CONCLUSION

This book has investigated how religious qualities and norms are learned, shared and challenged within a Muslim youth group. By participating in MJD, young people are both familiarized with Islamic virtues and offered incentives to practice them. Religious discourses are taught and discussed within a specific faith community, thus producing ideas of how a correct and Good Muslim should be crafting herself in order to become religiously proximate. This includes instruction in the gender order as given by a religious tradition, thereby learning what it means to be a young woman, a daughter, a mother, and a wife in Islam. It also involves learning the distinction made between culture and religion, how to relate external actions to internal motivation, how to desire correctly, and the importance of pursuing a specific Muslim character. MJD encourages its participants to continuously craft their Selves in relation to these religious values, attributes, and ideals. The youth were largely motivated by a desire to cultivate their Selves according to the ideals of how to be a correct and Good Muslim, which is considered a universal standard that is situated outside of time and space. But at the same time, as this study has examined, the religious space for virtuous young people that MJD provides also represents an alternative space to be a Muslim youth in a secular, modern Berlin. On the basis of this space, youth can position themselves in relation to their parents' ethnic social field, peers, family, and other youths.

The youths that were part of this study belong to a generation of Muslims who differentiate between their parents' ethnic, traditional Islam and what they describe as a pure Islam. By distinguishing between traditional and authentic religious knowledge, values, and practices, the youth make a discursive differentiation between the behavior, customs, dress, and tastes that are religiously proximate versus those they view as defined by an ethnic culture or habitus. In my research, I found that the gendered expectations among the youth partly changed in relation to their religious orientation, but also that the young women were partly taking on and partly given a representative role in guarding a religious integrity. The effort to distinguish between culture and religion emerged during the youths' discussions about the proper roles and behaviors of men and women. These discussions promote ideas of the Good Muslim Woman as an ultimate standard to aim for.

Much of the literature on Muslims' individualized religious identification seems to suggest that the religious subject is autonomous. However, Selves are also social and cultural (Cohen 1994). My concern has not been with the individual Self in isolation but with how the Self is crafted in relation to desires, motivations, and discourses, and within social relationships. The religious Self is not crafted passively or blindly vis-à-vis certain ideas; the subject is active and creative. The social individual is continuously dealing (consciously and unconsciously) with different and sometimes contradictory desires and expectations. Youth do not follow religious ideals or religious discourses homogeneously, nor are these ideals and discourses all-encompassing. I have endeavored to reveal how the religious Self is formed through complex processes: individuals go through more than a binary choice of either simply viewing and accepting the process as a submissive agent or completely rejecting religious discourses. My research uncovered many internal differences in the ways in which the young women appropriate religion or respond to religious norms, but these do not represent an individualization of religion. Rather, when investigating these differences, I found that the youths' behavior substantiates the internal flexibility of Islam as a discursive tradition. By considering how the participants deal with religious principles by analyzing the variety of ways in which they legitimate their actions (in religious trajectories), I have sought to bring attention to the creativity and negotiations involved in the crafting of the religious Self. These trajectories do not challenge or subvert norms; they are means through which the youths can position themselves within a social field in which the effort to be authentic and religiously proximate is highly valued. I have also sought to highlight the limitations of these processes of negotiation.

Thus, in social practice, there is creativity in the form, style, and performance of the youths' religiosity; and far from being universal it is firmly localized in time and space. In the process of interacting with religious texts and normative ideas, and participating in specific religious spaces, the youth also localize their religious youthfulness as a specifically twenty-first century, Berliner religious youth culture. The young women negotiate between enjoying modern, consumerist society and dedicating themselves to their religion and its practices, and they see no contradiction between these two endeavors.

Rather than conforming homogeneously to a religious or cultural matrix, the youth craft composite and multi-faceted Selves. The individual is not only responding to one specific social, material context but also to the nomos of several social fields and expectations, in addition to their self-motivation. Religion does not completely govern the women's agency but is rather activating ideas of what being a Good Muslim involves, which guides their acts and aspirations. Tension arises in situations where different expectations and desires come into conflict. How they deal with these tensions depends on the individuals and includes confrontation, use of multiple references, contesting knowledge, joking, or silence.

Nonetheless, crafting the Self as a religious subject brings with it restrictions, obligations, and (potential) group identification, which are all reinforced by the excessive public focus on Muslim women and the headscarf. For these women, the crafting of a religious Self also takes place within a context of representing Islam, at the local, national, and global level. Being a religious minority in a secular society shapes both the process of crafting the Self and the identification process. Within MJD, the perception of the youths' roles in representing Islam is situated within a religious discourse of inviting others to Islam, and thus is seen as a religious duty. Accordingly, many youth considered it their religious obligation to alter the negative view of Islam and Muslims in Europe. I see this as participating in a public struggle over who can define, or at least form, the normative content within the tarnished Muslim category.

As young women are deepening their religious orientation, they face their own and others' expectations that they also take on a role as representatives and transmitters of the meaning of Islam in twenty-first century Germany. By striving to imitate the internal, religiously defined gender order of what a Good Muslim Woman is, the women also seek to represent this ideal in the public sphere through their own bodies. One of the primary aims of this representation is to combat the stereotypes and stigmas attached to Islam and Muslims by the non-Muslim society. The consequences that this responsibility has in the youths' everyday life, however, cannot be overstated. Social pressure from themselves, their peers, and other Muslims becomes a component of their efforts to develop into Good Muslims, as defined by an Islamic discourse situated in a socio-historically defined context.

Being a Modern Muslim Youth

The shift to a religious lifestyle is broader than what is commonly called Islamic revival, since similar trends for religious renewal can be found in Christianity and in New Religious Movements. It is a phenomenon that takes place on a global scale, encompassing several countries around the world. The turn to a so-called pure Islam as found among these youth should not be understood as a mere trend caused by migration, as it also takes place outside the European and North American contexts. This kind of religiosity needs to be situated as part of a larger, ongoing process within Muslim tradition as a living tradition that embraces continued negotiations and struggles of interpretation and authority (Amir-Moazami and Salvatore 2003). We should not consider the youths' performance of Islam as merely a return to tradition, a re-Islamification or a coming out as Muslims, or only as a consequence of the specific European migration situation. To do so would ignore the dynamics within Islam. The youths' beliefs and practices (the religious culture) of Islam must be situated within a discursive Muslim tradition that is constantly subject to internal transformations (see Asad 1986; Amir-Moazami and Salvatore 2003). Thus, we must also emphasize the continuity of the internal logic of interventions within Islamic traditions. However, the consequences of European youths' turn to Islam do need to be understood within the European context, in which Muslims are a religious minority. For the young people in my study, values and moral norms are learned within a religious, de-ethnicized social field located in Germany generally and Berlin specifically. This contributes to a situation whereby the youth increasingly identify with a non-ethnically defined, so-called universally-oriented religious sphere. At the same time, their religious practices become localized within the Berlin context, encouraging them to find ways to practice Islam in the manner best suited for their specific socio-cultural sphere.

The increasing number of mixed ethnic marriages among the youth testifies to the greater value accorded to religious knowledge and body comportment as symbolic capital. For many of the women in this study, religiosity is more important in the selection of a future spouse than ethnicity or nationality. Identification with the ethnic social field diminishes as a premium is placed on religious knowledge and as points of religious reference are increasingly found outside of an ethnically defined social field. Consequently, the social network of the youth is increasingly ethnically mixed, and social emphasis is placed on common religious goals rather than on ethnic relations. This de-ethnicization of Islam may assist in strengthening their identification as German, although this remains an open, and pressing, research question. I expect that whether or not a German identification develops partly depends on whether or not public, non-Muslim actors and Muslim organizations and individuals persist in trying to make being Muslim incompatible with being German.

For some young women, the quest to perform a pure Islam can emancipate them, to some extent, from their parents and ethnic social field.

However, the discourse of pure Islam also emphasizes the value and place of parents in Islam, which means that there is a re-structuring of parental authority. This double-edged emancipation also exists when looking at education as a means of empowerment for the young women: in so far that women acquire knowledge and master Islamic discourse, language, and laws, they can set their own agenda within the otherwise patriarchal structure typically found in any of the world religions (Cooke 2001). However, at the same time, the fact that the women want to use their educational attainments not to reform their community but to defend it from the negative stereotypes prevalent in German society means that they decide (consciously or unconsciously) to subordinate the creation of a more liberal, emancipatory agenda as defined by secular oriented feminists. The manner by which the women have chosen to fight the idea of Islam being traditional, patriarchal, and backward-looking is through presenting themselves as Good Muslim Women, an ideal informed by their understanding of scripture. In this struggle, personal and social pressure is placed on young women, both by themselves and by their peers, to conform to the standard of Good Muslim Woman. Such pressure can itself be transformed into a means of social control by themselves and others in regard to the women's public behavior.

While some young women joined MJD in order to acquire the correct knowledge and body comportment necessary for entering Paradise in the afterlife (*akhira*), others were looking for a space that includes youth with similar socio-economic backgrounds, or wanted to improve their answers to questions posed by non-Muslims about Islam. Thus, to some extent, I agree with social research on Muslim youth in Europe that positions the youths' identification with Islam as a reaction to racism, discrimination, and economic disadvantages and as a way to gain more empowerment in relation to their traditional parents. The turn to Islam can be a response to the youths' family situation, the poverty of their neighborhood, and not being accepted as German. Living in a society where they constantly need to provide answers to questions that teachers, friends, schoolmates, and strangers on the street believe are related to Islam has led many young people to feel the need to spend time with people in the same situation or to be with others like them. A religious identification becomes an alternative to, or even a way out of, the ethnic social environment or traditionally defined practices and is in this sense an urban identity politics in a context in which the youth are rejected as German.

At the same time, this explanation largely ignores the set of meanings that the youth ascribe to their religiosity. Furthermore, it overlooks how desires to become virtuous or Good Muslims also inform their choices and acts. Most analyses of Muslim youth in Europe fail to include worship, godliness, holiness, piety, devotion, and ideas of religiousness in the understanding of the youths' activities, interests, and choices. Consequently, not only are religious desires and motivations not taken sufficiently seriously, but the role that communities play in shaping and actively forming a young person's Self is also neglected. Those who decide to form their Selves into religious subjects undertake this process in relation to Islam where socially relevant Others, including peers, family, other Muslims, and strangers, play an extensive role in the subject formation.

The dependency on religious authorities is decreasing across the Muslim world as a result of increased education and literacy, and this leads to an objectification process where Muslims reflect on what it means to be Muslim (Eickelman and Piscatori 1992). The young Muslims in Berlin emphasize and promote their Islamic identification as a conscious choice and as related to individual reflection. They voice their religious identity as a matter of personal decision, moral choice, and religious faith. As such, the youths' religious identification must be understood as individualized in terms of how they choose which religious group to identify with or not, whether or not to continue identifying with Islam, and in which form. They develop their personal networks of social relationships and peer groups through school, leisure, and virtual networks. In addition, their focus on Islamic knowledge and improving their religious behavior involves individual self-reflection and work on the Self by the individual. However, this latter process must be considered an effect of the youths' religious orientation, in which self-reflection, responsibility for the Self, and increased knowledge and skills are required to become a Good Muslim. The individualization forms parts of and is a prerequisite for the religious discourse to which they relate. Moreover, the process involves submission to a specific value system that endorses specific kinds of conformity and thus leads to a reduction of autonomy, even if this is autonomously chosen. In the search for a pure, Islam, the acquisition of correct knowledge and body comportment is alpha and omega.

My research indicates that we should modify, if not totally dismiss, the presumption that the young generation of Muslims born in European societies does not face social constraints on how to behave as Muslims. Oliver Roy (2000) contends that Muslim youth with migration backgrounds face no social constraints in their pursuits of religious rituals or practices and that individual Muslims must independently shape their religious lifestyle. I find that this argument overstates the anonymity and individualization of the Muslim subject in Europe. Roy argues that each individual has to create their own pattern of a Muslim daily life. This might be the case for religious actors who do not participate in or identify with any religious faith community or group. Where religious actors do belong to or identify with a particular faith community or group, group norms and values, which inevitably impact the behavior of group members, must be taken into account in order to understand the formation of a Muslim identity. Moreover, some of the social constraints and expectations that I have examined throughout this book also affect individual religious actors who are not directly involved in a religious organization. For example, when a young woman encounters other Muslim youth on the street, assessments are often made about the religiousness of her behavior, in particular in terms of her dress comportment, veil, and other signals of religious praxis. Overall, this study has stressed the collective content of identity formation even if the activity is, of course individualized. Thus the religious movement that I encountered in the MJD cannot be understood as individualizing but rather as individual engagement in a clearly collective project.

Religion as a Modern Urban Identity

The youths' turn to a pure or de-ethnicized Islam is not only a consequence of their high educational levels, new technology, or the general characteristics of Islam—it is also an urban phenomenon. The mobilizing opportunities that exist in the urban milieu make it possible for religious organizations to position their messages within the social antagonisms that characterize the urban landscape (Ismail 2006; Bendixsen 2011). A religious urban lifestyle makes it possible to choose between a variety of religious spaces, largely detached from one's family. At the same time, the perception that "people pick and choose what they like" (Dikomitis and Pinxten 2006, 9) because they are not bound by their neighborhood or tradition and are sheltered by the anonymity of the city ignores the continued relevance of public discourse or Othering processes that categorize people. A veiled Muslim woman is not anonymous in the city, as she is not in control of the meanings that strangers, both Muslim and non-Muslim, assign to her.

The young people I have studied hold a vision of modernity that is dissimilar to the Western models. This alternative modernity combines more typical Western ideas of modernity—such as Western-style urban clothing, an emphasis on education, taking pleasure in (Islamic) hip hop, and marking a distance from their parent's generation—with deep religiosity. The latter takes the form of a strong place for religion and practical religious observance in their daily lives, as well as pious fun and religious consumption (see also Bendixsen 2011). Their life choices call attention to the complex amalgamation young people make in leading a life that is both religiously observant and reflective of their situation as young, modern, urban individuals. European discourses suggest that this amalgamation is contradictory and see it as impossible to be both modern and religious, and in particular to be both modern and Muslim. In the European media, "Islam" and "Muslim" stand for everything that is traditional, conservative, and conventional. Salwa Ismail (2006) argues that "the view of Islamism as anti-modern rests on the assumption that modernization is associated with secularization and the retreat of religion from the public sphere. Islamism thus appears as an expression of an anti-modern strand that, for some, is inherent in the religion" (Ismail 2006, 3).[1] Instead of considering Islamism to be an anti-modern movement, Ismail refocuses our attention to its rejection of the perceived Western hegemonic ownership or meta-narrative of the modern.

Indeed, my research suggests that young Berliner Muslims do not believe that there are contradictions between consuming a modern lifestyle and being religiously diligent. Rather than seeing being modern and being religious as belonging in two different spheres, to my subjects, these activities are both integral parts of being young. Indirectly, this normalizes Islam as part of a modern way of life. Religious spaces like MJD promote ways for youth to live an active, practicing Muslim life in a Western urban society. The activities, presentations, and roles of more experienced active participants construct a specific image of how the modern, young, Muslim woman should look, behave, and consume. This image is inspired by transnational media and situated within a local space. The image creates a feeling of belonging to a group of highly literate Muslims that is characterized not only by knowledge of religious and non-religious matters, and by an awareness of social, cultural, and political issues, but also by socio-economic ambitions. This image can provide young people with a sense of direction that helps them not feel inferior to so-called modern Western youth, and by which they can contest, at least internally, the traditional and backward image of religious Muslim youth. Such practices suggest that it is possible to be modern and young while maintaining a commitment to religiously defined strictures. Furthermore, the young participants in MJD consider their chosen path to crafting the Self to be more modern than a path that remains affiliated with ethnically oriented group discourses that they view as traditional, uneducated, and misinformed.

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[1] Islamism is a contested term, and rightly so. Ismail (2006) refers to "Islamism" as both Islamist politics and re-Islamization, the latter of which relates to my usage here. Islamization is "the process whereby various domains of social life are invested with signs and symbols associated with Islamic cultural traditions. Examples of this process include the wearing of the hijab (veil), the consumption of religious literature and other religious commodities, the publicizing of symbols of religious identity, the reframing of economic activity in Islamic terms" (Ismail 2006, 2).

At this moment in history, when Islam is being socially, politically, and culturally positioned in European society, young people play an extensive, visible, and creative role in the establishment of new institutions and structures like MJD, which target young people specifically. The aims of this Muslim youth organization include raising awareness among young Muslims as to how they should behave in daily interaction with non-Muslims and how they should represent Islam in the German public sphere. The organizational approach that MJD assumes is part of a struggle to provide a social space where youth can learn or affirm that it is not contradictory to be modern and Muslim. The upward social mobility among the youth—mostly acquired through higher education and work—also entails a move from private to public life. Future research should examine how these actions and engagements affect the ongoing German public discussion about, and perceptions of, Islam in Germany.

By representing themselves as enlightened and well-informed in order to locate a modern Islam within Europe (which is contrasted to traditional, cultural, and misinformed Others), the youth are unintentionally sacrificing their parents and other fellow Muslims who embrace a traditional version of Islam. The youths' universalist approach to Islam privileges scripture over practice and traditions and promotes the idea of Islam as a single, universal tradition. According to universalists, the local form of Islam is contemporary and divergent (Ismail 2007). Scholars need to be conscious of not taking sides in this largely theological discussion. Whether or not a practice is more or less religiously correct according to theology should not be the focus of ethnographic attention. The main focus should rather be on how religious beliefs and practices shape social life, and on their socio-political implications.

Politics of the Religious Self

I have provided a description of the young women's experiences without pretending to disclose the whole truth about their lives. I have attempted to construct "new, less false stories" (Griffith 1997, 23) than those often conveyed about young Muslim women living in European societies. By engaging with the youth over an extended period, I had the privilege of understanding their aspirations, ideas, and thoughts in more detail than I would have through interviews alone. By observing their social behavior, listening to discussions among peers, and sometimes being an outsider-insider to whom they could confess their dislikes and disagreements, I was able to gain access to a deeper understanding of how the individual women form a religious Self in relation to peers and socially significant others, and how this formation is neither a one-dimensional, homogenous process nor a case of picking-and-choosing.

As noted, the process of young people identifying with Islam has long been considered a response to discrimination in European societies. Detached from their parents' form of religiosity and their parents' ethnic group, these youths are thought of as individualized and sometimes even agentive. While this approach must be commended for leaving behind the idea that religious (non-liberal) women are deluded, or brainwashed by the patriarchal structures of traditional religion, it ignores the complex social process in which this religious identification takes form and what is at stake. I agree with Abu-Lughod (2002), who argues that feminists, and social scientists in general, must recognize that individuals are called to selves in a variety of ways and that ideas of the good life are manifold. Abu-Lughod notes that "we may want justice for women, but can we accept that there might be different ideas about justice and that different women might want, or choose, different futures from what we envision as best (see Ong 1988)?" (Abu-Lughod 2002, 788).

Nevertheless, I simultaneously believe we also have a duty to investigate the social consequences of what the young women are doing. Thus, I take seriously how religious practices are activated, how they relate to broader social matrices, and how they shape everyday life. I have addressed these questions by investigating how the social and sacred power in MJD works on both individual and group levels, and how these powers affect identification with Islam and the crafting of the young women's religious Selves. Additionally, I have asked whether norms of discipline and authority are resisted or retained, and what the available scope for resistance and individual agency is. Here, we have to avoid binary distinctions between resistance and subordination and rather recognize the scope for more subtle social bargaining, tactics, and compositions.

Yet, this approach is most valuable if it can assist us in better understanding the potential restrictions religious devotion places upon the women, thus incorporating dimensions that are oppressive and liberating (see Griffith 1997). The acquisition of religious knowledge and the religious crafting of the Self seem to create opportunities to develop a positive understanding of the Self, partly liberating young women from the traditional structures of their parents and ethnic group, and thus empowering them in Germany. This kind of interaction with Islam potentially makes it more possible for the young women to identify as German. It may also bring about the opposite effect, namely solidifying gendered roles and boundaries that restrict women's room for action.

If we consider this form of devotion as a kind of "cultural resistance" (ibid., 211), we can recognize how religious submission can become a safe haven in an increasingly unstable, immoral, and individualized society. The discipline of prayer, religious moral duties, and obedience to Islamic rules and norms represents integrity, responsibility, and a meaningful direction in life within the context of the wider German society where, according to many Muslim youths' worldview, moral and family breakdown is the rule. This process includes identification with a faith community and its religious discourse, which includes opportunities and responsibilities such as representing Islam in general and a Muslim faith community in particular in the public sphere. In this space, they may feel pious or virtuous, as well as liberated and fulfilled. However, in this process the subject also remains dependent by being willing to subordinate to a collective project (see Friedman 1994, 249). As Friedman, drawing on Alberoni, argues:

> The re-identification of the subject with the larger project, while eliminating the ego-project and submerging the subject within the dictates of the group, simultaneously provides a new-found meaning in life and an ontological security. This relation is the core of movement organization. It consists in the formation of new sodalities where there was previously social disintegration and consequent individual regression. (ibid., 249)

Consequently, the process of individualization, or "the establishment of the complete self-directed person" (ibid., 216) among the youth, is not absolute, as interpersonal unities are re-established or created. Rather, the personal project is partly replaced by an engagement in a larger social project where the female Muslim subject identifies with the gaze of the Other.

Sympathy and recognition of subjective desires aside, we have to recognize the risk posed by the politics of the Self in which the youth take part. While the young people may defend religious values and ideals in relation to the hegemonic non-Muslim culture, these same values contain elements that some participants are uncomfortable with, as they feel they subordinate them as women. By seeking to advance an “ideal” image of Islam and Muslims, any failings in an individual Muslim’s public behavior can leave them exposed to critique by their peers, their Muslim neighbors, or strangers in the street. The by-now classical feminist postcolonial dilemma is reiterated: To what extent should women struggle to improve their situation inside the group, or focus on more common struggles together with male members (Yuval-Davis 1994, 414)? Again, we have to allow for differences among women and recognize that individuals are called to different subject positions, situated within a socio-cultural and historical context. “Rescuing women” is a dubious, frequently ethnocentric project (Abu-Lughod 2002). However, we must also reflect on the limitations within which individuals make their choices, and the social consequences their choices may lead to. I am grateful to Moore for putting it so clearly:

> If we imagine that individuals take up certain subject positions because of the way in which those positions provide pleasure, satisfaction, or reward on the individual or personal level, we must also recognize that such individual satisfactions have power and meaning only in the context of various institutionalized discourses and practices, that is, in the context of certain sanctioned modes of subjectivity. (Moore 1994, 65)

Moore incorporates politics and the importance of including a thick understanding of the social context within which certain desires are pursued and expressed. We have to recognize that it is never possible for individuals to completely reflect upon what they are doing with their body, or their linguistic statements, even if their intentions are clear (ibid., 52–3). The youths’ thoughts are always situated: they contemplate their world from a specific place with specific available resources.

Importantly, Western society and its media and public figures play an extensive part in bringing forth a dynamic that triggers these subject positions. Paradoxically, Western efforts to rescue the Muslim subject from oppressive strictures have the counter-productive effect of increasing social demands on women who are seeking to craft a religious Self within this context. The headscarf law restricts employment possibilities in the public sector for Muslim women who veil. More subtle constraints include how the image of Muslim women brings forth a politics of Self in which women take on a role as the incarnation of the Good Muslim Woman and which silences effective internal critiques of patriarchal aspects of Islam.

The social relationship between Islam in Germany and the non-Muslim German public is shaped by the demands Muslims make for their participation in, and formation of, the public sphere. The non-Muslim population may potentially react with suspicion or uncertainty toward a religious group that poses new demands in (and on) the public sphere. Such suspicion can easily be perpetuated by negative and sensational media coverage of Islam. The negative public assessment of Islam may well play a factor when individuals who otherwise were not particularly religious are turning to Islam as their main source of identification. The social Self of those whose religious identification is not foremost a reaction to the negative assessment of Islam is also clearly formed by these processes. Crafting a religious, Muslim Self in Berlin today is a complex process, clearly formed in relation to Islam as a religious discourse, as well as to the various local, national, and global dynamics around Islam and Muslims in Europe. The future public role of these German-educated young Muslims who seek to live out a pure Islam in German society remains to be seen.