response would have been instead of protesting or banning whoever made it… The best thing we could have done was saying, okay, there is a film out there. What can we do to actually address it. Let's correct it. You've seen this, sit together, let's review, one on one and go over these things. But those things never happen[52]".

Zara is the only person who told us she was an activist. She strongly wants to change the representations of Muslims in the media and feels it is her duty:

"I wrote that one article in [a newspaper about Muslims and the religion], we're all trying to change those conceptions, and that is the work we do. […] I don't feel like a spokesperson, but I think I have specific privileges. I have no accent, I've been born here. That makes it easier to speak in front of people. People might get

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[51] Interview, March 26th, 2013
[52] Interview, March 28th 2013

deported if they speak out or have other issues. So I do think it's a responsibility of mine. I don't think it's like a burden or something[53]."

This chapter focused on the media representations of Muslims and the Islamic faith in the US. All our interlocutors have negative opinions about the media and feel offended by what the media say about the Islamic faith. However, an important note to make is that we have found, due to observations, that there are media institutions that want to change the media representations of Muslims. Although some media institutions want to change it, our interlocutors do not consider this as a high priority, except for Zara. Besides the media representations having an influence on their religiosity, it also influences the way they talk and think. Moreover, our interlocutors have to deal with these negative representations every day, however, they do this in different kind of ways.

The focus of the next chapter will lay on the diversity of New York City compared to other parts of the US and this will be connected to the media representations of Muslims and the Islamic faith and the influence it has on our interlocutors.

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[53] Interview, April 6th 2013

Chapter 3: Life in New York City

Authors: Josje and Silke

In the previous chapters we have outlined what kind of media representations exist in the US and how this has influenced our interlocutors in terms of identity, religiosity and what they actively want to do about these representations. This chapter will attempt to answer the third sub question, and will therefore look into the role New York City plays in the lives of our interlocutors, and how they perceive to be treated in this metropolis.

The diversity of New York City can be seen on every street corner. Many different languages such as Spanish, Swedish, English, and Chinese can be heard on the streets and in the subway. Asian monks, dressed in orange garments, are sitting on the sidewalk of the street. At Union Square, Afro-American men are playing chess with passersby. In the subway, groups of Hare Krishna devotees are making music, while other groups of Latino men pass them in a hurry to catch their train. These examples give only a small insight in the diversity of New York City, however, if all these people actually interact with each other remains an interesting question. This chapter will analyze the diversity of the city, compare other parts of the US with New York City, and will answer the question if our interlocutors feel treated differently than non Muslims in New York City.

Diversity in New York City

Author: Silke

If you talk about New York, it's a melting pot. People over here are very accepting of anything that is new to them. You can be walking down the street, any which way and nobody would think anything of it. They are very very accepting[54].

Amina is not the only one who told us that New York City is ethnically very diverse. Nazima, for example, describes the open-mindedness of the city as following: "You have so many different cultures. It colors people to just be open-minded. I'm here, they're here, you got to learn how to get along. I think it's just that. I could fight all day or I could just get along[55]." These statements can be linked to the argument of Foner; that New

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[54] Amina, Interview, February 8th 2013
[55] Interview, March 28th 2013

York City is ethnically very diverse, and moreover, is tolerant. Due to the tolerance, all our interlocutors feel safe in New York City and Zara even sees the city as a haven.

Foner argues that the first- and second-generation ethnic groups mix and mingle with each other in different kinds of settings, however, our interlocutors do not agree with this. They state that there is a lot of diversity in New York City, however, so is segregation. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, there are ethnic enclaves were only two or three ethnic groups dominate the neighborhood. According to our interlocutors, many groups live mostly in their own community, sometimes even accommodated by an area that is mostly inhabited by the same community, such as Chinatown or Little Italy. When we talk about the segregation with Fizzah, she says:

"A lot of people that were born and raised here are Jewish, Italian or Irish, and when I talk to them, even the way they speak, they have an accent because they grew up in an Italian neighborhood. People, I know for a fact, they do not have friends outside that community[56]."

Alisha is not convinced about New York City being a melting pot as well:

"I don't trust people when they say it's a melting pot. Because, you know, people shop in their own backyard for like class, race, education... I just don't buy it. New York might be the best that certain people ever experienced, but, uhm, it's not like, I don't think it's the best that it could be for sure[57]."

Many of our interlocutors talked about diversity in a religious way as well. Since there are so many different ethnicities in New York, religious plurality is a natural consequence:

"Because in New York, I think, we have… Most people are open-minded, and we have, like, such a diverse area of religions, so there are people who are atheists,

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[56] Interview, April 9th 2013
[57] Interview, March 26th 2013

people who are agnostic, you know, they believe in different things. People hold different things of religious values[58]."

Our interlocutors do not think this religious plurality is an issue. Nazima, for example, ran a program for her organization for a high school:

"I remember running this program with all this high school students and I was communicating with them over email and they had no idea what I looked like, they know what I sounded like but not what I looked like. So finally when they met me they were all very surprised because no one was Muslim amongst the crowd. Four of these girls were from Orthodox Jewish communities; they were heavily heavily raised in a strong Jewish community. And we would talk about religion and it was so nice because they knew and I knew that in the end of the day we are all New Yorkers, we have religious identities and we just talk about it[59]."

New York City Compared To Other Parts Of The United States

In the subway network of New York City, it is very common that people will get on the subway and will try to sell candy or give a monologue about something that is important to them. One day, a slender, elderly man with a cowboy hat and boots steps in to the subway wagon. "Ladies and gentlemen," he yells loudly throughout the wagon, "I don't want to disturb y'all, but I have something important to say!" Not many people are paying attention to him, since they are listening to music or reading a book. However, he continues his monologue. First of all, the man tries to convince everybody that global warming is a "big, fat lie". Most of the people in the wagon grin or nod their head while he is telling his story. However, the second part of his monologue is striking. Loud and clear he yells: "Another thing I want to tell y'all is that President Barack HUSSEIN Obama is a Muslim! He wears a ring on his left hand and it has Arabic words written all over it! And do you know what those words mean?! Well, I do! 'There is no god but ALLAH!'"

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[58] Fizzah, Interview, April 9th 2013
[59] Interview, March 28th 2013

Next to us sits an Afro-American woman. When she notices our surprised looks, she says: "Don't mind him, darlings, he is not from around here. Definitely not[60]."

This observation shows that New Yorkers feel that New York City is different than other parts of the US. According to the interlocutors, living in New York City in comparison to other cities or states in the US is much better, due to the tolerance and peaceful coexistence. This is also the reason why the interlocutors are happy and proud to live in New York City. This confirms the argument of Foner that New York City is totally different than other parts of the US:

> "When you go to the middle of the country, it's very different. It is very conservative. There is only one way, there is only one religion, there is only one lifestyle, there is only one way of living. You go to the coast, California, it's like New York; you go to Texas, in many parts it's like New York. It's, it's really like, around the edges of the country you know where there is a lot of cosmopolitan areas where there is a lot of tolerance. But, in the middle of the country, it is very different[61]."

According to the interlocutors, other parts of the US are very Islamophobic, partially due to the media representations after 9/11 and the War on Terror:

> "[C]an you imagine [support] coming from some bigot in South Carolina? It would never happen, they don't have the capacity to understand, because [9/11] happened in New York City, but people in New York City, at the same time this is happening, they're friends with maybe Muslims or… It's not like they're surrounded with white people. So you have logical reasoning, to kind of understand that that's not really the case. Although that image is projected in the country, that's not diverse[62]."

Nazima adds to this that some other parts of the US are very secluded:

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[60] Observation, April 10th 2013
[61] Amina, Interview, February 8th 2013
[62] Zara, Interview, April 5th 2013

> "[I]n New York City you have a lot of diversity and if you're going to some regions, like, Upstate or so, it's very secluded at some times. Like, if you're going to many of the Southern states, or where it's predominable known as like a less population of Jews or Muslims, like a basic Christian community[63]."

Due to the fact that other pats of the US are not very diverse, people have to base their ideas about Muslims and the Islamic faith purely on what has been said in the media. However, as mentioned before in the previous chapter, these media representations are not always based on the truth.

After 9/11, New York needed to get back on its feet and as mentioned before, American citizens wanted to learn more about the Islamic religion. According to Nazima, it was a major undertaking for New Yorkers to understand Islam:

> "So I think, like, after 9/11, more of the conversation would be about "what is religion?" "What is Islam?" "What are Muslims?" "What are their roles in the society?" They were not that active, but after 9/11, there was a label put on Muslims, like, negative media was put on Muslims. So then Muslims felt, like, I think, assorting the community, about what our role is. We are New Yorkers like you guys, but we want to remind you that, just like a Christian or a Jew, we have our own set of values. But just act of, you know, does not just say what we are or what we aren't. It's our religion. So I think, after 9/11, it was a whole quest for the New Yorker to understand who the Muslims really were[64]."

This corresponds to the research of Panagopoulos, who discovered that Americans after 9/11 were more informed about the religion.

Being Muslim in New York City

Author: Josje

As is elaborated on above, our interlocutors feel that New York is a very special place, especially in comparison to the rest of the United States. However, this does not mean

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[63] Interview, March 28th 2013
[64] Interview, March 28th 2013

that they feel like it is a perfect place on earth. Marginalization and discrimination of Muslims still exists. Examples of this are the NYPD spying scandal, explained in the introduction of this thesis, and the vast existence of racial profiling in New York City against Muslims. According to Christina Fauchon (2004:157), racial profiling can be defined as stopping and searching people passing through public areas solely because of their color, race, or ethnicity, and is (like the spying scandal) controversial and covered extensively by the media.

Paradoxically, it seems that New York is far more tolerant and liberal towards Muslims than the rest of the country, or, other part of the country where 9/11 *did not* happen. Raza has experienced many good things after 9/11, one of them being that "if I say I am Muslim, what I get is more interest and questions from people who are curious and want to learn, so I experience more positive engagement[65]." However, it is important to mention here that Raza is a journalist, and often talks about religion for his job. This observation thus has to be placed in this particular context.

Raza has an interesting theory about his personal positive experiences. According to him, it is possible that it also has to do something with the fact that he, and in fact most of our interlocutors, does not particularly look Muslim. "It is much more difficult to see a man who looks like me and figure out their religious backgrounds. If you would see a woman and she covered her face that would be an automatic sign to you.[66]" As is also stated by Fauchon in her definition of profiling, Raza suggests that he escapes the racial profiling because he does not look the part. All but one of our interlocutors, who wears the *hijab*, would not be easily identified as a Muslim when it comes to the exterior. All of their parents are from the Indian subcontinent, and this is often the first thing people associate them with. Although none of our interlocutors have ever been racially profiled in NYC, they do perceive it as something very negative and discriminating, probably due to the earlier mentioned media coverage.

Partly due to this, our interlocutors still feel very marginalized and treated differently. It can be argued that the media has shaped their image in regards of how they are being treated. Many of them recount many stories of people who are discriminated, bullied, and harassed because of their Muslim identity, such as Zara's mom, who stopped wearing the *hijab* after 9/11, but none of them actually have such a

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[65] Raza, Interview, March 22nd 2013
[66] Ibed.

story of their own experience in New York. Fizzah even says: "When I say that I feel like NYC is more of a racist city it is not because I personally encountered anything.[67]" As can be seen by Raza's comment, it can even be argued that our interlocutors have experienced more *good* from the community around them since 9/11. Consequently, it can be argued that our interlocutors are very much influenced by the media in the sense that they feel as marginalized in New York as other Muslims are being marginalized in the rest of the country. Given the levels of Islamophobia and culture talk in the media, this does not seem as something surprising. Moreover, worldly issues revolving around Muslims such as the war in the Middle-East where, moreover, the U.S. army plays a very active (if not crucial) role, presumably contributes to this.

What is surprising about our interlocutors feeling discriminated, bullied and marginalized in the American society due to media representations, is the fact that, as is elaborated on in the second empirical chapter, all our interlocutors are extremely wary and skeptical about the media. It would seem fit that, given their mistrust and outspoken dissatisfaction with the media, they would not as easily assume certain representations, and most of all, not implicating it on their own situation, their lives in New York City.

3.4. Conclusion

Authors: Josje and Silke

It can be stated that New York City is a very ethnically diverse city. However, due to the interviews with our interlocutors, a remarkable outcome has surfaced: not only is New York City very diverse, it is also very segregated. According to our interlocutors, there is no mixing and mingling like Foner argued. However, all our interlocutors seem to love New York City, and prefer living there than anywhere else in the US. This is due to the fact that other places in the US are said to be more Islamophobic, since they, according to our interlocutors, do not interact much with Muslims and make their opinions about the Islamic faith based on the media representations. This does not necessarily mean that New York City is a perfect place to live. Controversies such as the NYPD spying scandal and racial profiling make our interlocutors feel very marginalized and discriminated as Muslims. However, it is interesting to see this in the light of the second chapter, where the dislike and distrust of the media by our interlocutors is discussed in

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[67] Fizzah, Interview, April 9th 2013

detail. It appears that our interlocutors do not want to accept much from the media, but unconsciously it has a vast influence on their perception of New York City.

5. Conclusion

Authors: Josje & Silke

This final chapter will combine the most important findings of the research. First, a brief summary will be given of what we set out the study. Second, the general conclusion of this research will be outlined. In the third part of this chapter, the general conclusion will be elaborated according to the theories mentioned in the theoretical framework and context. Furthermore, this part will highlight our contributions as well. Fourth, an answer will be given to the central question and the final part of this chapter will focus on our suggestions for further research.

5.1 Outline of the research

9/11 had a big influence on the Western world. Due to the attacks, the US started the War on Terror. However, in the following years other Western cities, such as Madrid and London, had to deal with terrorist attacks as well. The focus of this research lay on New York City, since the general assumption is that life in the city became harder for Muslims after 9/11. As for our population, we chose second generation South-Asian Muslims, since our network consisted mainly out of South-Asian Muslims. By focusing on the American mass media representations of Muslims and the Islamic faith, we were able to create a better picture of the identity of the interlocutors and how it feels to be a second generation Muslim in New York City post-9/11. Therefore, we used the following question during the research:

How does the (media-) representation of Muslims after the event of 9/11 and the war on terror affect the identity of second generation Muslims in New York City?

5.2 General Conclusion

This general conclusion will briefly describe our main findings. In the next part the main findings will be linked to the theoretical framework and context and will be more deeply high lightened.

It can be argued that the interlocutors do not trust the media, since they feel that the media is not critical and analytical. Therefore, they do not care to 'follow' the

mainstream media networks. For one thing, the negative media representations have an influence on their identity and behavior, since all the interlocutors have different ways of dealing with the negative representations.

Second, the media representations have an influence on the interlocutors' religious identity. Some interlocutors mentioned they were eager to learn more about the Islamic faith due to the negative media representations, allowing them to counter these representations. Besides the influence of the media representations, it can be argued that the interlocutors made a choice on religion when they went to college and this means that the interlocutors are more conscious about their religion. Therefore, it can be argued that the interlocutors are religious in a more analytical and educational way; this is in contrast to their parents.

Although the media representations of Muslims are negative in the US, the interlocutors do not have any personal examples of coming into contact with discrimination or racism in New York City. However, due to the negative media representations, they feel that the Muslim community in general is still marginalized in the US and in New York City, including themselves. Therefore, despite the fact that the interlocutors do not trust the media, the representations surely do influence the identity of the interlocutors and their image of how they are being treated. The fact that the interlocutors feel that Muslims in New York City are still being marginalized contradicts with how the interlocutors see New York City; tolerant and open-minded. The high level of tolerance and open-mindedness is, according to the interlocutors, due to the diversity of the city. Furthermore, due to the negative media representations, they feel more at home in New York City than in other parts of the US, which are, according to the interlocutors, more Islamophobic.

This general conclusion will be elaborated in the next part according to the theories mentioned in the theoretical framework and the context.

5.3 Theory

This part of the conclusion will focus on the earlier described theories of this thesis. An attempt is made to show how this research connects and adds to these theories, and how this affects the outcome of this research.

The definition of identity coined by Eriksen, the Self, is clearly noticeable in this research. Since we focused on religiosity, we will restrict ourselves in this part to the

identity domain of religion. All of our interlocutors showed a very clear phase of exploration, where the choice of religion was considered. All of them eventually chose, and therefore felt that their identity shifted from something that was ascribed to something chosen. Interestingly, the interlocutors that stated not to be very practicing, all still perceived themselves as Muslim, and part of the Islamic community. This can be connected to Davie's theory of belonging without believing, and might be associated with pride in one's national identity and heritage. However, if we look back to the commitment theory within the Self, it could be argued that this is a grey area. Although these interlocutors choose not to be (overtly) practicing their religion, they still feel very much connected to it. Moreover, none of them ruled out the possibility of becoming more practicing somewhere in the future. This would suggest that some are still in their exploration phase. We would like to argue that this can be influenced by the media. The Islam, Islamophobia, and wars fought with Islamic countries are constantly prominent in the American media. It can be argued that this is why the interlocutors do not make the transition to the commitment stage where they would choose to definitely not be a practicing Muslim, like they might have done if these issues were not such a *hot topic*. The media keeping these matters in the spotlight might actually contribute to our interlocutors' clinging to their religious identity more, and to the possibility of being a practicing Muslim.

In addition, the interlocutors who clearly made the commitment towards their religion are all very analytical and reflexive about their faith. This is something that can be connected to the theory on the objectification of religion. Eickelman & Piscatori's claim that being Muslim acquires more political significance in the modern world than other religions also stands for our participants. We would like to argue that this is also due to the vast media coverage on Muslims. Our interlocutors cannot avoid the representations of their religion, and are constantly made aware of it. Seeing that the interlocutors are all fairly educated people, it is not unreasonable to suggest that these people are constantly stimulated to analyze and reflect, due to the constant delivery of food for thought, contributed by the media.

The media also contributes to the common identity of all our interlocutors According to Robbins, people need to categorize in order to define the world. In this case, Muslims are often categorized by the media, although not often in a positive light. However, as Eriksen argues, identities, as well as common identities are perceived to be

increasingly important when threatened and under pressure. Our interlocutors all claim to have vast issues with the representation of Muslims and Islam through the media, which might suggest a certain pressure or threat. This can lead to the urge to strengthen or emphasize their identity, also possibly leading our interlocutors to be more committed to the Islam community, religiously as well as culturally.

As mentioned before, the interlocutors do not trust the media, since they do not feel it is analytical, critical and unbiased on different matters. This can be linked to the theory of Fürsich, who argues that the media has the power to control which issues are shown to the audience. Therefore, the media are partially responsible for the shared cultural and political opinions of the audience.

Said mentions that the American and Western media focus on Muslims and the Islamic faith. Therefore, the American public thinks they are well-informed about Islam and understand the religion. However, according to Said the issues on Muslims and the Islamic faith are often subjective and incomplete. As a consequence, false images of Muslims can be represented in the media, and can be perceived to be true by the American public. Exactly these representations are the ones our interlocutors are highly offended by. Moreover, the fact that these are often easily believed by the public makes influences their lives, since this is something they all feel – in their own way- that they should do something with it.

According to our interlocutors, the representations of Islam and Muslims are very stereotypical and they feel that the media represents Islam as subordinated and intolerant. For one thing, it can be connected to the theory of Othering, coined by Said. According to this theory, "other" societies are considered to represent only one culture and are perceived to be fixed. According to Said, this happened to *the* Islamic society: the West sees the Islamic religion, and therefore Muslims as well, only as straightforward and simple. Our interlocutors share these views when they talk about popular media such as *Homeland* and *Zero Dark Thirty.* They all feel that these kinds of media depict the Islam in a simplistic and wrong way. However, in the Islamic world, many different languages, traditions and countries can be found.

According to Mamdani's theory on culture talk, that is prejudicially considering a whole community, which happens to share a similar faith, as a homogeneous political collective. One example of culture talk is the Islamophobic advertisements that were

described earlier in this thesis. This is interesting for our research, since it shows that some kinds of media make use of culture talk.

Finally, Kumar argues that before 9/11, Orientalists already created five discursive frames about Muslims and the Islamic faith, which were employed by the media after the terrorist attack. What is most important is that the Orientalists see the Islamic world as subordinated, monolithic and intolerant as well. The interlocutors feel that the media representations about Muslims and the Islam became even worse after 9/11. This can be connected to the theory of Vertigans, who argues that Muslims today are still portrayed in Western media according to these five discursive frames, for example, as uncivilized or as terrorists. The interlocutors want to refute these representations. However, they all do it in their own way, but this reinforces their identity.

An important final note to make is that there are also institutions that make an attempt to create positive representations of Muslims and the Islamic faith. However, according to one of the interlocutors, the media does not always want to highlight this representation; the depiction of a moderate Muslim.

In general, the interlocutors feel accepted in New York City, due to its tolerance and ethnic diversity. This can be connected to theories of Foner, who argues that New York City is very diverse and is, therefore, not comparable to other parts of the US. The interlocutors state as well that in other parts of the US, Islamophobia is a bigger problem due to the media representations. People who do not live in New York have a smaller chance of getting into contact with the Islamic faith, and therefore base their ideas on the media representations.

In spite of the tolerance and diversity, Foner argues as well that New York City is not a (racial) paradise and the interlocutors feel the same way about this. The interlocutors state that segregation is very common in New York City. However, the interlocutors prefer living in New York much more than living in another part of the US.

5.4. Answer to Central Question

This section will indicate how the answers to the three sub questions contributed to answer the main question. The first sub question was: 'How do second generation Muslims in New York City experience their religiosity and how is this influenced by (media-) representation?' This sub question focused on the concept of religious identity.

By looking at the interlocutors' religious activities and how these are influenced by the media representations of Muslims and the Islamic faith, we tried to get a better picture of their religious identity. As mentioned before, the interlocutors are religious in an analytical and educational manner. It can be argued that some of the interlocutors wanted to learn more about the Islamic faith in order to refute the negative media representations. Besides wanting to refute these representations, the interlocutors became more aware of their position in the Muslim community. Therefore, it can be argued that the negative media representations have an influence on the interlocutors' identity.

The second sub question was: 'How do second generation Muslims in New York City think they are portrayed in the media and what do they do with this kind of information?' The concepts of representation and identity were the main focus of this sub question. The degree of influence of the media representations varies, from the desire to actively do something about these misrepresentations, to a short discussion of it in a bar with friends or wanting to do 'something' about it in the near future. The result of coming into contact with these negative representations on a daily basis is that the interlocutors feel offended by it and act on it in their own way. Therefore, because this threatens the interlocutors' identity, it can be argued that the media representations reinforce their identity.

The third an final sub question was: 'Do second generation Muslims in New York City have the idea that they are being treated in a different way than non-Muslims in New York City due to the media representations and what kind of role does New York City plays in this?' By means of this sub question, we tried to find an answer on how the interlocutors' identity is influenced by living in New York City after 9/11 and if they feel treated differently than others, due to the negative media representations.

Despite the negative representations in the media, the interlocutors have not come into contact with racism or discrimination on a personal level. Although the interlocutors do not trust the media, they are much influenced by the media representations because they believe that Muslims in general, including themselves, are treated badly in the US and New York City. Therefore, it can be argued that the (negative) media representations influence the identity of the interlocutors and the perception they have on how they are being treated. As mentioned before, this contradicts the tolerant and liberal ideas the interlocutors have of New York City. It

seems that the city is a very important factor in the lives and identity of the interlocutors. They feel very empowered being part of this city's community. Also, the sharp contrast between New York City and other parts of the US is mentioned very often. For instance, according to the interlocutors, other parts of the US are more Islamophobic. Probably due to the diversity and high tolerance of the city, the interlocutors feel this is not the case in New York City. However, as mentioned before, New York City is not perfect. It can be stated that, because of the diversity of New York City, people can interact more with Muslims. This is not the case in other parts of the US, where ideas about Muslims and the Islamic faith, according to the interlocutors, are solely based on media representations, since these part are not as diverse as New York City.

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7. Appendix

I. Summary

1. Introduction

Many will argue that after September 11, 2001, the Western world has changed. Due to the Al-Qaeda attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City as well as the Pentagon in Washington D.C., the United States started their "War on Terror". Moreover, the fear of terrorist attacks and a feeling of being unsafe spread all over the Western world. In 2004 and 2005 two other Western metropolises, Madrid and London, were attacked by Al-Qaeda. As a result, governments took action to prevent such attacks, and created a world full of security measures where the invasion of privacy is not eschewed.

In New York City, Muslim communities have to deal with racial profiling and spying of the NYPD. This includes mapping, photographing, and infiltration into Muslim communities and organizations (Namjotka 2013). It is interesting to research what the social consequences are for Muslim communities in the Western world. For instance, there is continues media coverage on wars and terrorism in the Middle East. After the recent bombing in Boston, four (Muslim) men were wrongly accused by the media of being the perpetrators. Due to this example of the Boston bombings, it can be argued that some American television networks and online and print media depict Muslims and Islam in a very negative light, often portraying Muslims as supporters of terror. Therefore, it can be interesting to research how these media representations influence the identity of Muslims. This summary will outline our research objective and will explain our main findings by means of the sub questions of the research.

2. Research Objective

We have conducted our research in New York City from February 4th until April 19th. Our research objective was to look at the media representations of Muslims after 9/11 and the war on terror and how this affects the identity of second generation Muslims in New York City. By second generation South-Asian Muslims, we mean people who were born in the US after their parents moved to the US from South-Asia. Therefore, the central question of our research was:

How does the (media-) representation of Muslims after the event of 9/11 and the war on terror affect the identity of second generation Muslims in New York City?

During our research, we used these three sub questions:

1. How do second generation Muslims in New York City experience their religiosity and how is this influenced by (media-) representation.

2. How do second generation Muslims in New York City think they are portrayed in the media and what do they do with this kind of information?

3. Do second generation Muslims in New York City have the idea that they are being treated in a different way than non-Muslims in New York City due to the media representations and what kind of role does New York City plays in this?

3. Main Findings

In general, we can conclude that the American media have a vast influence on the interlocutors in several ways. First of all, it needs to be said that the interlocutors do not trust the media industry in the US. By talking to the interlocutors, a better understanding of the media representations of Muslims and the Islamic faith was obtained. Working on a report on the Muslim portrayal in the media for one of the organizations where we volunteered, was very helpful as well. It can be argued that the interlocutors feel that the media representations of Muslims are negative and since they do not trust the media, they do not care to follow a specific mainstream media network. However, the interlocutors make use of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, and other sources, such as *commondreams.org*, *The Huffington Post* and *Al-Jazeera*. Theories written by Edward Saaid (1997) and Mahmood Mamdani (2002) refer to these negative representations in the media of Muslims and the Islamic faith.

The first sub question focused on the concept of religious identity. By looking at the interlocutors' religious activities and how these are influenced by the media representations of Muslims and the Islamic faith, we tried to get a better picture of their religious identity. As mentioned before, the interlocutors are religious in an analytical and educational manner. It can be argued that some of the interlocutors wanted to learn more about the Islamic faith in order to refute the negative media representations. Besides wanting to refute these representations, the interlocutors became more aware of their position in the Muslim community. Therefore, it can be argued that the negative media representations have an influence on the interlocutors' identity.

The concepts of representation and identity were the main focus of this sub question. The degree of influence of the media representations varies, from the desire to actively do something about these misrepresentations, to a short discussion of it in a bar with friends or wanting to do 'something' about it in the near future. The result of coming into contact with these negative representations on a daily basis is that the interlocutors feel offended by it and act on it in their own way. Therefore, because this threatens the interlocutors' identity, it can be argued that the media representations reinforce their identity.

By means of the third sub question, we tried to find an answer on how the interlocutors' identity is influenced by living in New York City after 9/11 and if they feel treated differently than others, due to the negative media representations.

Despite the negative representations in the media, the interlocutors have not come into contact with racism or discrimination on a personal level. Although the interlocutors do not trust the media, they are much influenced by the media representations because they believe that Muslims in general, including themselves, are treated badly in the US and New York City. Therefore, it can be argued that the (negative) media representations influence the identity of the interlocutors and the perception they have on how they are being treated. As mentioned before, this contradicts the tolerant and liberal ideas the interlocutors have of New York City. It seems that the city is a very important factor in the lives and identity of the interlocutors. They feel very empowered being part of this city's community. Also, the sharp contrast between New York City and other parts of the US is mentioned very often. For instance, according to the interlocutors, other parts of the US are more Islamophobic. Probably due to the diversity and high tolerance of the city, the interlocutors feel this is not the case in New York City. However, as mentioned before, New York City is not perfect. It can be stated that, because of the diversity of New York City, people can interact more with Muslims. This is not the case in other parts of the US, where ideas about Muslims and the Islamic faith, according to the interlocutors, are solely based on media representations, since these part are not as diverse as New York City.

4. Contributions to the Field

This research tried to contribute to the Anthropology of Islam by giving new insights on the media representations and the identity of educated and analytical second generation Muslims in New York City. The Anthropology of Islam focuses for the greater part on the traditional Islam, which means that most of the researchers study pious Muslims and their practices. Therefore this research tried to show that the study of Muslims and the Islamic faith can have a different approach. Moreover, in the Anthropology of Islam, not many researchers have focused on the media (Marraci 2008). An example of an Anthropological study is the analysis of Varisco of blogs on Islam or blogs written by Muslims. Furthermore, Varisco (2010) researched how these blogs can influence Muslim identities in. However, this research focused mainly on the mass media representations, and it tried to clarify how these media representations influence the identity of second generation Muslims in New York City.