NARRATIVES OF PIETY

An Analysis of the Formation of Moral Selves among Young Muslim Women in Denmark

Monique Hocke

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Department of Culture and Identity

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Supervisors: Birgitta Frello and Lise Paulsen Galal

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What should one do with oneself? What work should be carried out on the self? How should one “govern oneself” by performing actions in which one is oneself the object of those actions, the domain in which they are brought to bear, the instrument they employ, and the subject that acts? (Foucault 1997c, 87)
Note on the transliteration of Arabic words. I have applied the transliteration system of the International Journal for Middle Eastern Studies with the following modifications:

The consonants 'ayn and alif are marked with '. Long vowels are omitted. The diacritic signs of short vowels and emphatic sounds are omitted.
Chapter 1 Introduction

Incentives
It is Friday afternoon. I am on my way to one of the community centres of the city, where the Society of Young Muslims in Denmark (SYMD)\(^1\) has an arrangement with an invited imam from North America as guest speaker. I park the bicycle and walk into the centre, pay an entrance fee as I am not a member and walk into the room where the event is going to take place. The rows of chairs are arranged in two blocs. The female participants are seated on the right side and the male participants are seated on the left. There are 15 male participants and 36 female participants. 33 of the women wear the Islamic headscarf, the hijab. Some of them are also wearing long dresses, the jellaba, in loose materials, or they wear long skirts. While we wait for the event to start people chitchat. The guest speaker is announced by the moderator and the imam enters, takes the platform and begins reciting the al-Fatiha surah.\(^2\) Afterwards he recites the shahadah\(^3\) in English: “I bear witness to Allah and Muhammad the final messenger”. After the recitation the imam pauses and looks out on the

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1 The name of the association is anonymized.
2 Al-Fatiha (The Opening), Surah 1: In the name of God, the infinitely Compassionate and Merciful. Praise be to God, Lord of all the worlds. The Compassionate, the Merciful. Ruler on the Day of Reckoning. You alone do we worship, and You alone do we ask for help. Guide us on the straight path, The path of those who have received your grace: Not the path of those who have brought down wrath, nor of those who wonder astray.
3 The shahadah is the profession of faith.
audience. The room is completely silent; the atmosphere is full of expectation – almost vibrating. He begins his speech with a conversion narrative from the early Islamic history about Umar,4 who was an alcoholic who would behave violently towards women. He was all in all a miserable and unhappy person. But then he converted to Islam and was led to the straight path, and he became part of the followers of the Prophet Muhammad. The imam ends the narrative with the words: “this is what Islam should do for us, lead us from darkness to light, bliss”. The imam uses his voice in a very rhythmic manner and he builds up the points to a climax with a rising intonation and an intense phrasing which then evaporates into an almost resigned and uncompleted breath. His facial mimic and body gestures are minimal. He comes through as very intense and present. The audience seems moved. I am moved as well, by his performance and the atmosphere which is created in the room. The imam continues and speaks about the unity of Islam, tawhid, across national, ethnic and racial divisions and he says: “Islam gives empowerment”. He talks about choosing Islam: “Islam was my choice”, and he encourages the listeners to do “good deeds and actions”. They should engage in interreligious work and social community work. Then he specifically addresses the members of SYMD in emphasising the young generation of Muslims, and he emphasises that an Islamic conscious should be cultivated already during youth: “When you are young and vibrant this is

4 ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab was one of the first companions of the Prophet Muhammad. He converted to Islam in 616. He was appointed the second Caliph in 634 after Muhammad’s death.
when you want to do something for your dîn”. Where he previously spoke about what Islam can do for the individual he now introduces the theme of what the individual can do for his/her religion, his/her dîn. He proceeds by posing a rhetorical question: “How do you engage in a society that is not Muslim?” He answers it by encouraging the audience to do their part in establishing a positive representation of Islam, and he accentuates the importance of mingling with other groupings. (...) It is time for the question and answer session. The moderator informs the audience that it is possible to write one’s question on a piece of paper and submit it to the moderator if one does not feel comfortable standing up and posing the question. At first there are no questions, just silence. It is as if the listeners have to readjust in order to generate words themselves. Are they full of all the previous words and the intense atmosphere during the speech of the imam? The moderator breaks the silence and asks the first question. While the imam answers the question of the moderator a young women wearing the hijab and a long skirt has risen and walks along the rows of chair to hand in her slip of paper to the moderator. The moderator reads her question aloud: “How can we as Muslims take part in a society which is hateful against Muslims? I.e. the hijab- and judge situation in Denmark?” As the moderator reads the question aloud more paper slips with questions are being handed in, now from both men and women. The imam answers the

5 In general din is translated to ‘religion’.
6 At the time there was a fierce public debate on the question of Muslim female judges’ right to wear the hijab in the courtroom. The frame of the debate was a legislative proposal to prohibit judges from wearing religious symbols in Danish courtrooms. The law was adopted in May 2009.
woman’s question by referring to the Prophet Muhammad and the stories in the *Hadith* literature. He accentuates that as a Muslim one can be guided by these stories; they are real events and not stories in a fictional sense. The imam continues to point out that in spite of the Prophet being hated by the inhabitants of Medina he wanted to relate to them. He guided people in prayer even though he knew that they spoke badly of one of his wives, ‘A’ishah, because, the imam stresses, it is crucial to continuously be engaged in people even though they are not amicable towards one. The imam reaches the moral of the story by stating that the Prophet Muhammad acted with forgiveness, that forgiveness is the keyword. He concludes his answer to the question by saying: “*Muslims are kept out of mainstream society because they let them be kept off*”.

The extract above is from a lecture on Islam followed by a question and answer session in a community centre in a larger Danish city. The event was organised by the Muslim youth association SYMD. The extract is salient to exemplify significant themes in the discourse of the Islamic revival and how Islam is made relevant by young Muslims in Denmark: An authoritative past is invoked in the articulation of how Islam makes the difference to a good life; Islam is articulated as empowerment and as an individual choice; being good representatives of Islam and performing

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7 The *ahadith* (sing.: *hadith*) narrations are the transmitted records of the Prophet Muhammad’s *Sunnah*. Sunnah is the exemplary practice of the Prophet Muhammad and his companion. It is considered the second most important source for the derivation of Islamic laws after the *Qur’an* and guidance for Muslims to proper Islamic conduct.

8 The city is anonymized.
civic engagement in the Danish society is articulated as a task, even though some young Muslims experience hostility. In addition, the codes of gender interaction applied in gender segregation and sartorial modesty are equally of significance. The themes call for further exploration in investigating how young Muslims make Islam relevant in their everyday lives in a Danish context.

This study is about the moral formation of selves among some young Sunni Muslim women in Denmark who engage in revival Islam. By applying the perspective of cultivation of piety I explore how they assign meaning to being a practising Muslim in an everyday life according to Islamic standards of a virtuous life.

The Islamic revival covers various currents whose raison d’être is a call to return to the ‘pure’, ‘true’ Islam of the Qur’an, Allah’s revealed message to human beings, and the Sunnah, the practices of the Prophet Muhammad.9 In a Western context it is partly articulated with reference to and in continuation of the Islamic tradition of tajdid, revival, and islah, reform, as it took shape from the late 19th century in Muslim majority societies (Amir-Moazami & Salvatore, 2002). In the Western world, including a Danish minority context, researchers have pointed to a rising tendency among young well-educated Muslims to articulate and relate to a ‘pure’ and ‘global’ Islam (Roy, 2004; Schmidt, 2007). Islam is articulated as the primary vehicle for identity-making in transcending national, ethnic and

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9 The sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad.
racial difference. Being vocal and visible Muslims is part of the identity claims of some young Muslims in a Danish minority context.

However, visible Muslims are perceived as a challenge to secular Western liberal conceptions of democracy as well as ideas of national identity. The challenge places them at the centre of public debates (Schmidt, 2004). Visible Muslim women in particular are a politicised issue. In European controversies, the Muslim veil is often equated with women’s oppression by Islamic patriarchy. Here it is argued that veiled women are either coerced to wear the veil or develop a false consciousness (Bilge, 2010, p. 14). In a Danish context, Andreassen (2005) points to the process of ‘othering’ in the Danish media discourses in which veiled women are positioned as inferior to ethnic Danish women. The media articulate a binary hierarchy of stereotypification in which veiled Muslim women are represented as religious beyond logic; as victims suffering oppression from their culture, tradition and Muslim males. This stereotype is contrasted to a stereotype of ethnic Danish women as secular and liberated (Andreassen, pp. 163, 168, 170-172).

The motivation for this study is a puzzlement stemming from the continuous problematisation and stereotypification of visible Muslims. It raises the question of why there is a lack of interest in how practicing Muslims make sense of Islam in their everyday lives in Denmark. Based upon this puzzlement I argue for the relevance of exploring the religious identity construction of young Muslim women engaging in the Islamic revival in Denmark. I am inspired by Stuart Hall’s (1996)
conceptualisation of identity as processes of identification within a discourse producing subjectivity. By applying a constructivist perspective on identity Hall points to a concept of identity that is not essentialist but refers to:

The meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to ‘interpellate’ us, speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivity, which construct us as subjects, which can be ‘spoken’. (Hall, 1996, p. 6)

Transferring Hall’s understanding of identification to the context of this study I explore the process of identification within a religious discourse in a particular socio-historical context that produces particular Muslim subjectivities. According to Foucault discourses are “practices which form the objects of which they speak” (1989 (1969), p. 49). A discourse is a grid of relations of meaning and representations within which meaning and meaningful practices are constructed (Hall 1997). It determines the possible ways individuals can think, speak, act and know. Subjectivity is created and enacted through discourse. With this understanding of discourse and subjectivity I focus on the movements by which the subject invests (Hall, 1996, p. 6) in a subject position offered by a particular discourse. I understand this investment as the reflexive movements of subject production. The focus on the reflexive movements makes the Foucaultian perspective on subjectivation particularly relevant. In chapter 2, I unfold this study’s understanding of subjectivation, basing it upon the
later works of Michel Foucault ((1984) 1992) which deal with subjectivation as ethical self-formation.

This research interest requires that I take the religious discourse seriously in order to investigate Muslim subjectivation in the context of Islamic revival in Denmark. This context equally demands exploring how the women position themselves and are positioned as religious minority actors in a Danish secular context.

**Piety in everyday lived Islam**

The focus on the formation of moral selves entails the micro practices of everyday lived Islam. The term ‘lived Islam’ covers how Muslims do Islam and Muslimness in their everyday lives and is informed by Asad’s (1986) approach to Islam as a discursive tradition in which Muslims differently positioned in contemporary time negotiate and contribute to the discourse of what is correct Islamic belief and practice (see Chapter 2). Lived Islam entails the everyday practice of religious experts, *ulama*, as well as ‘ordinary’ Muslims. I understand ‘everyday (religious) practice’ as a modality of action (Schielke & Debevec, 2012, p. 8). The perspective of modality of action allows a focus on how everyday practice constitutes potentialities for transformation (Foucault 1992, pp. 26-28).

In a general approach I understand piety to be such a modality of action. In amplifying this understanding I draw on Mahmood’s (2003) description of piety: “(T) he quality of “being close to God”: a manner of being and acting that suffused all of one’s acts, both religious and worldly in character” (p. 847).
Acts of piety can involve bodily practices related to diet, comportment, deportment, bodily discipline and clothing (Turner, 2011, p. 292). Islamic piety has previously been associated with religious experts, ulama. In a contemporary national and global context it has also become a regular feature of ordinary Muslims (Tong & Turner, 2008, p. 42). Bryan S. Turner has termed this contemporary mainstreaming of piety “the halalisation of the everyday life” (Turner, 2011). Thus, in everyday life some Muslims are highly concerned with the distinction between the permitted and the forbidden, right and wrong, according to Islamic standards of a virtuous life in enacting the moral dimension of Islam.

In a further positioning of this study, I discuss in relation to this study the relevant research on Muslim women engaging in revival Islam in the context of Muslim majority societies as well as in a Western European minority context.

**Research on Muslim women engaging in revival Islam**

Part of the research on women’s engagement in Islamic revival currents in Muslim majority societies has given rise to a critique of being polarised between perceiving it as either practices of self-liberating resistance or as submission to the dominance of Muslim men (Christiansen, 1999, pp. 34-35). In gender research, Muslim women are a contested field of research in terms of defining if and how they can be said to manifest agency (Mahmood, pp. 2-17; Bilge, 2010, p. 14). Other research goes beyond this dichotomisation in explaining women’s engagement in the Islamic revival. It applies a Foucaultian perspective of power as a productive force and
understands the individual as inscribed in discourses which simultaneously subordinate it and create subjectivity (Ask & Tjomsland, 1998; Rasmussen, 1999; Christiansen, 1999; Mahmood, 2003, 2005; Deeb, 2006, 2009). As such, an exploration of the agency involved in the women’s engagement is central to this research. With a point of departure in the women’s practices of sartorial modesty it focuses on the how and the why Muslim women engage in practices perceived to be structured upon the individual woman’s submission to God and in extension the woman’s subordination in a patriarchal hegemony legitimated by reference to religion (Ask & Tjomsland, 1998, p. 3). In the following, I discuss the perspectives of important contributions in this field and point to the differences between two strands of research in order to situate the position of this present study.

In the first strand of research, the focus on the engagement in the Islamic revival is based on the perspective of strategies applied by the Muslim women. Two studies explore the strategies of identity politics in resistance to neo-colonial hegemony (Zuhur, 1992; Karam, 1998). One study focuses on strategies of empowerment to negotiate conditions of living in gendered everyday urban contexts (McLeod, 1991). Another focuses on women’s engagement in terms of localised strategies of modernity (Göle, 1999). These research contributions are important in understanding Muslim women as social actors engaged in the Islamic revival and in unfolding the women’s practices as various strategies of resistance, accommodation, and protest towards and subversion of various forms of domination. As such, these contributions offer insight into manifestations
of agency and the situated practices of Muslim women. I am inspired by this focus on Muslim women as social actors applying diverse strategies in negotiating positions in their social world. However, it may be argued that in these studies the dimension of religious practice and religiosity becomes subordinated to socio-politico-economic dimensions, with the risk of reducing the category of religion to a strategic (instrumental) means in Muslim women’s resistance to dominant relations of power.

In the second strand of research, the category of religion is not left residual. In applying the perspective of ethical subjectivation of the later works of Foucault (Foucault, 1984 1992), this strand explores the women’s engagement in the Islamic revival from the perspective of the cultivation of the pious self. In this, it differs from the one discussed above in making the category of religion central to the research objective. Here religion is the dominant discourse by which the women are both subjected and enact identity. Within this perspective, the concept of techniques of the self or self-practices is made relevant. One study analyses how the cultivation of piety is constituted through techniques of the self, which converges with a political gender activism in Egypt (Rasmussen, 1999). Sartorial modesty in the form of the Islamic veil, hijab, Islamic knowledge appropriation as well as the performance of da’wa\(^\text{10}\) is explored as techniques of the self. Another study analyses how techniques of the self in the form of narratives of the hijab, Islamic knowledge appropriation, the performance of da’wa and daily Islamic ‘programming’ become

\(^{10}\) “Da’wa” in its literal sense means the invitation to islam.
central in the women’s claims for recognition as Muslim authoritative actors in Morocco (Christiansen, 1999). The two studies reveal how both submission and resistance to relations of domination are at play as modalities of agency in the women’s cultivation of a pious self. They further explore the relational aspect of pious subjectivity with a focus on how it relates to gender activism in Muslim majority societies. Other studies amplify the focus on submission in exploring how acts of inhabiting religious norms can be perceived as agency (Mahmood, 2001, 2005; Deeb, 2006, 2009). A major contribution is the work of Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety – The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (2005). In her ethnographic study on women’s piety movement in Egypt, she undertakes an amplified exploration of how the agentival capacity inherent in processes of pious subjectivation is unfolded in the very practices of inhabiting religious norms and becoming a pious subject. Mahmood argues that practices of piety are a form of agency in and of themselves which do not have resistance to existing norms as their objective. On the contrary, they reveal the agency involved in acts of inhabiting existing religious norms. Similarly to the two studies mentioned above, Mahmood points to the women’s appropriation of Islamic knowledge, the performance of da’wa, and sartorial modesty as techniques of the self. In extension, she argues that endurance and suffering are techniques of the self in the women’s inhabitation of religious norms and becoming pious subjects. As such they are perceived as embodied acts constituting modalities of agency in which transformations of the self are realised. Hence, the latter strand of research
on women’s engagement in the Islamic revival in Muslim majority societies represents research interests either exploring both submission and resistance or an amplified focus on submission as modalities of agency inherent in pious subjectivation.

The present study inscribes itself in this latter strand of research. The aim is to explore both submission and resistance as modalities of agency situationally and contextually dependent. However, the context and situatedness of this study are focused upon the pious subjectivation of young Muslim women engaged in the Islamic revival in a Danish minority context forming part of a wider Scandinavian, Western European context. This context makes the application of a minority perspective relevant. I understand a minority as defined by the asymmetrical relations of power to the majority. A minority is relationally defined through the hegemonic meaning assignment of difference to the minority by the majority (Krag, 2007). In a Danish context, the women of this study are religious and ethnic minority actors by being second-generation Muslims (except for one woman) of Middle Eastern and North African origin. How is pious subjectivation unfolded in such a context? In the following, I discuss recent research on Muslim women in a European context and further situate this study in a Danish context.

**Research on Muslim women in Europe and in Denmark**

With the changed European religious landscape, Muslim women’s engagement in the Islamic revival in a secular Western European minority
context has become a field of research. Several studies focus on reproduction as well as reconfigurations of Islamic practice in this context. One study (Roald, 2001) explores how Arab Muslim intellectual elites in Great Britain, France and Scandinavia interpret Islamic sources that regulate gendered social organisation. It points out that interaction with the majority society in which they live has an important impact on reconfigured interpretations of these Islamic sources. Other studies, inspired by the one by Mahmood, address the question of how Muslim women appropriate and disseminate Islamic knowledge as a self-practice in a secular European context. One comparative study based on field research in France and Germany explores the relation of religious authority in the Muslim communities and the women’s self-practices. It points out that religious authority is negotiated by the women through shifts in the accumulation and transmission of Islamic knowledge, but not transformed in terms of the women’s appropriation of religious authority in the Muslim communities (Amir-Moazami & Jouili, 2006). Finally, a study (Jouili, 2008) on pious micro practices of Muslim women in Germany demonstrates how the women constitute their everyday lives as worship that is absorbed into a broader Muslim social logic, expressed by feelings of individual responsibility for the welfare of the umma, the world community of Muslims.

In a Scandinavian context, important contributions to research on the religious identity construction among Muslim youth are the ones of the anthropologists Christine M. Jacobsen (2011a, 2011b) and Pia Minganti (2007, 2012). The ethnographic studies of Jacobsen explore religious
identity among male and female Muslim youth in Norway, and Minganti explores female religious identity in Sweden. One focus among others in the studies is the transformation of everyday life into an Islamic worship through techniques of the self in the form of appropriation and dissemination of Islamic knowledge as well as da‘wa. The studies equally address the intersection of an Islamic ethics and a secular liberal ethics.

Common to the studies on Muslim women in a European context is an explicit focus on the social collective dimension. All the studies point to the cultivation of individual responsibility as a crucial aspect of becoming a pious Muslim woman. Here individual responsibility is related to the Muslim minority community (and in extension to the ummah) or/and to the majority society. The studies inscribe the Muslim women in relations of responsibility primarily to communities. Within this perspective, pious subjectivation remains a process whose objective is uniquely related to the social dimension.

However, in religious traditions, the anthropologist Talal Asad has pointed out that the formation of individual ethics can be viewed as an unresolved tension between a social and an eschatological dimension. Within this perspective, the cultivation of individual responsibility equally relates to the eschatological dimension in which the individual stands alone on the Day of Judgement to account for his or hers life (Asad, 2003, p. 91). By applying this approach, the ‘other side’ of responsibility can be perceived as forming the individual’s relationship with God. The objective (teleology) of the formation of individual ethics is crucial in terms of
defining the particular subject of such a formation (Foucault, (1984) 1992). In the context of Islamic piety, the objective is pleasing Allah in order to obtain salvation in the hereafter.

In studying pious subjectivation, I argue for the relevance of a focus on how the women relate to the eschatological in order to go beyond inscribing the cultivation of individual responsibility primarily in relations to collectives. In this study, then, I explore how becoming a pious subject relates to both the social and the eschatological dimension. This perspective yields insight into how the women relate to God in their everyday lives.

Finally, in a Danish context, research on young Muslim women has been conducted from the perspective of ethnic and intergenerational relations (Mørck, 1998). Other studies have applied the perspective of integration. One study explores how Islam constitutes a barrier to the process of integration of Muslim women in Danish society (Pristed, 2010). Another explores how Islam is conducive to the process of integration of Muslim women in Danish society (Christiansen, 2003). I acknowledge the relevance of including the perspectives of ethnicity, intergenerational struggles and integration in research on young Muslim women in Denmark. Nevertheless, these perspectives are not addressed in the study unless they are made relevant in the data.

Other studies explore practising Muslims’ identity-making. One study (Johansen, 2002) explores the reformulation of Islam among young consciously practising Muslims in the perspective of Euro-Islam. Others
address the issue by shedding light on the diversity of Muslim ‘voices’ on faith and practice in Denmark (Galal & Liengaard, 2003). Two studies focus on Muslim youth associations. One is a mapping of the organisational field and how the organisations articulate different understandings of Islam in a Danish and a transnational context (Schmidt, 2007). Another studies the interrelation of Muslim identity-making, religious community-building of Muslim youth associations and modes of belonging (Khawaja, 2010).

However, this study’s focus on Muslim women’s identification with the moral dimension of Islam in the formation of pious selves in Denmark has not previously been explored.

**Research question**

So far I have identified the overall problematic of this study. I have positioned it in relation to existing research on Muslim women engaging in the Islamic revival in Muslim majority societies and in European minority contexts. Further, I have outlined the existing research on Muslim identity-making in a Danish context. The purpose has been to unfold the research upon which I build this study as well as to orient it in the direction that needs further exploration. In pursuing this direction, I apply an interdisciplinary approach of anthropology of religion, history of ideas, identity studies and social (discursive) psychology in a constructivist, poststructuralist frame. The research question is as follows:
How do young Muslim women engaging in the Islamic revival invest the moral dimension of Islam in their everyday lives in Denmark?

Structure of the thesis
Apart from Chapter 1, the thesis consists of 8 chapters divided into two parts. The first part consists of 3 chapters. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical perspectives centred on a constructivist and poststructuralist approach to religion and the constitution of the (religious) ethical subject. In extension, the chapter presents theoretical perspectives derived from the two approaches and finally perspectives particular to the empirical field of research. Chapter 3 presents the method applied in the production of data as well as reflexions on the knowledge generated by observations and individual interviews. Chapter 4 unfolds the strategy of analysis. It presents the meta-perspective on narratives of the self which ties in with the theoretical one on the constitution of the ethical subject. In extension, it unfolds the operationalisation of a narrative approach to the interview data. Finally, it presents the structure and questions of analysis in reading for ethics in order to situate pious subjectivation. The second part of the thesis comprises the chapters of analysis. The 5 chapters are analyses of key narratives of piety. In Chapter 5, I analyse the interrelation of two aspects of self-formation: The mode of subjectivation which connects with the techniques of the self. This chapter functions as an introductory chapter on the self-forming work that the women perform in their everyday lives in becoming pious Muslims. In Chapter 6, I analyse the
teleology of the pious subjectivation. I analyse narratives of merit work with a particular focus on the women’s articulation of individual responsibility related to a collective as well as an eschatological dimension.

In Chapter 7, I analyse narratives of endurance resistance in probing the situated agency that the women perform. I analyse the narratives with a particular focus on the relational aspects: How the women negotiate piety in relations of dominance or claims to dominance. In Chapter 8, I explore if different configurations of subjectivities intersect in pious subjectivation. Here I analyse if and how an Islamic ethics of piety insects with a (neo)liberal ethics of individual authenticity. Chapter 9 presents the conclusion of the thesis.
Chapter 2 Theoretical Perspectives

In this chapter I present the meta-theoretical perspectives centred on a constructivist and poststructuralist approach to religion and the constitution of the (religious) ethical subject. In extension, I present theoretical perspectives derived from the two and finally perspectives particular to the empiric field of research.

Islam as a discursive tradition

Islam (...) should be approached as a discursive tradition that connects variously with the formation of moral selves, the manipulation of populations (or resistance to it), and the production of appropriate knowledges. (Asad, 1986, p. 7)

The citation above is from the now classic text The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam (1986) by the anthropologist Talal Asad. It has had a major impact on studies of Islam in reconceptualising Islam as an analytical category which encompasses socio-historical embodied experience (Scott & Hirschkind, 2006). Asad’s text can be seen in continuation of the seminal work of Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978) and the critique of essentialising representations of Islam in a Western perspective, where Islam is constructed as a monolithic and static entity as opposed to the West. Talal Asad’s appeal to conceptualise Islam as a discursive tradition is exactly an attempt to avoid the problem of reification and essentialisation of Islam.
In the perspective of the present study, Asad’s concept of Islam as a discursive tradition is relevant, as he applies a specific understanding of time and power. Asad integrates Alistair McIntyre’s formulation of a living tradition, where the present is comprehended as an intersection of the past and the future\(^\text{11}\) with Michel Foucault’s understanding of power as relations of strength embedded in particular socio-historical contexts. In doing so, Asad inscribes the dimension of historical time within which the movements of continuity and change are at play, perceiving them as relations of power. In this perspective, tradition is not merely a replication of the past, and by applying the discursive perspective negotiation takes the fore. I find this approach particularly relevant because Asad outlines the social construction and manifestation of tradition as relations of power. As a point of departure, Asad views Islam as a discursive tradition that includes and relates itself to the founding texts of the Qur’an and the Hadith (Asad, 1986, p. 14), and he amplifies the concept of tradition:

A tradition consists essentially of discourses that seek to instruct practitioners regarding the correct practice that, precisely because it is established has a history. The discourses relate conceptually to a past (when the practice was instituted, and from which the knowledge of its point and proper performance has been transmitted) and a future (how the point of that practice can best be secured in the short or the long term, or why it should be modified or abandoned), through a present (how it is linked to other practices, institutions, and social conditions). An Islamic discursive tradition is simply a tradition of Muslim discourse that addresses itself to conceptions of the Islamic

\(^{11}\) “Living traditions, just because they continue a not-yet-completed narrative, confront a future whose determinate and determinable character, so far as it possesses any, derives from the past” (McIntyre, (1981) 2011, p. 258).
Asad’s constructivist approach focuses on tradition as the production of authoritative discourses. Islam becomes those discourses and practices of argumentation that are conceptually articulated in relation to an exemplary past, and which are dependent on an interpretative engagement with foundational texts, by which practitioners of a tradition distinguish correct actions from incorrect. This conceptualisation of Islam is equally formulated as a critique of other contributions to the anthropology of Islam. Asad argues against conceptualising Islam (and a universalistic definition of religion) as a system of symbols formulated by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1971, 1973). He equally argues against the anthropologist Ernest Gellner’s (1981) perception of Islam as a dual structure: an orthodox ‘Great Tradition’ that applies to an urban scripturalist Islam form and a nonorthodox ‘Little Tradition’ that applies to a rural peasant/tribe Islam form. The two approaches, Asad contends, reduce Islam either to meaning or to social structure. As such, the former approach leaves out the perspective of power, and the systemic character of the structures in the latter makes social change impossible. In Asad’s conceptualisation, Islam becomes a socio-historical contextualised phenomenon which is negotiated by social actors in relations of power.

The definition of Islam as a discursive tradition is a quite inclusive one. It could be argued that according to this definition everything can be Islamic. However, Asad contends, not everything Muslims do or say
belongs to an Islamic discursive tradition. The vital criterion is: “the practitioner’s conceptions of what is apt performance and of how the past is related to the present practice” (Asad, 1986, p. 15). The constituent elements of the Islamic tradition include the Qur’an and Hadith, comments made thereon and the conduct of exemplary figures of the first believing community. According to Asad, the inscription in a tradition is through individuals, groups and institutions relating the present practice to a specific authoritative past. As such, reflection upon the past becomes a constitutive condition for the understanding and reformulation of the present and the future. In this understanding of a living tradition, the past becomes the point of reference in which the adherents of the tradition construct subjectivity.

In elaborating the definition of Islamic practice, Asad emphasises the pedagogical\textsuperscript{12} dimension of a tradition: “A practice is Islamic because it is authorized by the discursive tradition of Islam, and so it is taught to Muslims – whether by an ‘alim, a khatib, a sufi shaykh, or an untutored parent” (Asad, 1986, p. 15). Hence, the engagement with the founding texts of Islam is not delimited to a scholarly activity reserved for the ulama. It is equally an activity of ‘ordinary’ Muslims in their everyday lives, by which they position themselves in the discursive field of relations of power that produces ‘truth’: ‘correct’ practice as opposed to ‘incorrect’ practice. Here, Asad draws on Michel Foucault’s understanding of ‘truth’ as the interplay

\textsuperscript{12} He uses of the term ‘taught’. Asad finds grounds in the etymology of ‘doctrine’, which means teaching, and he contends that the orthodox doctrine denotes the correct process of teaching and the correct statement of what is to be learned (Asad, 1986, p. 15).
of discourse and power. Mahmood (2005, pp. 114-115) aptly suggests that Asad’s formulation of Islam as a discursive tradition can be comprehended as a particular modality of what Foucault terms a discursive formation.13

Asad’s perspective on Islam is applied in my study for two reasons. The first one is the emphasis on Islam as a contextualised discursive practice in which the founding texts gain meaning and in which ‘truth’ is produced. Secondly, this context is one in which differently positioned Muslims negotiate and contribute to the discourse of what is correct Islamic belief and practice. As such, Islam becomes a discursive tradition in which the production of ‘truth’ not only engages Islamic scholars, but ‘ordinary’ Muslims as well. This approach enables me to explore relations of continuity and change and the question of how processes of individualisation and authorisation tie in with the formation of moral selves. Asad suggests a genealogical approach in studying Islam in order “to understand the historical conditions that enable the production and maintenance of specific discursive traditions, or their transformation” (Asad, 1986, p. 17). However, in distinction to a genealogical approach, I apply a narrative approach (see Chapter 4). This approach is relevant in terms of analysing the micro practices of the technologies of the self in the ‘becoming’ pious Muslim women. In extension, it allows me to contextualise the technologies of everyday life and probe the agency

13 “(W)henever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can find a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functioning, transformations), we will say (...) that we are dealing with a discursive formation” (Foucault, (1969) 1989), p. 41, italic in original text).
involved. Nevertheless, Asad’s conceptualisation of Islam as a discursive tradition is a relevant theoretical perspective in exploring how the women’s pious subjectivation in Denmark is related to a wider Muslim discourse, as well as how the socio-historical Danish context conditions the women’s engagement with the discursive tradition.

The teaching and appropriation of ‘correct’ Islamic belief and practice can be perceived as Muslims’ relation to power in the form of orthodoxy. The domain of orthodoxy is:

(N)ot a mere body of opinion but a distinctive relationship – a relationship of power. Wherever Muslims have the power to regulate, uphold, require, or adjust correct practice, and to condemn, exclude, undermine, or replace incorrect ones, there is the domain of orthodoxy (…) Argument and conflict over the form and significance of practices are therefore a natural part of any Islamic tradition.

(Asad, 1986, pp. 15-16)

Asad suggests a focus on the social production of orthodoxy rather than conceptualising orthodoxy in terms of theological positions. Orthodoxy can be perceived as the effect of relationships of power and the authorisation of certain discourses, while others are denied: “(religious) power creates (religious) truth” (Asad, 1993, p. 33). Hence a practice is truly Islamic because it is connected to ‘truth’ itself. If orthodoxy is perceived as the effect of power, and when engagement with the discursive tradition of Islam encompasses Muslims differently positioned, then the perspective of Islam as a discursive tradition is relevant to apply in analysing how the Muslim women of this study enact the moral
dimension of a living tradition and how Islam is configured, reconfigured and made relevant by the women. The perspective enables me to ask: What are the women’s conceptions of what is proper performance, and how do they relate the past to present practices? How does tradition ‘breathe’ at this micro level, and which subjectivities are constituted in this ‘breathing’?

As a social production, orthodoxy is negotiated through contestation, arguments and conflicts. Relationships of power and resistance point to heterogeneity in traditional practices, but it does not indicate an absence of an Islamic tradition. Asad asserts that the aspiration to ‘coherence’ is a fundamental element in all discursive traditions, therefore research on Islam should seek to understand “the efforts of practitioners to achieve coherence” (Asad, 1986, pp. 16-17). It could be argued that the focus on coherence risks yielding static representations in research on Islam. Such is the critique of the Finnish anthropologist Samuli Schielke (2007). He argues that the concept of discursive tradition is valuable in:

explaining the persistence of certain topics and forms of argumentation in Islamic piety and scholarship, as well as in understanding the authoritative power of a particular ‘orthodox’ point of view in a given historical setting, it is not very useful when it comes to accounting for change (…). Schielke (2007, pp. 351-52)

Traditions, Schielke argues, are often invented to a significant degree. Therefore research should focus on the dynamics of invention in order to understand how traditions change. The focus on tradition as discursive formations, he contends, tends to exactly blur these dynamics (Schielke,
However, Asad specifically emphasises that the ‘inventedness’ of a tradition forms part of the way in which instituted practices are oriented to a conception of the past (Asad, 1986, p. 15). As such, one might say that a focus on the dynamics of invention, which Schielke calls for, is possible by a focus on how a past is related in a present’s negotiations of Islam, as Asad points out. An appeal to understanding the aspiration to coherence of a discursive tradition is to take the effect of discourse seriously, and as Mahmood rightfully contends it is: “to take a necessary step towards explaining the force that a discourse demands” (Mahmood, 2005, p. 17). The citation introducing this section calls for an approach with a focus on how Islam connects to the formation of moral selves. This focus entails an amplification of practitioners’ aspirations to achieve coherence. In his later works (1993, 2006), Asad has developed this perspective. Here he elaborates on the embodied character of authorising discourses in terms of how power operates in religious practices on the level of the individual (1993, 2006). In this perspective, Asad formulates authority, or authoritative relationships, as an “inner binding” (2006, p. 212). Authoritative discourses operate not only on the semantic level, in the sense of the meaning or reason of a practice, but are equally rooted in a somatic complex (hearing-feeling-seeing-remembering) which binds “persons to one another”, and to discourse as a “physical process” (2006, p. 213). Asad terms this form of ‘binding’ an encounter, in which the subject connects to ‘truth’ and begins a process of transformation that “subjects her to its authority and alters her” (2006, p. 213). Hence in terms of power, authorising discourse operates through the actual reasoning and
arguments that authorise a practice, the embodied recognition of authority and finally through the transmission and enactment of those practices. With this understanding, recognition of authority produces embodied practices that have been discursively constructed and organised. In the perspective of the present study, I draw on Asad’s approach in order to investigate how the women relate to and recognise the Islamic authorising discourse in a Danish context. The question touches upon ‘the encounter’. The way in which the encounter ‘opens’ to a process of transformation into a particular subject makes the Foucaultian perspective on the formation of the ethical subject relevant to apply. In what follows I outline his conceptualisation of ethical subjectivation.

**Religious identification: Formation of the self**

I am more and more interested in the interaction between oneself and others, and in the technologies of individual domination, in the mode of action that an individual exercises upon himself by means of the technologies of the self. (Foucault, 1997, p. 225)

Within contemporary research on religious identity there is an enhanced focus on how the autonomous individual in terms of religious identification is the outcome of processes of individualisation. It is based upon a conceptualisation of late modernity as de-traditionalised, by which the individual is set free in processes of self-reflexivity (e.g. Giddens, 1996). It argues that ascribed identities and traditional beliefs are losing their appeal in terms of belongingness (Davie, 1990). In a Muslim minority context, some studies assert that construction of religious identity becomes
a matter of the individual’s autonomous assessment in choosing what to believe and how to implement this belief in the practice of everyday life (Cesari, 2004; Jeldtoft, 2011). In this perspective, religious identity is perceived in terms of ‘bricolage’. It could be argued that this approach risks leaving out the conditioning possibilities in social actors’ religious identification as well as how the negotiations of a present relate to a past in a discursive tradition. Taking the effect of (religious) discourse seriously, I argue for applying the Foucaultian concept of self-formation as a perspective in exploring religious identification. This perspective acknowledges that ‘becoming’ a particular subject is only possible through the conditioning possibilities established by relations of power, and that the reflexivity of such becoming is framed within these conditioning possibilities. It enables me to explore how Islam connects with the formation of moral selves in a particular socio-historical context, or formulated in the frame of this study: How the women enact the moral dimension of Islam in ‘becoming’ pious Muslim women in Denmark.

It might be argued that a Foucaultian perspective on self-formation is not relevant in an Islamic context, as it deals with the formation of the self in the context of Medieval Christianity and the era of late Greek and Roman antiquity. However, I find support in the relevance of this perspective, as it is based on the premise that techniques of the self can be found in all cultures in different forms (Foucault, 1997, p. 277). Furthermore, as discussed above in Chapter 1, research on Islamic piety in contexts of Muslim majority societies (Egypt, Morocco) and in Muslim minority contexts (France, Germany, Sweden and Norway) has demonstrated that
this approach is applicable in exploring religious subjectivation in the contemporary Islamic revival (Rasmussen, 1999; Christiansen, 1999; Mahmood, 2005; Amir-Moazami & Jouili, 2006; Jouili, 2008; Minganti, 2007; Jacobsen, 2011a, b).

It is in his later works that Michel Foucault develops the idea of the formation of the ethical subject (Foucault, 1997/1984). Relevant for my study are the conceptualisation of power as reflexive and the relation of this form of power with self-practices in the constitution of a particular subject. The key concept is ‘technologies of the self’, the means by which the individual develops self-knowledge. I draw on this concept in particular in exploring the women’s pious subjectivation in a Danish context. Technologies of the self are part of a complex of technologies covering the various ways humans develop knowledge about themselves.¹⁴ As such, these technologies entail “certain modes of training and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of acquiring skills but also in the sense of acquiring certain attitudes” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). In a preliminary outline, Foucault defines technologies of the self as the means which:

permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in

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¹⁴ Foucault outlines four major types of technologies: 1. Technologies of production, which permit human beings to produce, transform or manipulate things. 2. Technologies of sign systems, which permit human beings to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification. 3. Technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivising of the subject. 4. Technologies of the self (see citation in main text).
order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (Foucault, 1988, p. 18)

Technologies of the self connect to the domain of morality. Foucault distinguishes between different levels or comprehensions of morality. In the following I outline these distinctions in order to clarify the perspective I apply in exploring the process of becoming pious Muslim women in a Danish context. One comprehension of morality, Foucault asserts, is a “moral code” understood as “a rule of conduct”. It is “a set of values and rules of action that are recommended to individuals through the intermediary of various prescriptive agencies such as the family (in one of its roles), educational institutions, churches, and so forth” (Foucault, 1992 (1984), p. 25). A second comprehension of morality is “the morality of behaviors”. Here morality has to do with the relationship of the moral code and individuals or groups, and how they act in accordance or not with the code (Foucault, 1992 (1984), p. 25). The third comprehension of morality is “the manner in which one ought to ‘conduct oneself’” (Foucault, 1992 (1984), p. 26) and Foucault elaborates:

(T)he manner in which one ought to form oneself as an ethical subject acting in reference to the prescriptive elements that make up the code. Given a code of actions, and with regard to a specific type of actions (which can be defined by their degree of conformity with or divergence from the code), there are different ways for the acting individual to operate, not just as an agent, but as an ethical subject of this action. (Foucault, 1992 (1984), p. 26)
With this comprehension, Foucault makes a distinction between “code-oriented” moralities and “ethics-oriented” moralities (Foucault, 1992 (1984), p. 30). The former is related to the moral rules and moral behaviours. The latter is related to “forms of moral subjectivation and of the practices of self that are meant to ensure it” (Foucault, 1992 (1984), p. 29). Ethics is the manner in which individuals constitute themselves as subjects of their actions. In this perspective, ethics is perceived as self-formation, as a technology of the self. Ethics is oriented towards:

What is required of the individual in the relationship he has with himself, in his different actions, thoughts, and feeling as he endeavors to form himself as an ethical subject. Here the emphasis is on the forms of relations with the self, on the methods and techniques by which he works them out, on the exercises by which he makes of himself an object to be known, and on the practices that transform his own mode of being. (Foucault, 1992 (1984), p. 30)

Ethics is self-practices: Practices, techniques and discourses by which an individual transforms itself in order to achieve a certain becoming: happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality. As self-relation (rapport à soi), it determines the way in which the individual constitutes itself as a moral subject of its own actions (Foucault, 1997, p. 263). Ethics equally entails the relation of self and others in the social interaction. The relation forms part of the individual’s aspiration to transform him/herself by self-conduct, as well as in social interaction in terms of ‘conducting the
conduct of others’

In perceiving ethics as practice, Foucault unfolds ethics as concrete activities designed to obtain a particular life modus (Foucault, 1992 (1984), pp. 25-30). Mahmood calls attention to this emphasis on ethics as local and particular. It enables an understanding of the technologies of the self as embedded in everyday life (Mahmood, 2005, pp. 28-29). In terms of this study, the situatedness of ethics is relevant in exploring how the young Muslim women enact local and particular technologies of the self in their everyday lives in the process of becoming pious Muslim women in Denmark. In exploring the dynamics of self-technologies further, I will address the relationship of power and the subject in the following.

As modes of evaluating and acting upon oneself, ethics is the means by which individuals come to examine, reflect, decipher and act upon themselves in relation to the permitted and the forbidden, the true and the false, the desirable and the undesirable (Foucault, 1994 (1984), p. 29, 32). In this way, subjectivation can be perceived as a form of power enacted through moral codes which hail a subject to constitute itself in resonance with the prescriptions. However, the Foucaultian understanding of the subject is not based upon an understanding of the autonomous individual who creates itself out of a free will. The subject is formed within the

15 In comparing the study of techniques of the self with the study of other techniques Foucault states: “…the techniques of the self do not require the same material apparatus as the production of objects; therefore they are often invisible techniques. Second, they are frequently linked to the techniques for the direction of others. For example, if we take the educational institutions, we realize that one is managing others and teaching them to manage themselves” (Foucault, 1997a, p. 277).
historically situated practices and moral injunctions which constitute the particular modes of subjectivation:

If I am (...) interested in how the subject actively constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something invented by the individual himself. They are models which he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society and his social group. (Foucault, 1997a, p. 291)

Subjectivation, then, is about how the subject constitutes itself through practices of the self. Here Foucault’s conceptualisation of power relations and the subject (Foucault, 1976) 1990, 1983, 1984a) becomes relevant in two ways. Firstly, the subject does not precede the operations of power. Particular subjectivities do not emanate from an undominated self, but through specific practices of subjectivation that subordinate the individual. “There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to” (Foucault, 1983b, p. 212). Thus subjectivation is a relation of subordination. Secondly, the relation of subordination is a relation of power. Relations of power exist only in action and are tied to action.

(W)hat defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future. (Foucault, 1983b, p. 220)
Power is a productive force (Foucault, (1976) 1990), and the subject is constituted by this form of power relationship. The double binding of subjectivation is that the processes and conditions that ensure the subject’s subordination are also the means by which the subject becomes a self. This relation is aptly condensed by Judith Butler: “There is no making of oneself (poiesis) outside of a mode of subjectivation (assujettisement) and, hence, no self-making outside the norms that orchestrate the possible forms that a subject may take” (Butler, 2005, p. 17). This perspective on subjectivation implies a specific understanding of agency. Action and the capacity to act are constituted and enacted in the very relations of subordination in which a subject comes into being. The perspective enables me to approach pious subjectivation as a mode of action upon oneself, while acknowledging that this action is unfolded through the norms that condition it. In a further development of the approach I apply in exploring the women’s pious subjectivation below, I outline the four major aspects of the Foucaultian perspective on ethics or the relationship to oneself and the questions of analysis that Foucault relates to them.

The first aspect of the relationship to oneself is the “determination of the ethical substance”. It concerns the substance of an ethical project in terms of the way in which an individual constitutes a part of him/herself as the prime material of moral conduct (Foucault, 1992 (1984), p. 26). Foucault formulates the question of analysis related to this aspect in the following manner: “(W)hich is the aspect or the part of myself or my behaviour which is concerned with moral conduct?” (Foucault, 1997a, p. 263). He exemplifies with ‘conjugal fidelity’. ‘Conjugal fidelity’ can be constituted as the
substance of ethics either by way of strict observance of interdictions and obligations in acts and/or by way of the inner mastery of desire (Foucault, 1992 (1984), p. 26). Hence, the ethical substance relates to both the exterior and the interior. It refers to the part of oneself or one’s behaviour which the individual takes up for ethical judgement through analysis and reflection and works upon (Foucault, 1997a, p. 263). In the context of this study, piety, closeness to God, is the ethical substance. In translating the question of analysis of the first aspect of ethics to this study, I ask: In what ways are the women to constitute a part of themselves as prime material for their moral conduct? Do they make a hierarchical distinction of the exterior, in terms of observance of acts of prohibited and obligatory acts, and the interior, in terms of the mastery of inner disposition, in the constitution of the prime material?

The second aspect of ethics is the “mode of subjectivation” (le mode d’assujettissement). It concerns the way individuals are invited or incited to recognise their moral obligations (Foucault, 1997a, p. 263). The question of analysis related to this aspect is how the individual establishes his/her relation to the rule and recognises him/herself as obliged to put it into practice. It can for example be by the social group, by tradition (Foucault, 1992 (1984), p. 27). It can be divine law, natural law, cosmological order or rational rule (Foucault, 1997a, p. 264). In the context of this study, the women are incited to recognise their moral obligations by the authoritative discourse of the Qur’ān and the Hadith. The form of authority is the divine plan given to humans in the Qur’ān and the Hadith, and from which the moral codes that a Muslim is obliged to follow
emanate. Mahmood calls attention to the fact that mode of subjectivation not only concerns the kinds of authority through which the subject comes to recognise the truth about him or herself. It equally concerns the relationship that the subject establishes between itself and those who are in authority (Mahmood, 2005, p. 30). In translating the second aspect of ethics to my study, I explore how the young Muslim women recognise and appropriate the authoritative discourse of Islam. Furthermore, as mode of subjectivation equally concerns the relationship between the subject and those in (religious) authority, I explore how the women relate to religious authority and consider if the women claim religious authority themselves.

The third aspect of ethics is the self-forming activity. It concerns the activity, the work, that the individual performs upon itself: "not only in order to bring one's conduct into compliance with a given rule, but to attempt to transform oneself into the ethical subject of one's behaviour" (Foucault, 1992 (1984), p. 27). Hence this aspect concerns the way in which the individual works on itself in aspiring to transform itself into a particular subject (Foucault, 1997a, p. 265). Foucault terms this third aspect 'asceticism'. He perceives of the term in a very broad sense, meaning the kind of techniques the individual applies in order to recognise itself and in constituting itself as a subject of ethics (Foucault, 1983, p. 241). In transferring this third aspect to the present study, I explore the self-forming work in which the women engage in order to become pious Muslim women. I focus on the particular self-techniques that the women apply and the complimentary movements of an exterior and an interior in constituting pious
subjectivity. An example is the practice of sartorial modesty as a self-technique. Here I explore if the donning of the hijab can be perceived as simultaneity of an exterior act that works upon the interior and an interior act that works upon the exterior in the constitution of pious subjectivity. Further, self-techniques are socially embedded. Foucault does not elaborate the role of others in his outline of the question of analysis related to the third aspect of ethics (Foucault, 1992 (1984), p. 27; 1997a, p. 265; 1983, p. 241). However, he emphasises the social dimension in his conceptualisation of technologies of the self: “(they) permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others certain numbers of operations (…)” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). In probing the social relational aspect of self-techniques, I focus on the ways others become enrolled in the women’s pious subjectivation. The enrolling can either be by way of others ‘helping’ the women to enact certain operations on themselves or by way of the women aspiring to manage the conduct of others, conducting the conduct of others.

The fourth and last aspect of ethics is the teleology or the objective of self-formation. This aspect concerns the kind of being towards which the individual aspires when behaving in a moral way. According to Foucault, moral actions are not singular acts, but are unfolded within the frames of a particular authoritative model which commits the individual to a mode of being characteristic of the ethical subject (Foucault, 1992 (1984), p. 28). The individual can aspire to different kinds of being when behaving in a moral way. It can be:
(...) a moral conduct that manifests a sudden and radical detachment vis-à-vis the world; it may strain toward a perfect tranquillity of soul, a total insensitivity to the agitation of the passions, or toward a purification that will ensure salvation after death and blissful immortality. (Foucault, 1992 (1984), p. 28)

Translated to this study, moral actions are unfolded within the frames of the Islamic authoritative discourses. Living in compliance with Islamic standards of a virtuous life is the individual Muslim’s aspiration to Allah’s satisfaction, and thereby salvation in the afterlife. The authoritative model of piety is the exemplary model of the Prophet Muhammad, who is emulated in order to cultivate a pious self and thus aspire for the satisfaction of Allah. This objective of pious subjectivation touches upon the eschatological dimension in the Islamic discursive tradition. In Chapter 1, I argued for the relevance of a perspective on this dimension. A focus on the ways that pious subjectivation relates to the eschatological dimension goes beyond solely inscribing pious subjectivation to collective relationships. In order to explore how the women relate to the eschatological dimension and relate piety and salvation in their everyday lives, I ask: What kind of relationship with God do the women aspire for in their everyday lives?

**Positioning**

In the citation introducing the section above a focus on the interaction between oneself and others is emphasised. In order to operationalise the relational aspect of subjectivation in everyday life, I draw on the concept
of positioning by the social psychologists Harré and van Lagenhove (1999), Davies and Harré (1990; 1999). ‘Positioning’ can be viewed as a further development of the Foucaultian perspective on subjectivation. The concept enables a focus on how an individual in particular contexts of interaction with others negotiate a position offered by discourses that condition the interaction by defining possible subject positions. In this perspective on discursive processes the subject is produced by the subject positions defined by a discourse as well as in the negotiations of a position in the interaction with others (Davies and Harré 1990). Thus positioning entails the aspect of positioning oneself and being positioned by others (Davies and Harré 1999). I apply the concept of positioning in order to investigate the ways in which the women in their everyday lives negotiate piety in inter-Muslim relationships and relationships with the majority as well as in the interaction of the interview.

**Situated agency: Resistance and endurance**

The Foucaultian perspective on self-formation enables a comprehension of agency as created and enacted in relations of subordination. In the following I elaborate the perspective of agency that I apply in order to investigate the modes of action involved in the women’s pious subjectivation. In a Western humanist conception, agency is articulated as resistance to relations of domination, with the objective of liberation. Further, in a Western secular-liberal feminist perspective, agency is articulated as resistance through performative acts of subversion against
the domination of patriarchal heteronormativity (Butler, (1990) 2006). In a critique of this perspective, Mahmood argues for detaching the notion of agency from the goals of progressive politics (Mahmood, 2005, p. 14). She calls for a perception of agency not simply as resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that specific relations of subordination create and enable. With the term ‘multiple modalities of agency’, Mahmood argues for a broader concept of agency. The term implies that agency can be understood:

only from within the discourse and structures of subordination that create the conditions of its enactment. In this sense, agentival capacity is entailed not only in those acts that resist norms but also in the multiple ways in which one inhabits norms. (Mahmood, 2005, p. 15)

Mahmood’s reconfiguration of the notion of agency is relevant for this study in two ways. Firstly, it is based upon the conceptualisation of Islam as a discursive tradition. Secondly, it draws on the Foucaultian understanding of subjectivation as embedded in discursive relationships of power. Hence, it ties in with the understanding that particular subjectivities are created within the discursive tradition of Islam, and it acknowledges that transformation of the self in compliance with moral norms in becoming a particular subject can be comprehended as a modality of agency.

In comprehending formation of the self as something which is local and particular and related to concrete techniques of self through which a pious subject comes into being, I will focus on agency involved in this
subjectivation as local and particular. In extension of Mahmood’s notion of multiple modalities of agency, I suggest the term ‘situated agency’ in order to grasp the mode of actions of the women in this study. I am inspired by the anthropologist Donna Haraway’s (1988) term ‘situated knowledges’ understood as knowledge specific to a particular situation. The term ‘situated agency’ implies that agency is situated not only in the specific socio-cultural historical conditioning possibilities, but also in the particular self-practices applied in aspiring to particular beings.

Mahmood’s reconfiguration of the agency concept is formulated as an epistemological critique of the feminist secular-liberal conceptualisation of agency in terms of resistance and progressive change. She suggests “that we think of agency not only as the capacity for progressive change but also the capacity to endure, suffer and persist” (Mahmood, 2001, p. 217). In elaborating this perspective, she exemplifies with the Islamic practice of patience, sabr. In the Islamic discursive tradition, sabr entails the capacity to endure without complaining in the face of hardship. Mahmood argues that sabr is an element in constituting everyday piety practice which does not have the sense of “passive submission but of active engagement” (Mahmood, 2001, p. 217). It may be argued that Mahmood’s study of women’s pious subjectivation in Egypt leaves out the perspective on resistance as agency in a prioritisation of a perspective on endurance. The Foucaultian perspective on subjectivation as relationships of power equally encompasses the possibility of resistance. By suggesting the term ‘situated agency’ I apply a perspective that can embrace both moments of
resistance and moments of endurance in order to probe the agency involved in the women’s self-formation in Denmark.

**Individualisation and authority**

The question of how the Islamic discursive tradition connects with the formation of moral selves in a Danish context entails the question of individualisation and authority. One strand of research on Muslims in Europe argues that individualisation is embedded in the particular European context of secularisation and the conditions of being a Muslim minority in non-Muslim societies. In this context of rupture with Islam as a socio-historical given thing in Muslim majority societies, the relation of the individual Muslim to Islam can only be articulated in the first person singular and be formulated as individual choice. Thus an interiorisation of faith and rupture with tradition as well as traditional Islamic authority takes place (Roy, 2000, p. 69, 71; Johansen, 2002). Further, in a French context, studies argue that Islam is lived in the private sphere. Here the individual Muslim decides autonomously which elements of Islam she/he considers to be binding or not (Cesari, 1994, p. 58). Traditional established Islamic institutions: mosques, imams, etc., become marginalised in favour of the emergence of ‘new Islamic spaces’ where ‘second’ and ‘third’ generation Muslims create new types of Islamic associations and religious communitarisation (Cesari, 1998, p. 99). One crucial aspect in the claim of fragmentation of authority is that knowledge acquisition by Muslims in

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16 Though Roy points out that the interiorisation of faith is embedded in the tradition of Islamic mysticism, Sufism (Roy, 2000, p. 79).
general has been facilitated by new media technologies (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1996; Mandaville, 2006). However, recent research (Amir-Moazami & Salvatore, 2002; Amir-Moazami & Jouili, 2006; van Bruinessen, 2011; Dessing, 2012) objects to the argument that fragmentation of traditional authority is the dominant mode of individualisation processes for Muslims living in a European context.

A relevant contribution to the discussion of the fragmentation of Islamic authority in Western Europe is launched by the political scientists Schirin Amir-Moazami and Armando Salvatore (2002). They engage the question of Islamic authority fragmentation by framing the question of the individualisation of Islamic belief and practice within the logic of the discursive tradition of Islam. In drawing on Asad, they understand religious traditions as both institutionally and discursively grounded and as a set of moral and social references which shape discourses and social practices. Religious traditions entail a variety of moral and emotional dispositions on the basis of which traditions are moulded and transmitted, configured and re-configured. These dispositions depend on institutional forms of authoritative discourse and on the embeddedness of individuals or groups in specific life narratives derived from the past (Amir-Moazami & Salvatore, 2002, pp. 53-55). In negotiations of coherence, tradition is reconfigured. Amir-Moazami & Salvatore point out that if fragmentation occurs in this process of negotiation, it is “because traditions, i.e. their discourses and their institutions, as well as the practices they authorise, have been exposed to permanent interventions, and this for quite a while, not only in the
modern (or supposedly post-modern) eras, but since their inceptions” (Amir-Moazami & Salvatore, 2002, p. 55).

Other studies on the ‘permanent interventions’ in the Islamic tradition call attention to the Islamic concepts of revival/renewal, tajdid, and reform, islah. The islamologue John O. Voll asserts that the concepts have served as legitimate platforms for the negotiations of coherence in the Islamic tradition since the 9th century. He stresses that these concepts have always implied a call for Muslims to return to the foundations of Islam: the Qur’an, Allah’s revealed words to mankind, and the Sunnah, the practice of the Prophet Muhammad. The tradition of tajdid and islah encompasses the attempts of the individual and the collective to explicitly define Islam in terms of the Qur’an and the Sunnah. The incitement to reform, islah, is based on the Qur’an’s message of moral justice and the efforts to attain it. The incitement to revival/renewal, tajdid, is based on the Sunnah’s message that at the beginning of every century there will be believers who will revitalise Islam or more precisely the ability of the Islamic community, ummah, to follow the path of Allah. As such, the tradition of tajdid and islah can be comprehended as a continuous intervention on tradition in terms of Muslims negotiating how the message of the Qur’an and the Sunnah can embrace changed and changing life conditions (Voll, 1983).

The contemporary negotiation of Islamic reform and revival in Muslim majority societies and in Muslim minority contexts in the West has its
background in the modern Salafiyya\textsuperscript{17} reform movement beginning in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. In Egypt it was led by the reformist thinkers Mohammed Abdu, Rashid Ridah and Hassan al Banna. The Muslim reformers were inspired by a variety of ideas including Western liberal modernist thinking. However, their call for revivification of the sacred core text and the politics of authenticity enunciates the embeddedness in a living tradition (Amir-Moazami & Salvatore, 2002, p. 57). The modern reform of tajdid and islah has significant impact on the process of individualisation of Islamic belief and practice.\textsuperscript{18} Mahmood emphasises that this reform Islam is in particular characterised by the general propensity toward the individualisation of moral responsibility (Mahmood, 2005, p. 64). The piety movement she studies in Egypt has a strong individualising impetus in that there are no centralised authorities to enforce the moral code and penalise infractions. It is rather a requirement for each individual to adopt a set of ascetic practices for shaping moral conduct (Mahmood, 2005, p. 30).

These perspectives on interventions are relevant in terms of an approach to religious authority in a Muslim minority context. The shift towards individualisation and reconfiguration of the religious tradition can be considered as a continuation of this reform movement within Islam rather

\textsuperscript{17} The Arabic term ‘salaf’ refers to the three first generations of Muslims. The Salafiyya movement, which emerged in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, advocates for a return of Islam to its pure sources. The prime exponent for the movement is the Muslim Brotherhood (Skovgaard-Petersen, 1995).

\textsuperscript{18} See also the studies of Rasmussen & Christiansen 1994, Rasmussen 1999, Christiansen 1999 on the individualisation of moral responsibility among activist pious Muslim women in an Egyptian and a Moroccan context.
than a rupture. One might argue that in this perspective it is not solely the socio-economic impact of migration and living in secular neo-liberal societies of Western European countries that produces reconfigurations of a religious tradition.\textsuperscript{19}

With the perspective on Islam as a discursive tradition, I will explore the relation between the subject and religious authority by focusing on the way the women engage in the textual knowledge in their everyday lives. According to Dave Eickelman and James Piscatori (1996) ‘ordinary Muslims’ engagement with the textual knowledge has become widespread in Muslim majority societies and beyond by means of mass education, mass mediation and transnational migration. These changes have led to transformation of traditional structures for the production, reproduction, transmission and authorisation of the Islamic discursive tradition. Eickelman and Piscatori term these processes of reflexivity ‘the objectivation of Islam’, hinging them to the global dynamics of modernisation. The advent of mass mediation has resulted both in a widespread homogenisation of the Islamic traditions (Asad, 1984, p. 16) and a multitude of voices claiming authority to the correct interpretation and practice of Islam (Mandaville, 2001; Turner & Volpi, 2007). Recent research on Muslims in Europe reveals that the issue of fragmentation of religious authority is relevant in terms of Muslims having access to a

\textsuperscript{19} However, a consideration of the ‘travelling of ideas’ would equally entail a perspective of Western modern liberal ideas of the individual, and their impact upon the thinkers of reform Islam. Salvatore (1997) has explored this relation as ‘transcultural space’. Be that as it may, it is beyond the scope of the thesis to give such a perspective appropriate attention.
wider range of authorities than one or two generations before. However, the status of these authorities has not declined (Van Bruinessen, 2011, p. 19). Based upon these perspectives, I explore the relation of religious authority and the individualisation of moral responsibilities with the question of how the women in this study incorporate, recognise and mould religious authority in the cultivation of piety.

**Piety, autonomy and authenticity**

(The subject) is not a substance. It is a form, and this form is not primarily and always identical to itself (…) Undoubtedly there are relationships and interferences between these different forms of the subject; but we are not dealing with the same type of subject. In each case, one plays, one establishes a different type of relationship to oneself. (Foucault, 1997d, p. 290)

With a point of departure in Foucault’s emphasis on the subject as a form, I explore if and how different forms of the subject converge in pious subjectivation. This implies that I do not apply the perspective of a homogeneous notion of self that coexists within a given cultural or historic space. Transferring the insight to my study it becomes relevant to ask if the ethics of Islamic piety intersects with other constructions of relation to the self or ethics? In addressing this question I am also inspired by Jacobsen’s (2011b) research on the intersection of different forms of ethics. Where Mahmood primarily focuses on configurations of self in the context of the Islamic piety movement in Egypt as distinct from and in opposition to those configured by a secular-liberal moral framework, Jacobsen’s focus
is on the intersection of an Islamic ethics and a secular-liberal ethics in the construction of religious subjectivities. She explores how young Muslim women in Norway, in speaking about self and self-realisation, draw on both an Islamic piety discourse and a secular-liberal discourse on freedom and the autonomous self. Jacobsen points out that different modes of ethical subjectivation inhabit the same cultural and historical space, Norway, and shape subjectivities and modes of agency (Jacobsen, 2011b, p. 78). I find Jacobsen’s approach relevant in exploring the situatedness of Islamic pious subjectivation in Denmark. The secular liberal discourse is equally present in the Danish context. In the following I will amplify this study’s understanding of fundamental elements of a liberal ethics of personal authenticity and autonomy.

The philosopher Charles Taylor (2007) characterises the liberal ethics of personal authenticity the following way:

> The understanding of life that each of us has his/her own way of realizing our humanity, and that it is important to find and live out one’s own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside, by society, or the previous generation,

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20 The secular can be conceptualised as a functional differentiation between the religious, the economic, the political and the scientific spheres (Dobbelaere 2002). However, in the Danish secular national state the church and the state are not separated. The Evangelic-Lutheran church is supported by the state. This relation between state and church is grounded in the Danish constitution. Though, the church is subordinated the state and religion is placed within the state system, but outside of the public sphere. The secular liberal discourse in Denmark articulates religiosity to be a private matter and a personal choice, which is not to be manifested in the public sphere (Rubow p. 87, 89).
or religious or political authority (...) It is in the era after the Second World War that this ethics of authenticity begins. (Taylor, p. 475)

Taylor emphasises the freedom to self-realisation, to become one’s true self as the prime element in ethics of authenticity. Freedom is based upon the right of ‘choice’. Taylor clarifies that it is choice in itself which is of prime value irrespective of what it is a choice between, or in what domain the choice is implemented (Taylor, p. 478). The sociologist Nikolas Rose (1996) elaborates the relation of freedom and ‘choice’ in the ethics of autonomy:

(S)ubjects are not merely ‘free to choose’ but obliged to be free, to understand and enact their lives in terms of choice (...). Human beings must interpret their past, and dream their future, as outcomes of personal choices made or choices still to make yet within a narrow range of possibilities whose restrictions are hard to discern because they form the horizon of what is thinkable. Their choices are, in their turn, seen as realization of the attributes of the choosing self – expressions of personality – and reflect back upon the individual who has made them. The practice of freedom appears only as the possibility of the maximum self-fulfillment of the active and autonomous individual. (Rose, 1996, p. 17)

In the moral framework of liberal ethics the road to freedom is paved with a series of choices that the individual freely makes in order to realise the self that it truly is. According to Taylor, religiosity becomes articulated within the logic of self-realisation:
The religious life or practice that I become part of must not only be my choice, but it must speak to me, it must make sense in terms of my spiritual development as I understand it. (Taylor, 2007, p. 486)

Transferring the insights of Taylor and Rose to this study I explore whether a liberal ethics of personal authenticity and autonomy converges with an Islamic ethics of piety in which the submission to an absolute God is to lead a virtuous life which becomes the road to salvation in the hereafter.
Chapter 3 Method

This chapter presents the method applied in the production of data. I introduce the chapter by arguing for the choices made in delimiting the empirical field. It unfolds how the choices of the qualitative method are situated by a particular research positioning as well as how they are informed by the objective of the study. In extension I reflect upon the kind of knowledge generated by the methodological choices.

Criteria for selecting data

The fundamental criterion was to enter into dialogue with women who engage in the Islamic revival. As outlined in Chapter 1, the movement has gained global momentum and is also present in the Nordic countries. Translated to an empirical level I aimed at establishing contact with active, vocal and visible Muslim women claiming to represent ‘true’ Islam. These criteria and the current research on young Muslim in the Islamic revival movement in a Nordic context (Johansen, 2002; Minganti, 2007; Jacobsen, 2011a) oriented my focus on young women affiliated with Muslim youth associations. The islamologue Garbi Schmidt (2007) informs us that Muslim youth associations have become part of the organisational landscape in Denmark since the 1980s. Some of them claim to represent ‘pure’ Islam. They seek to overcome ethnic and national divisions, and oppose what they understand as cultural representations of Islam.
Schmidt, 2007). I chose to delimit the field for potential interlocutors to two youth associations who articulate this understanding of Islam. They are part of the Islamic revival movement and they constitute fora where Islam is articulated as primary identity (Schmidt, 2003). With this delimitation, it could be argued that I risk reproducing particular representations of Muslim identity in Denmark. Schmidt calls attention to Muslim youth associations having come to represent ‘the Muslim voice’ in the Danish public arena due to their identity political activities (Schmidt, 2007, p. 10). In extension, some research argues that an enhanced research focus on young organised vocal Muslims risks silencing a diversity of Muslim voices and groupings to whom Islam is not a primary identity category, but intersects with other categories in constructions of identity (Jeldtoft, 2011; Schmidt, 2011).

However, this present study explores how religious norms are inhabited in a particular socio-historical context. In Chapter 2, I discussed research which explores Muslim women’s engagement in the Islamic revival in Muslim majority and Muslim minority contexts by applying the perspectives of subjectivation, piety and agency. In taking the issue of Muslim piety seriously, as Mahmood encourages us to (2005, p. 16), and with my focus on how young Muslim women in Denmark become pious Muslim women, I acknowledge that the discursive tradition of Islam conditions ‘becoming’ a pious subject. This is the reason for my focus on young women who are vocal about their religion articulating it as a primary identity. Taking piety seriously in terms of formation of moral selves is equally a reason behind the choice of gender as Muslim women

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have been a contested field of research from the perspective of conceptualising if and how they manifest agency (Christiansen, 1999; Mahmood, 2005; Bilge, 2014). I chose two Muslim youth associations, namely The Society of Young Muslims in Denmark (SYMD) and the Association of Young Muslims in Denmark (FYMD)\(^{21}\) as a platform\(^{22}\) to get in contact with potential interlocutors. Both associations are situated in a larger city in Denmark.\(^{23}\)

**Generating data**

The primary data of the thesis consists of 10 qualitative interviews. At the initial stage of the project I carried out participant observations of various activities organised by the two youth associations. The purpose was to obtain access to the field (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) and initiate contact to potential interlocutors for interviews. Partly, they were an entrance to the discursive practice of the Islamic revival. In the following I unfold how the data was produced and the choices involved.

\(^{21}\) The associations are anonymized.

\(^{22}\) As they serve as a platform I do not situate the associations in comparison with other Muslim youth associations in Denmark. An aspect is that it would collide with the criteria of anonymization. However, while observing the criteria of anonymity, I mention other associations when the women refer to them in the interviews. I include these references with the analytical purpose of considering why the women make the associations relevant in their self-positioning as pious Muslims.

\(^{23}\) The city is anonymized.
**Participant observations**

In SYMD, I observed two guest lectures with invited speakers from abroad. One was an imam from Western Europe, while another was from North America. I also observed one session of Qur’an recitation for women which took place in the women’s section of the association. In FYMD, I observed four Sunday *darses*, religious lectures. I took notes during the observations of the activities and completed them after they had ended. One objective of the observations was to establish contact with potential interlocutors by initiating contact myself and by being introduced to some of the women by my gatekeepers (2007, p. 49). The observations equally functioned as a tool of orientation towards something of significance to explore further in the interviews. The extract, in Chapter 1, from a participant observation in SYMD is salient to exemplify significant elements in the discursive practice of the Islamic revival that called for further exploration in the interviews: the articulations of Islam as empowerment, as an individual choice, as unifying across differences, the importance of being good representatives of Islam, the focus on good deeds and actions as well as articulations of lived Islam in a minority context, sartorial modesty and norms of gender interaction.

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) outline the method of participant observation as a continuum of ‘complete participant’, ‘participant-as-observer’, ‘observer-as-participant’ and ‘complete observer’. My practice has been ‘observer-as-participant’ as I had a minimal involvement in the social setting observed and was not part of the group observed (2007, p.
I did for example not perform prayer with the women during the darses at FUMD, nor pose or answer questions posed by the teacher to the audience. The anthropologist Cathrine Hasse (2002) points out that by way of participant observations the researcher obtains an ‘embodied experience’ of the field. By being present in the same physical space as the participants and observing them through alertness in terms of the senses of seeing, hearing and body sensation the researcher obtains the embodied experience of the field (p. 24). In terms of obtaining such an experience of the field participant observation was a productive method in terms of developing sensitivity towards what I observed, and to implement this sensitivity as a research tool during the interview sessions. As it turned out, the women who became my interlocutors had all participated in one or another activity in which I conducted participant observations. Therefore, I was able to draw on a stock of experience related to the single interlocutor: her tone of voice in talking with others; facial mimic and bodily gestures in social interaction female to female and female to male; praying in a row with other women;\(^\text{24}\) the movements of adjusting the hijab which would be repeated during the interview. With participant observations I gained insight into the emotional dimension of and the ambiance during the activities; signs of friendship in greetings, smiles, laughter, glances, silences during emotional moments, moments of immense concentration. Furthermore, the observations enabled me to refer to shared experience during the interviews. For example, with one interlocutor, Hafsa, I referred to the guest lecture by the North American

\(^{24}\) In FYMD, the weekly darses began with the \textit{al-\textasciitilde{}‘Asr}, afternoon prayer.
imam and his encouragement to represent Islam in a positive way as a point of departure to ask questions about da’wa. Another interlocutor, Malika, was interviewed immediately after she had attended a class of Qur’an recitation, *tadžwid*. By observing her dedication and concentration during the lesson I witnessed her hard work and discipline in perfecting her recitation. Thus, in the interview with her I was able to refer to an incident during the lesson where Malika informed the teacher about her supplementary one-to-one lessons in *tadžwid* with another teacher. This reference served as a point of departure for her to tell me that she strived for achieving a diploma in *tadžwid* so that she could teach the discipline. She emphasised that the objective with teaching was her desire to create change for others. This statement made the theme of da’wa relevant to explore.

**Getting contact to interlocutors**

In SYMD, I established contact with two women by way of introducing myself to them at different events in the association. In FUMD, based upon information on its web site I got in contact with the woman who is a contact person for the female members of the association. The three women have been gatekeepers (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p. 49) to some of the interlocutors. They equally agreed to be interviewed. By participating in the guest lectures, weekly darses and a class of Qur’an recitation I was introduced to potential interlocutors by my gatekeepers. I equally established contact to potential interlocutors myself at the events, when circulating during the pauses. In addition, I made use of the
women’s networks and circulated a call for interlocutors by email. I presented the research project as an exploration of how they practice Islam in their everyday life in Denmark. Even though I experienced very positive reactions when presenting the project, the process of acquiring interlocutors nevertheless turned out to be more difficult than these reactions indicated. I experienced long stretches of time with no replies to my request for interview, potential interlocutors concluding they did not wish to participate in the project anyway, and difficulties in finding dates for interviews due to the women’s extremely full time schedule.25 As a consequence of this and equally due to my maternity leave from May 2009 till June 2010, the interviews were conducted in March 2009 and from January 2011 until April 2011. My way of establishing contact to interlocutors has been a balancing act between being proactive and less proactive. I struggled with experiencing myself as a transgressor, with the risk of being cut off the field if I were too proactive in my quest for interlocutors. I have been in contact with 17 potential interlocutors. Out of these 10 women agreed to participate in the project.

**Ethical considerations**

The ethical considerations of this study imply that the interlocutors are anonymized, as are the youth associations. Being anonymized was a

25 A daily schedule filled by activities related to being a vocal Muslim woman characterises the women’s time management. Other researchers have had similar experiences with difficulties in making interview appointments due to the Islamic ‘programming’ of daily life by Muslim women engaging in the Islamic revival. See Christiansen 1999 in particular.
condition the women set for participating in the interviews. At the briefing (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) of each interview, I informed the single interlocutor about the research project and emphasised that the data would be anonymized. I equally informed them that they could withdraw their consent to my use of the data if they so wished. Finally, I told them that I would respect if there were questions they did not wish to engage or topics they did not want to talk about. Due to this ethical aspect I do not go into further details on the associations, the geographical locations of them, their parents’ countries of origin as well as specific details of their education or work.

*The interlocutors*

The 10 women who became my interlocutors are between 17 and 31 years old. Apart from one, they are all born in Denmark as children of Muslim migrant workers of North African, Middle Eastern, South Asian and South West Asian ethnic origins. The women are Sunni Muslims. Their level of education is upper secondary level for the women between 17 and 20 years of age, and high-level education for the women between 21 and 31. They all wear the hijab. In compliance with the orthodox tradition of Islam some of the women donned the hijab at the first menstruation. Others have donned the hijab later on in life. Some of the women wear the djellaba, a loose fitted long dress or long skirt so as to not reveal the
contours of the body. Their sartorial style is distinctly\textsuperscript{26} Islamic and complies with what they assert is the correct Islamic way to dress.

The women are or have been very active in the two youth associations. One of them spent 19 hours a week on volunteer work in FUMD at the time of the interview. Some of them are or have been on the boards of the associations. All of them are active in different steering committees of the associations, primarily in the educational and the social steering committees.\textsuperscript{27} The women are engaged in Muslim community work in the form of teaching Arabic in weekly classes to Muslim children and adolescents, giving foundational courses in Islam to converts, arranging id-prayer and end of the Ramadan celebrations, helping Muslim youngsters with their school work and performing various kinds of social intervention work toward delinquent Muslim teenage girls on request of their parents. They are equally active in formalised representations of Islam and Muslims to the Danish majority society as invited speakers giving talks to public and grammar school students as well as to residents of old people’s homes about Islam and being Muslim. One association organises ‘open house’ events directed at the Danish majority where some of the women give talks to the visitors. In addition they organise and engage different forms of events in the public sphere addressing the

\textsuperscript{26} See Christiansen (2011) for a discussion of different sartorial strategies of self-representation employed by Muslim women in Denmark.

\textsuperscript{27} In addition to a board, the youth associations are organised in various steering committees responsible for different areas in which the associations perform activities.
majority population. The women comprehend these activities as part of their Islam practice and more specifically as da’wa work. Da’wa in its literal sense means the invitation to Islam. Da’wa addresses the Islamic moral principle “to enjoin others in the doing of good or right, and the forbidding of evil or wrong” (Mahmood 2005:58).28 In the following I present the interlocutors.

Mira is 20 years old at the time of the interview. She is born in Denmark. Her father is from the Middle East and her mother from North Africa. She has obtained her grammar school degree and attended supplementary courses at the time of the interview in order to study natural science at the university.

Nabila is 25 years old. She is born in Denmark. Both her father and mother are from North Africa. She is divorced. After the divorce she moved home and lives with her parents and siblings. She works part time in the health care sector and is also a coordinator in the ‘Role Model Corps’ (‘Rollemodelkorps’).29 Nabila wants to upgrade her skills with a master

28 The Islamic moral principle “to enjoin others in the doing of good or right, and the forbidding of evil or wrong” occurs a number of places in the Qur’an. One verse that addresses women and men equally is 9:71. The Islamic revival draws on this moral principle as an incentive to perform da’wa (Mahmood, 2005, pp. 58-64).

29 The Role Model Corps is part of a general campaign “Brug for alle unge” (All young people are needed) launched by the Danish government in 2003 in order to motivate the youth to begin an education. A specific target group of the campaign is the ethnic minority youth which especially the Role Model Corps addresses as it is made up of various ethnic minority youth who act as role models. See Chapter 5 for an elaboration.
degree in pedagogy, and her future plan is to work full time with youngsters.

Ruba is 27 years old. She is born in Denmark. Both her father and mother are from South Asia. Ruba is married. She is a social worker working with ethnic minorities.

Salma is 27 years old. She is born in Denmark. Her father and mother are from the Middle East. She is married and has children. She is a social worker working with ethnic minorities.

Suha is 22 years old. She is born in Denmark. Her father and mother are from North Africa. Suha is married. She studies natural science at the university.

Hana is 31 years old. She is born in Denmark. Her father and mother are from North Africa. Hana is married and has children. She studies humanities at the university.

Hafsa is 21 years old. Her father and mother are from South West Asia. She studies humanities at the university.

Malika is 18 years old. Her father and mother are from North Africa. She is a student of upper secondary level.

Hafiza is 24 years old. She is born in South Asia and has been living in Denmark for 5 years at the time of the interview. She is a student on upper secondary education level.
Samira is 17 years old. She is born in Denmark. Her father and mother are from South Asia. She is a student on upper secondary education level.

The 10 women are active, well-educated and socially resourceful young second-generation migrant (except for Hafiza) Muslim women engaging in the Islamic revival. Based on information from my interlocutors on the number of women members in the associations and on my observations, I assess that the women with whom I had conversations are part of a small grouping of very active and vocal Muslim women. They strive to live in compliance with Islamic standards of a virtuous life. They perform civic engagement by way of volunteer work in the Muslim community, which is equally directed towards the Danish majority society. However, I cannot go into detail about the specific numbers on which I based this assessment as it might disclose the identity of the associations as well as of the women. This would compromise the ethical demands of anonymization.

The qualitative research interview as a social encounter

The research interviews I conducted are conversations between the interlocutors and me. They constitute talk in interaction, and as such they can be comprehended as social encounters (Potter & Wetherell, 1995, p. 84). In applying the methodological perspective of interactionism I understand the qualitative interview to enable access to the interlocutors’ own articulations and reflections in the interview situation as a meaning-making and interpretative practice to be analysed (Mik-Meyer & Järvinen, 2005; Hasse, 2002). With this perspective, the interlocutor is understood as
mastering interpretative capabilities which must be activated and stimulated during the interview rather than as a vessel of knowledge that may be tapped unaffected by the interviewer’s questions.

I am inspired by the sociologists James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium’s (1995) understanding of the interactive interview as a limited “‘improvisational’ performance”. It is a sort of drama where the narrative is scripted by its topic with the distinguishable roles of the interviewer and the interlocutor and following the format of a conversation. It is a performance where “(t)he production is spontaneous, yet structured – focused within loose parameters provided by the interviewer” (p. 17). In operationalising such an understanding of the interactive interview, I made use of an interview guide that functioned as a “conversational agenda” (p. 76). It was structured into six themes: Islamic knowledge; Islamic practice in everyday life; religious minority context; da’wa; femininity and the body. Each of the themes covered interview questions which were formulated on the basis of research questions pertaining to the theme.

The research question of the theme Islamic knowledge is: Which forms of Islamic knowledge do the women make relevant in positioning themselves as Muslim women? The interview questions related to the theme are for example: Are there areas of Islamic knowledge you find important to know something about? Do you read in the Qur’an in addition to the readings for prayer? Do you read the Hadith literature? Do you participate in courses on Islam? Do you use the Internet to search for
Islamic knowledge?

The research question related to theme Islamic practice in everyday life is: How do the women practice Islam in their everyday lives? The interview questions formed are for example: Could you describe how you practice Islam in your everyday (e.g. prayer, fast, mosque visit, food) How did you for example practice Islam yesterday?

Two research questions are related to the theme of da’wa: Which da’wa activities do the women engage in? How do they relate knowledge and behaviour in performing da’wa? The interview questions formed are for example: Do you give da’wa? How do you give da’wa? Do you give da’wa to Muslims and non-Muslims? Do you give da’wa to both women and men? Can all Muslims give da’wa? What does it require to give da’wa?

The research question related to the theme of the religious minority context is: How do the women position themselves and are positioned as religious minority actors in their everyday lives? The interview questions are: Have you had experiences with non-Muslims in Denmark when being Muslim was of significance?

The research question related to the theme of femininity and the body is: How do the women position themselves as Muslim women? The interview questions are: When did you begin to wear the hijab? Is there a difference between wearing the hijab and not wearing the hijab? How would you describe yourself as a Muslim woman in Denmark? What does Islam give you as a woman? As mentioned above, the interview guide
functioned as a conversational agenda. During the interviews, I often experienced the women addressing the themes of the interview guide prior to my intervention. In the interview situation, questions were equally formed from the interlocutor’s responses for an amplification of the response.

I applied the method of working with my interlocutors as co-interpreters during the interviews by posing questions that called on interpretative possibilities (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 78). When an interlocutor had answered a question, I would ask if I were to understand the answer in this or that way, or I would briefly sum up the answer, and then ask if I were to understand it this or that way. Hence the process of interpretation and analysis already began at the level of the specific interview. I activated my background knowledge relevant to the research topic by using the vocabulary of the religious discourse in order to “engage respondents in meaningful talk about their everyday worlds in terms that derive from the circumstances of lived experience” (p. 77). In this way, I oriented the interpretative capabilities of my interlocutors to terms that specifically pertain to the discursive tradition of Islam. Let me give an example of such a co-interpretative movement in the interview situation:

Mira: (...) to listen to a programme is not practising, you must go out and use your knowledge, “how can I use what I have heard” at a lecture, for example.
Monique: mmm, so for you it’s very, very important to go out and convey the knowledge about Islam to others, I think I need to understand you correctly, if you actually mean that these lectures and those kinds of things are a part of your practice of Islam?
Mira: it’s a part of it.
Monique: do you perceive it to be like that?
Mira: yes, I pass on the Prophet’s message.
Monique: do you consider it to be da’wa?
Mira: yes, 100%, it’s da’wa.
Monique: are there other situations where you exercise da’wa?

When one of my interlocutors, Mira, relates the practice of Islam with giving talks on Islam (or transmitting Islamic knowledge), as a first move I sum up her answer in order to clarify if she conceives of this activity as an Islamic practice. As she affirms my interpretation and amplifies it by explaining that she transmits the message of the Prophet, I then activate my background knowledge of the Islamic discursive tradition. Here I use the religious vocabulary in appealing to her co-interpretation by asking her whether she considers these activities to be da’wa, even though she has not mentioned the term da’wa. When she answers affirmatively, I then invite her to describe other situations in which she performs da’wa in order for her to engage in further descriptions of everyday life Islam. With another interlocutor, Hafsa, I explored her meaning assignment to da’wa the following way:

Hafsa: (...) But da’wa can be in different ways. It can also be in an indirect fashion, the way you talk, the way you act, the way you are towards your fellow human beings, the way you eat, drink, that is, the indirect way. And I don’t feel the need to stand on (name of the street) and hand out folders and pamphlets, when I can do it my way, to be a Muslim and act in accordance with the knowledge I obtain in Islam concerning how I should act towards my fellow humans and such. So I relate to the way of giving da’wa, uhm, being together with my fellow students spending time with them, that is, being who I still
am, but not directly saying: “listen, Islam says this and that”, or “I want you to believe in this”, that kind of thing I would never dream of doing. That’s the understanding I have of da’wa.

Monique: mm... does that mean that you basically regard a social relation...

Hafsa: ... yes.

Monique: ... as a da’wa relation?

After Hafsa’s initial description of performing da’wa I appeal to her to co-interpret her response. In suggesting the specific perspective of comprehending social relations as a da’wa relation I attempt to grasp the significance of da’wa in her everyday life.

**Procedures**

I left the choice of interview locations to my interlocutors, as I at an early stage became aware that the women operate with very busy time schedules. I would have to accommodate to their time management. Hence, one aspect of this decision is logistics. Another aspect is that I wanted them to feel comfortable and be at ease during the interviews, and their own choice of location would support this endeavour. The interviews have been carried out in the two youth associations (rooms available), private homes (two of my interlocutors chose to be interviewed in their homes), a public work place and a public educational institution. The interviews were recorded either on a Dictaphone or mobile phone, and they range from twenty minutes to one and a half hours.

I transcribed the interviews myself in order engage the analytical process
which the act of transcribing also entails (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Another benefit of transcribing the audio files of the interviews is that the activation of the auditory sensibility equally activated the visual memory of the actual interview situation. Pål Repstad (1993) informs us that the researcher’s presence in the interview situation is an oscillation between closeness: the researcher’s empathic presence during the interview and distance: the researcher’s analytical gaze during the interview. In transcribing the interviews this oscillation replicated as this procedure allowed me to ‘relive’ the interview situation albeit in an altered presence. Activating auditory sensibility and visual memory created the experience of presence. In the analyses of the transcribed material, the altered presence enabled me to retain the interlocutors as persons in real life and not transforming them into solely articulations on transcripts. As such, I experienced the oscillation between closeness and distance on three levels of the process of generating knowledge: at the level of the interactive interview situation, at the level of transcribing and at the level of analysis. The form of the thesis is an attempt to represent the presence by way of the frequent citations of the ‘voices’ in the chapters of analysis.

**Accentuated reflexivity**

One aspect of ‘doing’ Muslimness is that women are used to talking about being Muslim. This doing is part of their da’wa activities in giving talks as invited speakers and other activities related to the associations. Hence, the women are very conscious of representing Islam, and narrating the
narrative of being Muslim may be viewed as performing Muslimness. Narration forms part of achieving a (religious) identity (Cadge & Davidman, 2006). It raises the question whether the women who are accustomed to talking about being Muslim occasion certain forms of self-representations? I argue that an accentuated reflexivity is pronounced in the women’s self-representation. In the following, I will discuss accentuated reflexivity as an activity prior to and beyond the interview situation. The interactive interview and my interviewing technique of appealing to co-interpretation invite to reflexivity. As such, a reasonable objection to my suggestion of accentuated reflexivity could be that reflexivity obviously stands out as an element in the women’s self-representation, as the interview form in itself gives voice to reflexivity. The sociologist of religion Robert Wuthnow (2011) addresses the issue of taking talk seriously in studies on religious identity: “talk is cultural work that people do to make sense of their lives and to orient their behaviour (…) It serves rather as the means through which values and beliefs acquire sufficient meaning to guide behaviour and to provide template for self-understanding” (p. 9). In this sense, reflexivity is related to the social interaction of talk, and the qualitative interview in itself creates a platform for reflexivity. However, the accentuated reflexivity could be considered from a perspective on the religious minority context. When the women talked of relations to the majority, they articulated encounters of difference in the form of being meet with many ‘whys?’ e.g. ‘why do you wear the hijab?’ ‘why do you fast?’ ‘why are you a Muslim?’ ‘why do you pray five times a day’, ‘why do you believe in Allah?’. Being held accountable for being
Muslim by Danish majority persons (e.g. fellow students, colleagues and people on the bus and in the street) was articulated by the women as having a considerable impact on their desire to know why and how Islam makes sense to them. The religious minority context demands reflexivity in order to respond to the claims of accountability. Finally, I will consider accentuated reflexivity from the perspective on self-formation. As I outlined in Chapter 2, self-formation is exactly a process of reflexivity embedded in the relation to the self in terms of self-practice. Hence, the process of accentuated reflexivity can be perceived as prior to the intervention of an interview(er) and self-representations performed in the interview.

**Researcher positioning**

The objective of this study is to produce knowledge about the signifying practices through which the social world comes into being. With this objective, I position myself from a specific perspective as a researcher and in doing research. Some of the sources of inspiration for this positioning are James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium (1995) and the sociologists Nana Mik-Meyer and Margaretha Järvinen (2005). They emphasise a

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30 See also Jouili’s (2008, pp. 466-7) study on pious Muslim women in Germany. She points to the confrontation of difference as being an important impetus for the women’s search of Islamic knowledge.

31 I do not advocate a perspective of ‘living in the West makes Muslims reflect’. I merely point to the minority context as an aspect in processes of reflexivity. For a general study on Muslim’s relating to Islam in terms of modern reflexivity in Muslim majority societies, see Eickelman & Piscatori (1990). For a study on a specific national context, Morocco, see Christiansen (1999).
constructivist-interactionist approach in investigating the production of meaning in the social world. This approach equally implies a perspective on the researcher contribution to the production of meaning studied (Mik-Meyer & Järvinen, 2005, p. 16). The researcher’s intervention reaches beyond the design of the research and into the actual production of material to be analysed. Thus, the researcher participates in the production of data material. In terms of this study I interact in the production of meaning by influencing the told and the telling in the interviews. Apart from a focus on what is actually said during the interview, the constructivist-interactionist perspective renders a focus on the context of interview interaction necessary (p. 17). I amplify the significance of this focus in the following.

I am of Danish-Algerian ethnic origin. It raises the question of how I was positioned by the women of North African, Middle Eastern, South Asian and South West Asian ethnic origins. I had decided not to vocalise my ethnic origin when introducing myself. I wanted to see if ethnicity was made relevant by the women. I had a preconception that it would, as I often experience being asked about my ethnic origin in both ethnic majority and minority relations in Denmark. It was indeed a preconception as only one of the 17 women I encountered asked me, incited by her own preconception of believing that I was from the same North African origin as her. However, what the women did make relevant was that in Islam people are united across boundaries. They all stressed that in Islam there is room for all, and in the youth associations people are from every ethnic and national origin. This position is emphasised by the
youth associations in various presentations either on their websites or written material. That Islam transcends all forms of divisions; national, ethnic, class, etc. forms part of ‘true’ Islam articulated in the Islamic revival. I understand the women’s silence on my ethnic origin as a claim to this position. However, even though I did not share if I have a religious orientation or not, it became clear to me that I was positioned as a non-Muslim. One of my interlocutors replied to my question of how she practices Islam as follows:

Ruba: (...) you can always find an Islamic dimension in everything you do. Just by talking to you, I see it as entering into a dialog and a dialogue is something positive regardless of whether or not the same opinions are shared. This is because I know that the Prophet also entered into dialogue with people, even if he did not share the same religious beliefs, which makes dialogue very important. Also giving an interview I perceive as a positive thing, a good Islamic thing to do. That you actually also show how you are as a Muslim; that you do not isolate yourself and practice by yourself, or that Islam is only for some and not for all, nor that Islam is only for me and not for you, that sort of thing. Islam is for everyone (...)Ruba positions me as a non-Muslim, with whom she nevertheless can engage a dialogue. It is legitimated by relating to the past and the practice of the Prophet Muhammad, who engaged dialogue with people of other religious convictions. However, she has an objective with being interviewed. She wants to show how one can be a Muslim, and that Islam encompasses everybody. One can conceive of this objective in terms of da’wa. I do not understand it as her immediate attempt to invite me to Islam in terms of missionary activity. It raises the question whether my access to the interactive production of meaning in the interview situation became possible because the interlocutors conceived of this situation as an opportunity to perform da’wa, and through me by way of this study represent Islam and being Muslim
the ‘right’ way. The women are conscious of performing a self-representation. In considering an interactionist perspective, processes of self-representation can be conceived as their social identities and social strategies (Järvinen, 2005, p. 30). In the following chapter, I amplify this aspect in unfolding the analytical strategies I apply to the data material.

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32 This concurs with the findings of Minganti (2007, p. 41) in gaining access to her research field in Sweden.

33 Järvinen draws on the sociological tradition of Goffman and uses the term ‘self-presentation’. I draw on a discursive psychology tradition and use the term ‘self-representation’.
Chapter 4 Strategies of Analysis

Identities (...) are (...) narratives, stories that people tell themselves and others about who they are, and who they are not, as well as who and how they would like to/should be. (Nira Yuval-Davis, 2010, p. 266)

In Chapter 3, I discussed the methodological approach based upon the constructivist-interactionist perspective on qualitative methods. The narrative approach is relevant analysing the meaning production in the interviews. One strand of research in the field of narrative inquiry applies a constructivist approach and understands narrative as a meaning-producing social practice in the constitution of identity (Bruner, 1998 (1990); Gubrium & Holstein, 2009; Riessman, 2008; Bamberg, 2004). With this perspective I comprehend the interviews as stories. I use the terms ‘narrative’, ‘story’ and ‘account’ interchangeably (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009, p. xviii). According to Gubrium & Holstein, a minimal definition of narrative is: “spates of talk that are taken to describe or explain matters of concern to participants”, and they elaborate further in comprehending a story as an extended account, an explanation or description of something that makes a point (p. xviii). The storyteller, they continue, is the one who provides an account of experience or event of his or her own (p. xix). Riessman points out that despite the major differences in definitions of narrative in the field of narrative research a common criterion is contingent sequences (Riessman, 2008, p. 5): “Whatever the content, stories demand the consequential linking of events or ideas. Narrative shaping entails
imposing a meaningful pattern on what would otherwise be random and disconnected” (Phil Salmon in Riessman, 2008, p. 5). How is such a meaningful pattern imposed? According to Jerome Bruner, the constituents of a narrative are a unique sequence of events, mental states and happenings involving human beings as characters or actors. However, they do not have a meaning on their own. Meaning is created through a plot, the thematic tread, which configures and integrates the elements of the story (Bruner, 1998 (1990), p. 43). As such, the plot of the story is meaning producing. Polkinghorne equally addresses the plot of the story as meaning producing. He further characterises narratives to be concerned with human attempts to progress to a solution, a clarification or unravelling of an incomplete situation. The basic frame of stories is an individual protagonist engaged in an ordered transformation from an initial situation to a terminal situation (Polkinghorne, 1995). Narratives are concerned with themes, characters and plots from a specific position – the position of the narrator – in order to make a point or a claim in a particular context:

Narratives, irrespective of whether they deal with one’s life or an episode or event in the life of someone else, always reveal the speaker’s identity. The narrative point-of-view from where the characters are ordered in the story world gives away – and most often is meant to give away – the point of view from where the speaker represents him/herself. By offering and telling a narrative, the speaker lodges a claim for him/herself of who he/she is. (Bamberg, 2004, p. 223)
By applying a narrative perspective I attempt to grasp how the women of this study produce and assign meaning to being Muslim and how they make Muslimness relevant in their representation of self. In the interviews the women talk about their everyday lives as Muslim women in Denmark. They give accounts of themselves, stories that negotiate between a self of the present and a self/selves of the past (Byrne, 2003, p. 30) as well as a self of the future. The theoretical perspective of self-formation, elaborated in Chapter 2, makes it relevant to delimit my focus to ‘narratives of the self’. In the following, I outline the concept of narrative of the self that I apply, the operationalisation of the narrative perspective, and finally I address the questions of analysis based on the four aspects of ethics.

A meta perspective on narrative of the self
In Chapter 2, I argued for the Foucaultian perspective on self-formation in investigating the women’s religious identification. I analyse the processes of subjectivation by way of self-narrative, produced in the qualitative interviews with my interlocutors. I comprehend narrative of the self as an account of one’s relation to oneself (Foucault, 1997b, p. 217). By applying the perspective, I explore moments of investment in and identification (Hall, 2011 (1996), p. 12) with particular subject positions. According to Foucault, the historical emergence of self-narrative can be found in the (letter) correspondence between self and other:

To write is thus to “show oneself”, to project oneself into view, to make one’s own face appear in the other’s presence. And by this it should be understood that the letter is both a gaze that one focuses on
the addressee (through the missive he receives, he feels looked at) and a way of offering oneself to his gaze by what one tells him about oneself. (Foucault, 1997b, p. 216)

I draw on two important points in the above citation which I integrate in my approach in order to underline the inherent sociality of a scene of address for self-narrative. The first one is that to give an account of oneself is an interaction between self and other. The second one is that it is through such an account that the self becomes visible and intelligible to itself and to others. In this context, one can say that narrative of the self is understood as “stories that serve as a critical means by which we make ourselves intelligible within the social word” (Gergen & Gergen, 1988, cited in van Langenhove & Harré, 1993, p. 92). Further, I comprehend narratives of the self in this study as stories or accounts of “the quality of a mode of being” (Foucault, 1997b, p. 218). With such an understanding I focus on the evaluative dimension of self-narrative. Thus my approach is to perceive them as the narrator’s evaluation of the quality of mode of being experienced. As such, this narrative approach accentuates the conceptualisation of ethics as modes of evaluating oneself, which I have elaborated in Chapter 2. And one might say that my exploration of the women’s formation of self is by means of analysing narrative of self as one of the techniques of self. Narrative of the self is an entry to explore techniques of the self (Christiansen, 1999, p. 145; Byrne, 2003, p. 31). In sum, in this study I consider self-narrative an account which evaluates the quality of a mode of being and by which self becomes intelligible to self and other. One might argue that narrative of self has the character of
confession; “an act of speech in which the subject ‘publishes himself’” (Butler, 2005, p. 112). In this context, it is important to point out that confession is understood in terms of self-formation. This comprehension differs from Foucault’s earlier formulation of confession as the violence of self-scrutiny and the imposition of a regulatory discourse (p. 113). Judith Butler emphasises two aspects in her reading of Foucault’s reconfigured concept of confession:

Confession (...) presupposes that the self must appear in order to constitute itself and that is can constitute itself only within a given scene of address, within a certain socially constituted relation. Confession becomes the verbal and bodily scene of its self-demonstration. It speaks itself, but in the speaking it becomes what it is. (p. 113)

According to Butler, the social and performative dimensions are crucial to confession. Confession presupposes another, an audience to whom one ‘publishes’ oneself. In other words: The scene of address for confession is within a social relation. Butler points to the double movement of confession: It is both a referential act which reflects self and a performative act by which the self is produced. Through narrativisation the women refer to identity as well as produce identity. In what follows, I elaborate the operationalisation of the narrative perspective applied and outline the questions of analysis emerging from the four aspects of ethics.
Operationalising the narrative perspective

The focus on the evaluative dimension of narrative makes it relevant to draw on existing narrative research that adopts an experience-centred approach to narrative. I focus on narrative as stories of experience rather than stories of events (Squire, 2008; Patterson, 2008). In terms of an experience-centred approach, the concept of narrative covers the narration of ongoing or enduring states of being, or of present, future or hypothetical experience (Patterson, 2008, p. 21). This understanding of narrative implies that I do not consider the narratives to be straightforward descriptions of events. Therefore I do not undertake a structural analysis of narrative as event in order to produce knowledge of the internal organisation of a narrative. In such an analysis, the focus would be to identify the clauses of abstract (summary and/or ‘point of story), orientation (to time, place, characters, situation), complicating action (the event sequence or plot in general with a crisis or turning point), evaluation (where the narrator steps back from the action to comment on meaning and communicate emotions) and coda (ending the story and bringing action back to present) in the narrative structure implied by a Labovian event-centric approach (Riessman, 2008, p. 84).

My analysis is conducted on two levels. One level is the content of the narratives. The other level is the context of the narratives. With a focus on the substance of the narratives, I undertake a thematic analysis (Riessman, 2008) of the self-narratives in order to establish ‘key narratives’ (Phoenix, 2008). Key narratives emerge from recurrent themes in the women’s stories. Thus the focus on this level is on what the stories are about. The
focus on key narratives implies that I generate thematic categories across individuals, even if the individual stories of the women are preserved and grouped into the themes (Riessman, 2008, p. 62). This procedure is generated by the readings of the material. The readings for themes and key narratives are carried out with inspiration from the discursive psychologist Dorte Marie Søndergaard (2000). I have conducted two different forms of readings on the material: a horizontal and a vertical. The horizontal reading implies a crosswise reading of all the interview material. The vertical implies a lengthwise reading of the single interview for an amplification of the research questions and themes in relation to the single interlocutor (Søndergaard, 2000, p. 80). Both forms of readings relate to the research question of the interview themes and further explore the themes articulated by the women. Where the horizontal readings have enabled the generation of thematic categories across individuals, the vertical readings have enabled me to maintain the individual stories when grouped into themes. The analysis presented is structured around the two forms of readings. The presentation of the analysis is, however, modelled on the generation of thematic categories. This structure implies that interlocutors are not first presented as single cases from which themes are generated and subsequently presented as key narratives. With the structure of key narratives, the women’s narratives are presented as a collective story of similarly situated individuals (Richardson, 1997, p. 14, 21). Put differently: I construct the collective story of some young Muslim women’s pious subjectivation in a Danish context.
I draw on the discursive psychologists Kenneth Gergen’s and Mary Gergen’s conceptualisation of plot in narratives of the self (1983), which prioritises a focus on alterations in the evaluative dimension of experience. The foci of Bruner and Polkinghorne can be regarded as more oriented toward how configurations of events can be typologised into a specific vocabulary of plot drawing on Western literary traditions: romance, epic, tragedy, etc. In order to overcome a culturally embedded vocabulary of plot, Gergen & Gergen operate with three basic plots forming three rudimentary types of narratives of the self, based on how narrators select incidents and images occurring across time and links them through evaluative comparison. They operate with the ‘evaluative continuum’, a scale of evaluation in which movement over time (experience) can orient in a positive direction or in a negative direction. The first type is the ‘stability narrative’. This narrative configures incidents, images, or concepts in a way where the individual remains unchanged in terms of the evaluative position. The second type is the ‘progressive’ narrative. This narrative configures incidents, images or concepts in an increment movement in the evaluative space. The third type is the ‘regressive narrative’. This narrative configures incidents, images or concepts in a decrement movement in the evaluative space (pp. 258-59). Gergen’s & Gergen’s conceptualisation of plot is relevant in terms of situating the narrative types by which the women articulate becoming pious Muslim women.

I address the level of context from the perspective that narrative accomplishes certain task. As such, I adopt an understanding of narrative
as strategic, functional and purposeful (Riessman, 2008, p. 8). In this sense, narrative is comprehended as a form of action in terms of stories being discursive ways of doing or accomplishing something (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012, p. 7). They are produced in a social context. In addressing the context level, I have two foci. One is the immediate or local context of the interaction in the interview between the interlocutor and me. The other is the wider socio-cultural context in order explore how the women position themselves in relation to dominant discourses by which they are positioned.

**Reading for ethics**

In Chapter 2, I outlined the four aspects of the Foucaultian perspective on ethics: determination of the ethical substance, mode of subjectivation, the self-forming activity and the telos of the ethical subject. These aspects constitute the analytical frame for the readings of the interview material in posing questions of analysis pertaining to the aspect of ethics in question.

The first aspect of ethics concerns the determination of the ethical substance, which in this study is the women’s cultivation of piety, closeness to God. The first question of analysis addresses the relation of the interior and the exterior in the women’s cultivation of piety by asking: Which way are the women to constitute a part of themselves as prime material for their moral conduct? Do they articulate a hierarchical distinction of the exterior – in terms of observance of acts of prohibited
and obligatory acts – and the interior in terms of the mastery of inner disposition in the constitution of the prime material?

The second aspect of ethics concerns the mode of subjectivation. The second question of analysis addresses the relation of the women and religious authority on two levels. The first one is in terms of the authoritative religious discourse of the Qur’an and the Hadith by which the women are incited to recognise their moral obligations. The question of analysis on this level is: How do the young Muslim women recognise and appropriate the authoritative discourse of Islam? The second level of this aspect is the relationship between the women and claimants of religious authority. Here the questions of analysis are: How do the women relate to religious authority? Do the women claim religious authority themselves?

The third aspect of ethics concerns the self-forming activity or self-practice performed by the women. The questions of analysis address the means by which the women change themselves in order to become pious subjects. Here I ask: Which kinds of self-techniques do the women apply in the cultivation of piety, and how do they apply them? Foucault does not elaborate the role of others in his outline of the question of analysis related to the third aspect of ethics (Foucault, 1992 (1984), p. 27; 1997a, p. 265; 1983, p. 241). However, he does emphasise the social dimension in his conceptualisation of technologies of the self: “(they) permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others certain numbers of operations (…)” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). It is therefore relevant to address the
relational aspect of self-techniques in order to explore the modes of relations at play between the women and others in the constitution of pious subjectivity.

The fourth aspect of ethics concerns the telos of the ethical being or the kind of being towards which the individual aspires when behaving in a moral way. As such, this aspect relates to the frames of a particular authoritative model committing the individual to a particular mode of being. In the Islamic discursive tradition the objective is to please Allah in aspiring for salvation in the afterlife. The fourth question of analysis addresses the eschatological dimension in terms of how the women relate to piety and salvation in their everyday lives.
Part two Analyses
Chapter 5 Narratives of the Good Example

This chapter explores the relation of two aspects in self-formation: the mode of subjectivation and the self-forming work applied in becoming a pious subject. It analyses how Islamic knowledge and behaviour are interrelated in a moral practice of the everyday life. I introduce the chapter by analysing how the women are incited to and invest in subject positions offered by the authoritative discourse of Islam. Here I focus on the exemplary models of the Islamic discursive tradition and how the women draw on them in the self-forming work to become a good example. I then proceed to analyse the good example in the frame of da’wa in order to pin down the relational aspects of pious subjectivation. Based on this analysis I argue that the women position themselves as knowledgeable and devoted Muslim women who represent ‘correct’ Islam to a Muslim community as well as a Danish majority society. Finally, I explore the effect of this positioning in terms of religious authority by asking if the women as pious subjects carve out space as religious authoritative actors.

The exemplary in the Islamic discursive tradition: Antagonistic discourses on the ‘Muslim woman’

In Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, I established the authoritative discourse of the Qur’an and the Hadith to be the mode of pious subjectivation. In a further exploration of how the women recognise and appropriate the authoritative discourse of Islam, I will, in the following, focus on the
models of the exemplary in the Islamic discursive tradition. The words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad constitute the exemplary model to be emulated in order for a Muslim to act correctly in harmony with orthodox standards of piety. This exemplary model serves as an all-encompassing set of moral and social references which shapes discourses and social practices. The exemplary model of the Prophet is also what lies behind the impetus of Muslims to become the good example towards each other in “enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong”, which encompasses the propagation of Islamic values to fellow Muslims (Mahmood, 2005). In addition, the wives of the Prophet constitute specific female exemplary models. However, Islamic interpretations of the founding texts have given rise to antagonistic discourses on the female models implicating different conceptions of the Muslim female subject (Ahmed, 1992; Stowasser, 1994). In her book Women and Gender in Islam (1992), Leila Ahmed characterises the founding discourses of Islam as a tension between two distinct voices in terms of gender perception. One is expressed in a pragmatic hierarchical structuring of gender relation subordinating women to male domination. The other is expressed in an ethical egalitarian vision that advocates the moral and spiritual equality of male and female (1992, pp. 63-66). However, the ethical egalitarian vision was marginalised during the codification of the Qur'an and the Sunnah into a theological-legal system within the androcentric and misogynist society of the Abbasid dynasty (750-1258 CE). It resulted in an institutionalised subordination of Muslim women to male domination legitimised by interpretations of the founding texts (pp. 67, 79-94). The
historian of religion Barbara Stowasser demonstrates the emergence of a hegemonic discourse on the female exemplary models in the age of the Abbasid dynasty. It consolidates the hierarchical structuring of gender relations by stipulating the human weaknesses of the wives of the Prophet emerging from their claimed inferior human nature. This theological-legal discourse legitimates restrictive rules in terms of women’s liberty of action based upon interpretation of the founding texts. Its focus is strict gender segregation, the isolation of the women to the domestic sphere, an emphasis on the women’s modesty of behaviour and their veiling, the submission of women towards their husbands based on the Prophet Muhammad’s wives’ submission to him (Stowasser, 1994, pp. 106-7). In sum, this hegemonic discourse does not recognise women to be moral subjects of their actions.

A key element in the discourse is the concept of fitna. Fitna means chaos, disorder. It signifies social rift or conflict. It equally signifies temptation and fascination, and in this context it stands for a beautiful and irresistible woman. The research of the Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi (1985) on the concept of fitna yields further insight into the reasoning of this theological-legal discourse as well as the consequences it has for the hierarchical social organisation of gender. Mernissi points to a conceptualisation of female sexuality in the Islamic discursive tradition as an active, potentially subversive power, because it diverts the male’s alertness from his social and religious obligations. Woman is both fitna in herself and a potential fitna creator. According to Mernissi, the organisation of the social order in Muslim societies revolves around the
submission of the woman’s alleged fitna-creating power in order to prevent the harmful effects of it (Mernissi, 1985, pp. 30-34). In sum, the discourse of the Muslim woman as fitna articulates the female without capacity to act as a moral subject and having potentially subversive powers. A subject position as the good example is not offered to Muslim women.

In the 20th century, the hegemonic discourse of the Muslim woman as fitna becomes seriously challenged by a counter discourse of the exemplary Muslim women. This discourse offers an alternative interpretation in downscaling articulations of the inferior female nature and constructing the wives of the Prophet as exemplary models. A glorification of femaleness through the divine given role to the woman as a mother and a wife is a key element. The wives of the Prophet are articulated as active helpers of the domestic sphere, where the family appears with a renewed moral and educating function of morality. Furthermore, the wives are articulated as active women beyond the domestic sphere, who side by side with the Prophet fight the cause of Islam physically, mentally and spiritually (Stowasser, 1994, p. 107, 125-126). The counter discourse of the exemplary Muslim woman disseminates within Muslim majority societies with the Islamic revival of the 20th century (Ahmed, 1992; Stowasser, 1994). Ethnographic research (Rasmussen, 1999; Christiansen, 1999) in Muslim majority societies reveal that Muslim women engaging in the Islamic revival position themselves within this counter discourse in negotiating new positions as the good example and in claiming recognition as
authoritative actors in society. In a Middle Eastern context, the study of Lene Kofoed Rasmussen on Muslim women’s engagement in the Islamic revival in the 1990s in Egypt demonstrates how Islamist women navigate within different competing discourses. They resist the hegemonic discourse of ‘the Muslim woman as fitna’ by positioning themselves as pious subjects claiming moral capacity to embody the good example for others as intellectuals, pedagogical instructors and political activists. Additionally, Rasmussen analyses the women’s positioning as countering a Western (neo)colonial secular liberal feminist discourse of ‘the Muslim woman as a victim’ (Rasmussen, 1999). Inspired by the research in Muslim majority societies, I find it relevant to explore how the women of this study activate the exemplary models of the first believing community and position themselves as good examples in a minority context.

From the exemplary models to being a good example

The women articulate the exemplary models of the Prophet Muhammad and his wives as reference to act according to Islamic conceptions of piety. In acts of everyday life, the present is related to a past by activating these

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34 According to William E. Shepard (1987, p. 308, 314), the term ‘Islamism’ refers to an ideologisation of Islam, where Islam is conceived as an integrated system for life conduct which also encompasses the political, economic and social dimensions of organising society. In the context of Rasmussen’s study, Islamism is understood as a modus of argumentation with which groups or individuals position themselves in the field of identity politics in an Egyptian national context and a geopolitical north-south context (Rasmussen, 1999, p. 7, 13, 14).

35 See Connie Carøe Christiansen (1999) for a comparable study in a Moroccan context.
models as a self-forming activity in aspiring to be a good example. The women constantly refer to the model of the Prophet in claiming an Islamic perspective to their doings of everyday life. This perspective was particularly pronounced when I invited them to describe their everyday Islamic practice. Malika articulates: “When I do something then I always think if it forms part of the Prophet’s practice”. Acts of worship in the form of Islamic rituals\(^{36}\) as such were not made relevant in their description of everyday practice of Islam. What they did make relevant in the description of their Islam practice was how Islam makes sense to them and their reflections on how they aspire to be good Muslims by seeking an Islamic dimension to all aspects of (daily) life. Ruba describes it the following way:

Rubā: For me Islam is everything. That is, understand me correctly, that when I go to work I find an Islamic dimension in it, that I do it for God’s sake, that I have a purpose with it, I want to do something good for others, for myself; the fact that I am getting an education, that I am treating others well. All these things are because it is something I know that the Prophet has said is something good to do. It is like a reason, for example for my behaviour, or my opinions, or that sort of thing. In the everyday life it is expressed, of course when I wear my headscarf. In the morning, every morning, when I wear it, go to work, come home, if I am taking it off or putting it on, just that I touch my headscarf, I get in contact with my religion. Just by praying my prayers, just by coming home and saying hello to my husband, that is, all the everyday things I do. You can always find an Islamic dimension in everything you do.

In relating to her subjection to God and following the exemplary model of the Prophet, Ruba explains how daily life in general becomes acts of worship. She positions herself as a consciously practising Muslim by articulating a continuous mindfulness – an Islamic reasoning – to her doings.

The women equally relate to one of the Prophet’s wives, ‘A’ishah, in particular. ‘A’ishah bint Abu Bakr was one of the wives of the Prophet. She is an important source to the Sunnah of the Prophet in being the transmitter of a vast amount of Hadiths. Sunni Muslims regard her as an esteemed authority for the preservation of their past (Spellberg, 1994, p. 10). One of my interlocutors, Hana, makes the model of ‘A’ishah relevant in discussing qiwamah, a key concept in the Islamic perception of gender relations. In general, qiwamah is comprehended as men’s responsibility for women. Hana positions herself within the ethical egalitarian discourse of Islam and asserts that Islam does not legitimise male dominance in the relation of men and women. She refers to “the sources” and argues that in the first Islamic community men and women had different areas of responsibilities, but they were considered equals. She sustains the argument of equality by reference to the exemplary models of

37 The Islamic concept of qiwamah implies that the husband is in charge of/responsible for the wife and is based on the Qur’anic verse 4:34. The Swedish historian of religion Anne Sofie Roald points out that the American Islamic feminist and Muslim scholar Amina Wadud has researched the genealogy of the concept. Her conclusion is that the Islamic understanding of qiwamah as men’s control over women is subject to time and place. However, Wadud suggests that a contemporary interpretation of the text would imply that men’s responsibility for women applies only to their economic support of the family (Roald, 2001, p. 145).
the Prophet and his wives, stating that equality was the characteristic of their relationship. I ask her if the wives of the Prophet are exemplary models for her. She answers that in Islam the wives of the Prophet and his followers are models of the exemplary for everything, and Muslims of today can indeed apply the example of the first community in their lives. When I probe how Hana more specifically appropriates these models of the exemplary, she activates the model of ‘A’ishah:

Monique: how do you do it? Are there any figures that you have a special, can you say, relationship to, who inspire you?
Hana: well, amongst others there is the wife of the prophet, A’isha, whom for me seems as a sort of superwoman, this is because she was really bold, intelligent, and really acute; which are some traits, which I think sometimes traditionally are utterly absent from women, that is sometimes they are almost reduced to small dolls who should stay at home and take care of children, and so on. Not that I’m saying it’s something bad to stay at home and take care of the children. It’s just this monotonous or one-sided picture which sometimes is concerning women, which I, all of us, can get frustrated about. Whereas I think someone like A’isha brings out some very different aspects of womanhood, which I think is admirable, and I think: “okay, she is a tough woman, I want to be like her”.

Hana is a mother of three young children. She is studying for an MA in a humanistic discipline. She is committed to volunteer work in the Muslim youth association in the form of giving foundational courses on Islam, and she aspires to get involved in other activities of the association. She is thus an active woman beyond the domestic sphere and embodies other aspects of womanhood than the one put forward in the Islamic traditionalistic perspective. By legitimating her stance with reference to ‘A’ishah, she can
articulate a critical evaluation of this perspective and simultaneously be in compliance with the discursive tradition of Islam. As such, in identifying with ‘A’ishah, she negotiates other subject positions as a Muslim woman than the one offered within the claimed traditionalistic perspective.

Cultivating the right feelings

The women’s appropriation of the exemplary models in becoming good examples is a work of converging inner dispositions and behaviour in the micro practices of everyday life. In mastering inner dispositions, the cultivation of the right feelings is an area of focus. In this self-forming work, the exemplary model of the Prophet is activated to discipline feelings counterproductive to pious subjectivation. The women particularly strive to feel joy, love and humility. Feelings of joy and the energy derived from joy are for example cultivated by way of “the smile”. Smiling is a self-technique that works both on inner dispositions, to be filled by inner joy, and behaviour, the act of smiling to others, both Muslims and non-Muslims. In referring to the exemplary model of the Prophet, the women consider smiling an act of charity, sadaqa. In acquiring “even more love to this religion”, one of the interlocutors cultivates the feeling of love by talking a lot about the events in the life of the Prophet, about “his qualities and glorified characteristics” with her friends and co-associates in SYMD. Some of the women activate the exemplary model of the Prophet in order to discipline feelings of anger. In the following, Mira narrates how she disciplines feelings of pride:
Mira: (...) well, pride is a very common trait in people, we all have it, it just is, even if you don’t show it, and it only is something you feel, it’s still wrong, and it’s even more wrong when you show it. But it’s something which haunts me every day. It can appear, well, maybe it’s there and I cannot feel it. For example, if I get up from my seat, to offer it to an elderly lady on the bus, then I think “oh, today I did something good” instead of thinking “well, this is what the Prophet has taught me, because God told him, so what I’m doing is to follow the Prophet’s actions, then I have not done something unusual or exceptionally well. The only thing I have done is to follow in the footsteps of a person who acted this way 1400 years ago, there is nothing special about it”. It’s about being able to restrain oneself.

Mira works upon herself by activating the exemplary model of the Prophet in evaluating, disciplining and transforming her feelings of pride that emerge from doing a good deed. The direct speech in the narrative lends insight into the different positionings and how Mira manages them. In the first voicing of the direct speech, the evaluation of her act is one of praising herself. This is the positioning of pride, according to Mira. The second voicing of the direct speech reveals the evaluation of this first positioning. In reflecting upon this positioning, Mira articulates a new positioning informed by the exemplary model of the Prophet Muhammad. One might say that in a movement of reflexivity Mira objectifies herself, reflecting upon her actions and feelings from the perspective of the exemplary model of the Prophet in an evaluation of her first assessment of the action. Then in the second positioning, she transforms her assessment of her behaviour into compliance with the moral obligation of the
discursive tradition of Islam. This is how she curbs her pride and conducts herself.

**From conducting self to conducting others**

Mira’s story above conveys how she conducts herself. Self-conduct is the reflexive movement of power at work in self-technologies. Another movement of power is the conduct of others. In Chapter 2.2, I emphasised that technologies of the self equally imply the relationship to others. In probing the logic of the good example and how others become enrolled in the women’s pious subjectivation, I apply the Foucaultian perspective on power relations as a set of actions upon other actions. Here I focus on the reflexive and transitive movements of power relations. The reflexive movement is that of self-domination, of self-conduct. The transitive movement is that of acting upon actions of others: governing the conduct of others (Foucault, 1983, pp. 220-221). In the following, I elaborate how the movements intertwine in the women’s pious subjectivation. The reflexive movement relates to the self-forming practice of being good examples. The transitive movement – conducting the conduct of others – relates to acting as good examples that have an impact on the conduct of others.

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38 An act of pride can also be a quarrel with her mother, where Mira describes herself as being rebellious. In order to counter these acts of pride (after they have taken place), Mira is particularly attentive to humble acts in the cultivation of humility. I elaborate on this aspect in Chapter 6.

39 In order to operationalise power relations as acting upon the actions of others or governing the conduct of others, I apply the concept of ‘transitive power’ outlined by Göhler (2009). Here transitive power is understood as the influence that an actor performs on another actor with the intention to open up or close off specific options to him or her (Göhler, 2009, pp. 35-36).
others. The following story of Mira exemplifies how the interpellation of the Islamic authoritative discourse starts a reflexive movement of transformation. As a teenager, Mira began studying Islamic literature as well as the Qur’an and Hadith literature. Her motivation was to obtain an amplified knowledge of the reasons and the deeper meanings of the rituals of the prayer and the fast in order to find out how Islam made sense to her:

Mira: (…) finally, I had understood Islam correctly, and now I wanted to do something about it, and not just be one of those Friday Muslims, who only go to the Friday prayer or shed a tear when they listen to the Qur’an, or say something smart concerning Islam, when they’re in a Muslim forum. I wanted to do something which would make me stronger, that was for example the headscarf (…) it (the headscarf) gives me a feeling of it being harder for me to do something wrong. Of course it’s wrong to steal, to lie, and to speak ill of other people; but as a Muslim with a headscarf it’s even harder for me to throw a banana peal on (name of the street) and I know there are 50-60 Muslims watching me. For example, it’s hard for me to say the F-word. It’s even harder due to my feeling of responsibility, that is, it’s even harder for me to do something wrong when I’m wearing the headscarf.

Mira articulates a breakthrough of reaching a proper understanding of Islam and how it makes sense to her. Taking action upon this breakthrough becomes a movement of differentiation from other Muslims, whom she claims do Muslimness differently than she does: attending only the Friday prayer in the Mosque suggests that they are merely Muslims on Fridays (what about the other days of the week?); the emotional reaction when hearing the words of the Qur’an suggests a sentimental relation to
religion (do they implement Islam in their actions?), and finally being knowledgeable about Islam, but using the knowledge to assert oneself, suggests a superficial understanding of Islam. The narrative can equally be read as Mira referring to possible positions of a past self. Before her breakthrough, she was one of the ‘Friday Muslims’ whom she now differentiates herself from. Now she does Muslimness by way of implementing Islam in her everyday life; cultivating coherence between feelings and behaviour; acquiring Islamic knowledge not for the sake of self-assertion in social relations, but in order to propagate it to others. With Asad’s (Asad, 2006, pp. 212-213) term, one can perceive of this breakthrough as an ‘inner binding’ in which Mira connects to the ‘truth’, the Islamic authorising discourse, and begins a process of transformation. One may read Mira’s articulation of individual responsibility as an aspect of moral strength, and in the narrative it is linked with the practice of the hijab.40 The hijab practice intensifies differentiating right from wrong and transforms seemingly small acts like throwing litter in the street or swearing into serious challenges to an individual responsibility for virtuous conduct. Mahmood analyses the bodily practice of hijab as a self-technique in the cultivation of an interiority of female modesty (Mahmood, 2005, pp. 160-161). However, Mira’s story points to a further perspective than the cultivation of modesty and exemplifies the hijab as a

40 In differentiating herself from Muslims doing Muslimness differently, Mira is silent about other Muslim women not wearing the hijab. Apart from one, none of the women articulates moral evaluations of other Muslim women not wearing the hijab. The one who does states that not wearing the hijab does not make a Muslim woman less Muslim. The women are very conscious of articulating the donning of the hijab as a choice which the individual woman must make herself.
self-technique in the cultivation of individual responsibility for virtuous conduct. The gazes of other Muslims in public places reinforce the impetus to virtuous conduct. Applying the Foucaultian perspective on Panopticism (1977, pp. 195-228), the gazes may be read as an embodied normalising discourse that disciplines Mira to a self-monitoring of acting according to an Islamic conception of female modesty in public spaces. However, situating the gazes of other Muslims in the perspective of reflexive and transitive movements of pious subjectivation leads to a further reading. Here the focus is on the enrolling of others in self-practices. On one level, the gazes of other Muslims constitute ‘the help’ of others in the self-forming work of transforming herself into the good example. On another level, the gazes become the means for Mira to govern the conduct of others. This is the level of the transitive movement of pious subjectivation. Enrolling others in pious subjectivation can be a way of working through the power of the example (Rasmussen, 1999). In the following, Mira reflects upon the effect of her sartorial representation:

Monique: I was also considering that you mentioned this feeling of responsibility earlier, for example the wearing of hijab, which requires you to act more responsibly (…) does it also concern being a better role model to others?
Mira: yes, it does. For example, I wear a headscarf, and I could never, on a summer day, go out with a skirt without wearing pants underneath. I would never be able to go out wearing a headscarf and a T-shirt because if someone walks by me on (name of the street), and she, just five minutes before she sees me, considered if she should

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41 Khawaja (2011) focuses on the minority-majority relation in exploring how Muslim minority youth in Copenhagen negotiate Muslimness and visibility in public spaces conditioned by the normalising gaze of the Danish majority.
wear a headscarf or not and then sees me and how I’m dressed; she would go put on a headscarf, on the basis of what she has seen, that is, she would think it’s okay to wear a T-shirt, or skirt, or walk around with a cigarette in her hand, or she might think it’s okay to have a child before you’re married, all that sort of stuff. It’s an immense burden all the time to walk around and feel like an example to others (…)

Mira articulates a cause and effect relation in terms of what would happen if she did not perform the good example. She positions herself as representing correct Islam, and being visibly Muslim she claims to have an impact on other Muslim women’s perceptions of doing Muslimness. The gazes of others become a means to influence the spectators to do good Muslimness by way of working through the power of the example.

I have now analysed how the exemplary models of the first Islamic community constitute a mode of subjectivation transposed into a self-forming activity of the good example. With a focus on the transitive movement of the good example, I pin down the relational aspect of pious subjectivation. In sum, the striving to be a good example demands daily work upon the self. It equally requires work upon others. In further exploring the convergence of the reflexive and the transitive movements in pious subjectivation, I build upon the research of Rasmussen (1999). Rasmussen points out that, in an Egyptian context, the relational aspect of pious subjectivation is the women’s claim of exercising influence on others by working through the power of the example. Rasmussen argues that this relationship with others is a strategy of da’wa. This relational aspect opens
to a perspective on the women’s positioning as religious authoritative actors that have an effect on others. In the following, I explore the dimensions of da’wa in the constitution of the pious subject.

**Da’wa**

Da’wa is a central activity performed by Muslim women engaging the Islamic revival both in Muslim majority societies (Christiansen, 1999; Rasmussen, 1999; Mahmood, 2005; Hirschkind, 2006) and Muslim minority contexts (Amir-Moazami & Jouili, 2006; Jouili, 2008; Jacobsen, 2011; Minganti, 2007). The term da’wa means ‘invitation’ or ‘call to Islam’. Historically, it has been conceptualised in various ways in different Islamic traditions. The contemporary meaning of da’wa encompasses propagation of Islam both to Muslims (inter-ummahic da’wa) as well as to non-Muslims (extra-ummahic da’wa) (Racius, 2004, p. 39). Contemporary understandings of da’wa in Islamic revival movements is that of a religious duty that requires all adult members of the Islamic community to urge fellow Muslims to greater piety, and to teach one another correct Islamic conduct (Mahmood, 2005). However, in the Egyptian context, despite women’s increased participation in the field of da’wa, they are not allowed to carry out da’wa to men (p. 65).

In a contemporary Danish context, da’wa is performed to Muslims as well as to non-Muslims. The women I interviewed perform da’wa to men when they engage in da’wa activities towards non-Muslims. As invited speakers the women give talks about Islam and being a Muslim to audiences of
mixed gender. They equally organise and engage different forms of events in the public sphere where both males and females are addressed. The ‘Ramadan Tent’ is an example of such an event. In the month of the Ramadan, one of the youth associations has raised a tent on a square in the city. Here some of the women, while observing the rules of the fast themselves, serve food to curious visitors entering the tent and engage talks about the Ramadan and Islam in general. One study on contemporary organised da’wa in the West underlines that da’wa activities form a link between the Muslim communities and the majority societies (Janson, 2002, p. 70). The perspective of linkage between communities can be applied to the two youth associations of which the women are members or affiliated to. They encourage their members to be good representatives of Islam towards the Danish majority society. As I have described in the introduction, such an encouragement was clearly articulated at a public event of SYMD. Here the invited speaker, an imam, emphasised that the way Muslims are to engage in a non-Muslim society is to be positive representatives of Islam, not to isolate themselves, but to mingle with other groupings than their own.

The women I interviewed emphasise that da’wa can take many forms. However, in compliance with the discursive tradition of Islam, they distinguish between direct and indirect da’wa to Muslims as well as to non-Muslims. Larry Poston (1992) has studied the performance of da’wa in Muslim minority contexts in the West. He describes the direct form of da’wa as an activist approach propagating the message of Islam to individuals and/or groups. It implies face-to-face communication (e.g.
giving dars, Islamic teaching, door-to-door calling, talking to friends and colleagues) and mediated communication (writing or publishing either offline or online material on Islamic issues). The indirect form is described as a ‘lifestyle approach’, a sort of ‘show-it-don’t-tell-it’ approach, in which it is understood that the devout Muslim has such a powerful attraction on others that they will take initiative to ask questions about the lifestyle (p. 10, 117-130). Based upon the distinction described by Poston, the Swedish Islamologue Jonas Otterbeck (2003) suggests terming the ‘lifestyle’ approach a ‘passive’ form of da’wa. He defines passive da’wa as: “the act of being visibly Muslim showing non-Muslims what being Muslim is all about. The example is supposed to counter stereotypes and show Muslims as good, friendly and special” (p. 16). Jacobsen (2011) argues against the term ‘passive’ da’wa as it risks blurring the active engagement of being visibly Muslim in a minority context (p. 190). Building upon Jacobsen’s argument, I retain the term indirect da’wa. Being visibly Muslim and conducting oneself as an example of good Muslimness for non-Muslims is indeed an active engagement, even though it often concerns the little things of everyday interaction as for example a smile towards a curious or sometimes mistrusting gaze of a non-Muslim majority. Additionally, the women I interviewed make use of the terms indirect and direct da’wa. Hence, I apply the terms direct and indirect to da’wa performed to Muslims as well as to non-Muslims.
Performing da’wa

In their everyday lives, the women are active in Muslim community work as instructors teaching Arabic to children and adolescents; Qur’an recitation and foundational courses in Islam to converts. They organise id-prayer and events related to ending the Ramadan. They help Muslim youngsters do their homework and carry out various kinds of intervention work toward delinquent Muslim teenage girls. In relation to the majority society they are guides for visitors during ‘open house’ events; give talks to public and grammar school students about Islam and being Muslim; organise and participate in events in the public places in the city in order to create relations of dialogue and to inform about Islam and participate as invited speakers in public discussion about being Muslim organised by different civic centres in the city. The women articulate these activities as part of their Islam practice and specifically as da’wa work. The activities above are part of the direct da’wa performed by the women. The women perform indirect da’wa by way of conducting themselves in a kind and friendly manner. In relating to the Danish majority society, they actively position themselves as good representatives of Islam. One crucial strategy is to make themselves available to all kinds of different questions about Islam from co-students, colleagues, people in the street, on the bus or the train. The women comprehend questions posed by others as an opportunity to engage in dialogue and a possibility to represent Islam the right way in order to counter misunderstandings about Islam among the

42 At the time of the interview one of the interlocutors, Mira, spent around 18-19 hours a week engaging in the association.

43 The ‘open house’ is a recurring event in one of the associations.
majority population. Being visibly Muslim entails an active engagement in the surroundings in a given situation. The women frequently articulate indirect da’wa as the “simple things” or “very basic things”. The ‘smile’ as ‘simple things’ in performing da’wa is a recurrent theme in their narratives. As described in above, to smile is an act of cultivating the inner disposition of joy. In the context of da’wa, joy is related to acting friendly toward others, and here the smile becomes a counter act to presumed negative prejudices encountered in their everyday lives. Despite the articulations of the smile as a simple thing, the women ascribe it a great impact on the receiver(s).

An act can simultaneously be extra-ummahic and inter-ummahic da’wa. In the following, Mira, articulates the simultaneity:

Mira: … now that I spend a lot of time in (name of the city), well, there are so many different types of Muslims and that I for example smile at an old lady on the bus and she comes over and asks me something, well, that can rub off on someone (a Muslim woman, ed.) who is sitting on the bus and saw what just happened and… she comes over and asks: “well, don’t you find it embarrassing to sit and smile at her; well, isn’t it embarrassing(1) to ask questions on the bus, such as when people are sitting and looking; well, why do you have to get up for her” … that is, that just a small smile can draw out many different things in people.

Performing extra-ummahic da’wa to the aged non-Muslim women in the form of a smile and being at disposal for questions simultaneously becomes an inter-ummahic da’wa to the Muslim woman on the bus, who
observes how Mira conducts herself in relating to the non-Muslim woman. As such, the incident is articulated as an opportunity to influence the Muslim woman (a different type of Muslim than Mira?) by working through the power of the example: In relations with non-Muslims a Muslim is to conduct herself with politeness, kindness and openness to engage in dialogue.

To advocate indirect da’wa can be a positioning against other groupings of Muslims in Denmark. Some groupings are either regarded as being too political in their understanding of Islam or as having a wrong approach to the non-Muslim majority society. Hizb ut-Tahrir\(^4\) is mentioned as a grouping that some of the women distance themselves from. In the following, Hafsa articulates her understanding of da’wa in opposition to the direct da’wa performed by other groupings (she is alluding to Hizb ut-Tahrir, which she positions herself in opposition to several times during the interview):

Hafsa: well, that to invite to Islam depends on how you understand the sentence; because some have the view that it should be... some groupings prefer direct da’wa where they stand in (area of the city) with folders and pamphlets inviting to Islam. But da’wa can be in different ways. It can also be in an indirect fashion, the way you talk, the way you act, the way you are towards your fellow human beings, the way you eat, drink, that is, the indirect way. And I don’t feel the need to stand on (name of the street) and hand out folders and pamphlets when I can do it my way, to be a Muslim and act in accordance with the knowledge I obtain in Islam concerning how I

\(^4\) The global Islamic political organization Hizb ut-Tahrir was founded in the Middle East in the 1950s. In Denmark it was established during the 1990s. Its object is to reinstate the caliphate (Grøndahl et al. 2003).
should act towards my fellow humans and such. So I relate to the way of giving da’wa, uhm, being together with my fellow students spending time with them, that is, being who I still am, but not directly saying: “listen, Islam says this and that”, or “I want you to believe in this”, those kinds of things I would never dream of doing. That’s the understanding I have of da’wa.

Monique: mm... does that mean that you basically regard a social relation...
Hafsa: … yes.
Monique: … as a da’wa relation?
Hafsa: yes.

Hafsa does not perform direct da’wa activities. However, in comprehending indirect da’wa as a potentiality present in all social relations, Hafsa transforms her everyday life into a da’wa situation; the way she drinks, eats, walks, dresses, talks and acts towards others. With such an understanding of da’wa, being a good example becomes a requirement in every social relation as an embodiment of who one is in order “to be myself as a Muslim”.

Being good citizens

The women’s narratives of performing da’wa in terms of being the good example draw on elements in the Danish discourse on integration. In the articulations, there seems to be a fusion of the Islamic conceptualisation of the good example and the theme of the good citizen in the Danish discourse on integration. Here the concept of ‘Role Model’ (rollemodel in Danish) is a key term. It is specifically applied in an area of political
priority called “Brug for alle unge” (All young people are needed) launched in 2003 by the former Ministry of Refugees, Immigrants and Integration. It is now a project under the Ministry of Children and Education (www.brugforalleunge.dk, accessed 10.07.2013). This project targets ethnic minority youth with the aim of motivating them to and supporting them in obtaining a youth education. One strategy to obtaining this goal is the “Role Model Corps”. The corps consists of young ethnic minority persons working benevolently as role models based upon their achievements in Danish society. The ‘Guide to the Role Model Corps’ (Guide til Rollemodelkorps) distributed by the Ministry of Children and Education describes the role models as being educated or in the process of obtaining an education, they have a job, they participate in different forms of community work. They are active in society, and they perform good citizenship. As role models, they are examples to inspire other ethnic minority youth to start or complete a youth education. They give talks in different settings and tell their stories of successful achievements. They are equally to counteract marginalisation and extremism among minority youth by guidance and talks in relation to issues of identity, relation to family, active co-citizenship, democratic processes and fundamental values in Denmark. Based on the ‘Guide to the Role Model Corps’ it may be claimed that the Role Model project is an articulation of the Danish discourse on integration in which education, work and active co-citizenship define the good citizen in Denmark.

In positioning themselves as an example in their da’wa activities, the women draw on elements of this discourse. One of my interlocutors, Suha,
articulates an interrelation of being a good Muslim and being a good citizen as she narrates her experience with giving da’wa:

(...) but due to that I really felt that this (Islam) was the answer to my life of how I wanted to live my life, for me it made sense, so it’s obvious that I want to help others with this, and make them aware of that (...) instead of sitting selfishly at home and just thinking yeah okay, or to look down on others: “I feel sorry for you, running around making trouble, running around committing crimes and stealing scooters”, and the girls who organise themselves into gangs in girl gangs, and what not. Then you could be a type of role model to them, both spiritually and, how would you put it, earthly in Denmark, be a role model purely Islamic and what you have done in life, studies and try to set them straight (...) through and through it’s about being good citizens and at the same time being Islamic.

Suha positions herself as an active pious Muslim woman and a good citizen in narrating her breakthrough in Islam that leads her to da’wa activities. By being a role model both spiritually: to be a good example and mundanely: to be a good citizen, Suha performs da’wa to delinquent youngsters in order to influence them to achieve something in their lives. They need to become good citizens (as in studying) and belong spiritually (in Islam).

Salma, who teaches courses of tadjwid, focuses on helping her students to overcome feelings of fragmentation and marginalisation by way of her own example:

Monique: and for example being a good example to the girls whom you teach, what does it take to be a good example (...)?
Salma: yes well, with a part of the girls who come (...) they are sort of torn, and I don’t think I have ever felt that way; that is, I don’t feel that I have been torn, it may be that some people feel that way, they feel...
Monique: ... torn concerning what?
Suha: … concerning their family that they feel that they must behave in one way, but when they’re in school they feel like a different person and some of them do; but in each incident first and foremost to show them that you can be the same person, that is, in Islam you don’t need to be several people, that is, you can easily combine Islam with everything else (...) So yes, that would be an example of that it can work, you can easily be here in Denmark and have a good life as a Muslim (...).
Monique: mm, like you said a moment ago, that just by showing the people who come that you can be a good Muslim and do well here in Denmark. Is that something you find important to show and why?
Salma: yes (...) well, take these young people who are constantly told by society: “you’re useless, you’re such and such”, well, they’re constantly told different things, they’re being labelled almost even before; and if they come from, well, I don’t like to use the word, but if they’re from a socio-economically disadvantaged family (...) then it could be that one feels trod upon and you feel as if you’re getting further and further down, right. But that they also get the other side of it (...) that you surely can function on the outside also concerning work, which you discuss a lot: “yes, yes, I cannot get a job anyway, because I wear a headscarf” or “of course you can, look at us, all of us work and that’s not a problem”.

The young girls to whom she offers guidance articulate feelings of self-fragmentation. They experience being different persons depending on the contexts they are part of: the family (a Muslim context) or the school (a non-Muslim context). The voicing of majority society articulates the marginalisation of the girls and the effect it has on them in the direct
speech of the girls, in that they posit the veil as a hindrance to getting a job (therefore it is of no use to get an education and stay in school, where they experience fragmentation?). Salma counters the claims of the girls by appealing to them that her own example proves them wrong. By narrating the guidance of the girls attending her class in the youth association, Salma positions herself as a person with a strong sense of a coherent self.

The narratives of Suha and Selma exemplify how the women’s articulations of the good example converge with a Danish discourse of integration and citizenship. One might say that the Danish integration discourse of ‘role model’ becomes inscribed in the women’s articulations of the good example in performing da’wa. Islam is articulated as a tool to navigate complex life conditions and to surmount experience of marginalisation in a Danish minority context.

The quest for knowledge

Research on Muslim women’s engagement in the Islamic revival in Muslim majority societies (Rasmussen, 1999; Christiansen, 1999; Mahmood, 2005) and in Muslim minority contexts (Amir-Moazami & Jouili, 2006; Jouili, 2008; Jacobsen, 2011; Minganti, 2007) reveal that pious Muslim women schedule their everyday lives into an Islamic programming in which acquisition of Islamic knowledge, ‘ilm, is a crucial activity. The women I interviewed equally articulate knowledge

45 See Christiansen (1999, pp. 136-137) in particular for the meticulous daily programme of pious Muslim women in a Moroccan context.
acquisition to be imperative. They regard it as a continuous task in their lives. The most important thing is the foundational knowledge of the Qur’an, and the Hadith literature. All of the women read Arabic, though with varying proficiency. They emphasise knowledge acquisition to be an obligation incumbent on every Muslim. Salma formulates it the following way:

Salma: (…) well, in Islam the first verse which came down was ‘iqr’, which means read, and it’s every Muslim’s duty to always search for more knowledge. One must never reach the point of: “well; now I am smart enough”. That is, it’s an eternal pursuit; you must always learn more and know more.

Salma argues for her striving to become a knowledgeable Muslim woman by way of referring to the past: the narrative of the angel Gabriel, Djibriil, conveying the first verse of the Qur’anic revelation to the Prophet Muhammad by ordering him to read. She tells me that she has a set programme to follow in order to acquire knowledge. Among other things, she reads sirah literature, the biography of the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions, watches broadcastings on satellite television on the subject and attends the weekly darses, religious lessons, offered by FYMD. Her tadjwid instruction and being responsible for organising different activities46 for young girls at FYMD equally motivate her to acquire further knowledge related to these activities.

46 Salma mentions working out a quiz for the girls to learn basic knowledge of Islam in a playful manner.
The women attend religious lessons on the doctrine of Islamic faith, ‘aquidah, rules in relation to worship, fiqh, and Islamic spirituality, tasawwuf. The darses are offered by the youth associations and other Muslims organisations. In FYMD, darses are offered once a week. As SYMD does not give weekly darses, the women affiliated with this association attend weekly darses elsewhere. One woman attends private tuition tadwjid apart from the class offered in SYMD. They engage in different online Islamic academies where they equally attend courses in amplifying knowledge on the subjects mentioned above. A Danish one is IslamAkademiet (The Academy of Islam) founded by shaykh Imran bin Munir Husayn and shaykh Muhammad Amin. All of the women stress vigilance when using the Internet in terms of knowledge acquisition. They assert that many sites are not of good quality, and often it is not possible to know who the author of the information is. Therefore they make use of sites by recognised religious scholars. One is IslamOnline founded by the Egyptian Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi. He is considered the leading scholar and intellectual of the Islamic revival (Mahmood, 2005, p. 83 n. 10). The scholars are consulted with questions related to family problems, youth problems, questions specifically pertaining to sharia, etc. However, a vital criterion in the women’s assessments of answers is that the individual scholar relates his answer to the lived context of the women’s lives, particularly if the scholar is from a Middle Eastern context. They do not want: “answers taken directly from the book and that fit into the society he lives

47 The 5 doctrines of faith are faith in the absolute God, angels, prophets and scriptures, the Day of Judgment, and destiny.
in”, but answers that can be implemented in their daily lives in Denmark. The women also mentioned Islamic scholars or experts such as Tariq Ramadan, shaykh Hamza Yusuf Hanson, shaykh Hesham al-Awadi and the Ruqaiyyah Warris Maqsood as sources to Islamic knowledge.

In the constitution of pious subjectivity, knowledge acquisition is a technique implemented in the everyday life by way of a programme that works on forming the individual women. In terms of the relational aspect it can be a technique that the women apply to negotiate a position in the field of ‘truth’ claims by various Muslim groupings. In the following, Hafsa articulates her motivation for studying the commentaries of the Qur’an, *tafsir*:

(...) but one of the ways you abandon this misunderstanding which may be encountered with the Qur’an, if you as a person begin to pluck out verses and in that way is in the extreme wing, I felt I had the need to read the meaning behind the different verses because all the people I knew, they could bandy about a verse without considering the entire context, without considering when it had been revealed and in which connection and such. But with a tafsir like this, where I could dip into each verse and understand what that is, and what this means. Because as a human being I’m not capable of that, I’m not knowledgeable enough compared to the ulama and such, so it was nice to know: “okay, (...) the way this group has understood this is totally different”...

Hafsa experience of being confronted with claims of true Islam from different Muslim groups motivates her to seek knowledge of the meaning and context of the verses by studying the *Tafsir al-Qur’an* by the authoritative Islamic scholar Ismail Ibn Kathir (1301-1373 CE). The
knowledge she acquires provides her with legitimacy to evaluate the claims as misunderstandings of the Qur’anic verses and to position them as extremist. By narrating her experience, Hafsa positions herself as a Muslim with knowledge of the meaning of the Qur’anic verses in contrast to what she considers an extremist strand in lack of this knowledge.

In amplifying the relational aspect of knowledge acquisition I will consider how Islamic knowledge provides the women with legitimacy in performing da’wa. Mira, for example, repeatedly asserts that she cannot perform da’wa without a profound knowledge and an accumulation of knowledge by a continuous study. Ruba articulates the relation of knowledge and da’wa the following way:

(...) it’s also dangerous to give da’wa if you don’t understand Islam, that is, that you try to guide others towards Islam, both Muslims and non-Muslims, if you don’t have the basic knowledge down correctly

Monique: and you perceive yourself as being at a point in your knowledge about Islam where you can do it?

Ruba: I would say you never reach it, it’s never sufficient, understand me correctly, there will always be this: “there is something I don’t know” (...) you will never feel like you have the core, that now you know the basics; because there will always be more, and more, and more, which you figure out that “you don’t have”, dependent on how much you’re absorbed in your religion. There are also some people who would say to you: “Islam’s five columns, Islam’s six articles of faith, to acknowledge Allah and the Prophet and the other prophets, that is sufficient”, but then you realize that “no that’s actually not enough”, because to perform that which the Prophet did, all those things are as important as believing in God. And it’s not like you can believe in one without the other. And then all the time find out that: “oh well, the Prophet did numerous things”, and then you start
practising, so you will never feel complete. It’s a bit like, therefore it’s really good for us not to know if we have done everything well now because then we would stop doing anything later. So you would constantly feel this that you want to do more because you never actually know when it’s enough.

In articulating her knowledge quest with the purpose of giving da’wa, Ruba marks a difference between herself and other Muslims (represented by the direct speech of the characters in her story), who, she asserts, consider basic knowledge of Islam to be the five pillars, the six articles of faith and recognition of Allah and the Prophet Mohammed as well as the other prophets before him. Notwithstanding her initial statement that performing da’wa requires a basic knowledge of Islam, the criteria for what Ruba considers basic knowledge expand according to her accumulation of knowledge. In an acceleration of the knowledge quest, a profound knowledge of and realisation of Prophet Muhammad’s Sunnah is juxtaposed to the belief in God. Ruba positions herself as competent to give da’wa, implying a distinction to other Muslims whom she considers to be less knowledgeable than she is. The continuous expansion of Islamic knowledge provides Ruba with legitimacy to perform da’wa.

Ruba’s narrative of the knowledge quest outlines how Islam becomes a task. There is always more to know, more to do, and this leads to an intensification of faith – to become an even more devote Muslim. Faith emerges or expands on the basis of knowledge. Knowledge acquisition is a

48 The five pillars of Islam are testimony, shahadah, prayer five times a day, salat, alms giving, zakat, fasting in the month of Ramadan, sawm, and pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a lifetime if one is able, hajj.
self-technique to the intensification of faith. Ruba positions herself as a
good Muslim by drawing on a classic conception of the relation of
knowledge and faith implied in the complex of Islamic morals, adab, in the
Islamic discursive tradition. According to Ira Lapidus, the concept of adab
implies the virtue of knowledge to be in a causal relationship with faith.
Faith, iman, can emerge from and grow out of knowledge, ’ilm. In its most
general sense, adab implies correct knowledge and behaviour in a total
process by which a person is formed into a good Muslim (Lapidus, 1984,
p. 39). It implies that knowledge is not true knowledge unless it is realised.
The inner self cannot be untouched by what one knows and hence by
what ones does. What makes a good Muslim is the oneness of knowing,
doing and being (Metcalf, 1984, p. 10). One might say that it is the
interrelation of knowledge and faith, between knowing and being that
constitute the inner disposition of piety which becomes transformed into
doing. Bektovic (2003) point out, the interrelation of knowledge and faith
constitutes the ‘inner’ orthodoxy of Islam which comes into being by a
personal acquisition of the truth of Islam (p. 167). This relation is the
inwardness of Islam (p. 169).

Cultivation of knowledge and faith through knowledge is pious
subjectivation in its reflexive movement. In extension, the cultivation can
be perceived in relation to the transitive movement in terms of providing
legitimacy to give da’wa. The women position themselves as
knowledgeable and devote Muslims claiming to have an impact on others
by giving da’wa. This relational aspect leads me to explore the transitive
movement in the perspective of authority by asking if the women’s
performance of da’wa by way of the good example is a claim of Islamic authority for others to recognise.

Authorities of Islam
In Chapter 2, I argued for a focus on the relation of religious authority and the individualisation of moral responsibility in exploring how the women incorporate, recognise and mould religious authority. So far I have analysed the women’s engagement in the textual knowledge as self-practice. They work upon themselves by implementing the exemplary models in their everyday lives to become good examples. They cultivate knowledge and faith in becoming devoted Muslims apt to perform da’wa by way of the power of the good example. In the self-forming work they rely on established religious authorities. They attend Islamic courses on doctrinal issues offered both offline and online by recognised religious scholars as well as consulting them when they need answers to questions in religious matters. In terms of the women’s relation to those who are in authority, they recognise religious authorities of establishment Islam. However, recognition is based upon the individual women assessing whether the truth claims make sense to them and can be incorporated in the context of their lives. One interlocutor, Hana, articulates assessment as the capacity to probe the reasoning of the claims. In the following she argues for the relevance of this capacity by relating to the exemplary model ‘A’ishah:

(…) she always asked questions. Every time the Prophet said something, she did not merely accept it, she asked: “why and how
can it be?” and that, I think, is something which I like; because sometimes there can be a bit too much of this obedience concerning numerous things, both for men and women, towards authorities, such as the imam. Here I think that this ability to ask a question is very admirable, and it is very important to keep things alive and going, so yeah.

The exemplary model of ‘A’ishah and her mode of relating to the statements of the Prophet provide Hana with legitimacy to the act of assessing truth claims by Islamic authorities as well as to her marking of difference between herself and some Muslims. To reflect and to assess are articulated in contrast to being too obedient toward religious authorities. One has to understand the reasoning of a claim in order for it to make sense. In elaborating her point of view, she explains that she is not referring to a particular grouping of Muslims, but to a particular behaviour she thinks some Muslims display irrespective of geographical location (it may be in Denmark or when she is in North Africa visiting relatives) and social categories (it may be an imam or a relative). She defines this behaviour as ‘imitation’: to do what others have done without posing questions because this-is-the-way-things-are-done. Hana positions herself as a Muslim who is driven by the desire to reflect on and understand the ‘doings’ of the tradition in contrast to some Muslims who she claims merely imitate tradition.

Hana’s argumentation can be situated within contemporary negotiations of the Islamic discursive tradition. As I discussed in Chapter 2, these negotiations in Muslim minority contexts do not only have their point of departure in the minority context, but are equally embedded in the
modern Salafiyya reform movement in Muslim majority societies. The call to reform and renewal in Islam was formulated in a critique of imitation, *taqlid*, the doctrine of imitating the decisions of previous Islamic scholars. It was considered a hindrance for the activation of tajdid, renewal, and islah, reform, in Islam (Hourani, 1983, p. 127, 150, 235). In drawing on the discourse of the Islamic reform movement, Hana articulates a relation of evaluation to established religious authorities, which is legitimated by way of relating the present to an exemplary model of the past.

So far I have discussed the women’s relation to those in authority. In the following I explore the perspective of authority with a focus on the transitive movement of pious subjectivation by asking if and how the women by way of their performance of da’wa can be said to be authority figures of a new type (van Bruissen, 2011, p. viii) as opposed to those of the traditional religious establishment. According to the anthropologist Martin van Bruissen, the new type of authority figures do not have a main education in traditional Islamic studies, but they are nevertheless “strongly committed to Islam and have acquired sufficient knowledge to speak confidently about matters of religion and its social relevance” (p. viii). Some studies on the relation between Muslim women and religious authority in Europe claim that Muslim women cannot be said to be authorities, despite changes in the field of Muslim religious authority in Europe (Spielhaus, 2012; Amir-Moazami & Jouili, 2006). In defining religious authority they distinguish between the production of religious knowledge and the transmission of religious knowledge. Particularly Amir-Moazami & Jouili argue that despite women’s participation in the
transmission of Islamic knowledge, they cannot be said to be authorities of Islamic knowledge as they do not engage processes of knowledge production which becomes part of the religious canon (Amir-Moazami & Jouili, 2006, p. 631). In order to move beyond the distinction of religious canon and lived tradition in exploring whether the women of this study can be viewed as religious authorities, I will proceed to elaborate on the notion of authority that I apply in the perspective of the transitive movement of pious subjectivation.

The sociologist of religion Bruce Lincoln (1994) offers a discursive perspective on the concept of authority. His point of departure is the etymological foundation of the Latin term ‘auctoritas’: “A word used (...) in connection with the capacity to perform a speech act that exerts force on its hearers greater than that of simple influence, but less than that of a command” (p. 2), and he elaborates:

(Authority) does not arise out of some quality of the speaker, such as an office or a charisma. Rather, I believe it is best understood in relational terms as the effect of a posited, perceived, or institutionally ascribed asymmetry between speaker and audience that permits certain speakers to command not just the attention but the confidence, respect, and trust of their audience (...). (p. 4)

Authority is not something that exists in itself, but is an effect of a relation between at least two parts: one part claiming authority and another part recognising the claim. One might say that authority has to be achieved by the act of others recognising it. Discursive authority is to be understood as an effect of the conjuncture of a speaker and an audience who share the
same cultural and historical space, which conditions the audience to recognise the speaker’s speech as legitimate and act upon it (p. 11).

I apply this notion of authority in order to explore if and how the women can be said to be a new type of authority figures. They position themselves as knowledgeable and devoted Muslim women claiming to have an impact on others by way of the good example in giving both inter-ummahic and extra-ummahic da’wa. One of my interlocutors, Mira, refers to herself as “the expert” in relating to her ethnic Danish audience when she talks about her extra-ummahic da’wa activities. Another interlocutor, Malika, articulates representing ‘correct’ Islam on the inter-subjective level, when being together with her ethnic Danish fellow students:

(…) I just feel that it’s on the personal level that I can do something. (…) that is, personally I also work with myself and make sure I have implemented the good character and the correct way to practice Islam to be able to represent Islam in the right way (…) The people I socialise with and when they ask me questions, well then I answer them (…) if you want to see a change in the surrounding world, then you must start with yourself and your acts (…) and then people will see: “oh so this is what Islam really is about” (…).

Embodying adab, “the good character”, and correct Islam are self-forming practices that equally work on forming others by representing Islam the “right way”. Like the other women, Malika applies the technique of making herself available to questions from others concerning Islam and being Muslim. Elaborating the story, Malika tells me about an incident with an ethnic Danish fellow student. Based upon experience with some of
his Muslim classmates, he was of the opinion that Muslims isolated themselves and were intolerant of non-Muslims. However, after Malika explained to him what Islam is all about, being open and friendly towards him, he changed his point of view and was grateful that she made an effort to answer his questions. In her everyday life, Malika claims to be a good representative of Islam to the majority. The characters in her narrative constitute majority others who recognise her as such by posing questions, and by way of her answers they establish a ‘correct’ perception of Islam, “oh, so this is what Islam really is about”.

In an inter-ummahic context, Mira narrates how she instructs young Muslim girls:

(…) I have given lectures to many Muslim girls (…) in reality it’s the foundational Islamic things which must be in place if you want to build upon it. Many of these girls wish to expand, but if the foundation is not in place, then of course the rest will crash. And they have to understand, for example, that if they want to practise: “well, then you have to take it step by step, you cannot go on a pilgrimage tomorrow and then come home being a super-Muslim, because after a month you’re back at the beginning again, you must take it step by step”. That sort of thing, it’s not new knowledge; that is, I prefer not to convey new knowledge to them. I stick to what they know, but I straighten out the knowledge they have, and that means a lot.

Mira governs the conduct of the young Muslim girls by cultivating their Islamic knowledge and behaviour. The effective intervention is done “step by step” in order for the girls to acquire the ‘right’ Islamic foundation. Performing the major rituals as the pilgrimage, hadjdj, is subordinated to
the everyday micro practices in embodying Muslimness. One might say that Mira works on the inner dispositions and behaviour of the girls at the level of micro practice with the objective of a permanent transformation.

Based upon the analysis, I argue that the women in their everyday lives claim religious authority that has an effect on either the doing of Muslimness by other Muslims and/or on the perception of Islam and Muslims in Denmark by the non-Muslim majority. The argument finds support in research on young Muslim women within Muslim youth associations in Sweden, by the Swedish anthropologist Pia Minganti. Parallel to my data, the women exercise religious authority while supporting traditional sources of Muslim authority in transmitting religious knowledge. According to Minganti, the women are religious authorities in terms of being representatives of Islam both in a Muslim community context and in a Swedish majority context (Minganti, 2012, p. 378). The women in my study claim and are offered space as religious authorities by way of performing inter-ummahic da’wa: organising events, transmitting Islamic knowledge in instructing children, youngsters and peers and guidance based upon their experience of how to do Muslimness in a Danish context. In a Danish majority context, they claim and are offered space as religious authorities by way of performing extra-ummahic da’wa: creating relations of dialogue either in a formal or an informal context. As such, they exercise religious authority in both a Muslim community context and a Danish majority context by being recognised as representatives of ‘correct’ Islam.
**Summing-up**

In this chapter, I have analysed two aspects of the formation of moral selves: mode of subjectivation and the self-techniques the women apply in becoming pious Muslims. I have analysed the two aspects through the grid of reflexive and transitive movements and shown how they converge in relational and socially embedded self-forming activities. With a focus on the self-techniques at play in pious subjectivation I have pinned down the workings of reflexive and transitive movements. The movements shed light on the agency of inhabiting religious norms as modes of action transforming the self and others.

I have analysed how the women are incited to recognise their moral obligations by the authoritative discourse of Islam and shown that their appropriation of the authoritative discourse relates to the Sunnah in particular. This mode of subjectivation is transposed to and serves as the foundation for techniques of the self in which inner disposition and behaviour converge in micro practices of the everyday life. One can say that a process of ‘Sunnahfication’ of everyday existence takes place. A dominant technique employed is activating the exemplary models of the Prophet Muhammad and his wives in the self-forming work of being a good example. As such, the present is continuously related to the past in the constitution of the good example. The women work on their emotional dispositions in becoming good Muslims by cultivating feelings of love, joy and humility. The practice of the hijab, acquisition of Islamic knowledge and the intensification of faith related to this activity are equally self-techniques employed in their everyday lives. The women position
themselves as knowledgeable and devote Muslims, and the self-forming work marks a difference to other Muslims.

I have analysed the relational aspect of the women’s pious subjectivation by focusing on da’wa as the women’s enactment of the good example. I have shown that in the women’s articulation of da’wa, Islamic knowledge and behaviour are interrelated in a moral practice of their everyday lives that is claimed to have an impact on the conduct of others. Particularly the technique of Islamic knowledge acquisition provides the women with legitimacy to perform da’wa. I have shown that while the women support traditional sources of Muslim authority they exercise religious authority in a Muslim community context and a Danish majority context by being recognised as representatives of ‘correct’ Islam.
Chapter 6 Narratives of Merit Works

In this chapter, I explore the teleology of pious subjectivation by analysing the women’s meaning assignment to merit work. With merit work as a frame I address the question of how piety and salvation in their everyday lives in a Danish context is bounded by a social dimension and an eschatological dimension. I particularly focus on their meaning assignment to individual responsibility in analysing the women’s aspiration to create space for moral actions in this world that have effect in the hereafter.

Pleasing God: Working for the hereafter

In their everyday lives the women are concerned with pleasing God. The work they perform on themselves, the activities they engage in and the way they relate to others are articulated as religious merit work with the objective of pleasing God and entering Paradise. In the following, Hafsa explains how she strives to satisfy God:

(...) to attain God’s satisfaction with me and to attain it, I have made up my mind; I must put aside my own desires’ intentions. That is, the human being desires many things, if I’m not sufficiently aware of it, then I would not be aware of my creator when all comes to all. Thus I try, I might be that I experience that something is completely wrong and I become lustful, if I can explain it that way, I might get angry and react on it and such things, which might be tough as a human to withhold. Then I try to remember that I, on the whole, must achieve my creator’s satisfaction, and in that way I can, for instance, forgive
something or other (...) or do a great deal for a person, that is, help a fellow human being, no matter whom, it’s merely to attain my creator’s satisfaction, right. Because, when it comes down to it, then I don’t know when I have filled the goblet with God’s satisfaction because it could be that I might lose all of which I have obtained so far, due to making some mistake.

Perfecting the self in order to satisfy God is continuous work as Hafsa is confronted with the uncertainty of the moment when God is pleased with her. She monitors desires that destabilise her constant awareness of God. She disciplines them by cultivating inner disposition of forgiveness transformed into the behaviour of a non-reactive behaviour towards someone who has done her wrong. Cultivating inner disposition of generosity embodied in helping others without differentiating to whom help is given equally constitutes the self-forming work to transform herself in order to please God. Hafsa is particularly concerned with cultivating generosity in her relationship with God. In fact, she feels that God is testing her ability to be generous in her everyday life. From small incidents such as giving her neighbour’s children the ice cream that she initially bought for herself to consume, offering a cinnamon roll and a juice to a child on a bus ride to donating money from a sparse student budget to charity work are acts she articulates as responding to God testing her virtue of generosity:

to pass on what Allah grants me, but that I don’t have that attitude that I’m the one who owns it, as if you own everything and that you’re eternal since you have that opinion. That is, if you walk up and say: “basically, I am nothing because it’s Allah who gives me
everything, and He can easily take it away from me again”, that you’re aware of it and are able to share.

Hana cultivates knowledge and virtue of generosity by way of being conscious of her earthly finitude and in recognising God as absolute and the giver of everything. These are the ‘doings’ she enacts as a pious Muslim in order to satisfy God.

Religious merit work may in a general sense be understood as practices of good deeds with the objective of satisfying God and thereby gain entrance to Paradise. Accumulating merit work in this world is related to the individual responsibility of earning recompense that will determine their eternal existence when they return to God and are called to account for individual deeds (Smith & Haddad, 1981, pp. 1-15; Asad, 2003, p. 91). The Islamic notions of ajr, hasana (pl. hasanat) and sadaqa are related to the idea of ‘working for the hereafter’. Ajr is the reward or recompense for doing good deeds, hasanat. However, in practice the terms are often used interchangeably (van Nieuwkerk, 2005, pp. 128-129). The women I interviewed only used the Arabic term sadaqa when referring to smiling as a good deed. Otherwise they used merit (‘belønning’ in Danish) when speaking about religious merit work and the reward they strive to obtain for doing good deeds. The anthropologist Karin van Nieuwkerk has studied religious merit work linked to Islamic calendar rituals among Moroccan migrant women in a Dutch context (van Nieuwkerk, 2005). Her focus is ‘daily lived Islam’ or practical ethics of Islam in contrast to institutionalised Islam (pp. 125-126). In comparing the conception of merit
work across generations, Van Nieuwkerk points to a difference among the first and second generation of Moroccan migrant women. Whereas the first generation of Moroccan migrants has a strong trade-like approach to earning recompense enacting merit work in concrete and materialistic ways, some from the second generation have less of a bookkeeper’s conception of merit work. Further, according to van Nieuwkerk, some of the second-generation migrant women appear to have weaker religious concern for the notion of recompense than the first generation. They stress that pleasing God is the prime motivation for doing good deeds and not the recompense (p. 132, 139).

My approach is different from van Nieuwkerk’s in terms of going beyond merit work linked to specific calendar rituals. I focus on how merit work in everyday lived Islam is related to self-forming activities whose teleology is satisfying God and salvation in the hereafter. One might say that I focus on how ‘collecting’ merit work in the everyday may be considered as the women creating space for moral action that articulate this world in the next (Asad 2003, 91). In my data there are both parallels and contrasts to the finding of van Nieuwkerk. Parallel to the findings of van Nieuwkerk the women do not conceive of merit work as an accounting system. A contrast in this study is the young Muslim women’s manifestation of an accentuated reflective approach to merit work as a religious concern.

During the interview with Malika, she introduced the theme of merit work by stating that even though a smile is a little thing, it can be considered as
a big thing in terms of being a meritorious act. In further probing her meaning assignment to merit work I asked her if there are particular things that give more merit than others. She countered my attempt to refer to religious rewards as an accounting system by making the Islamic concept of intention, *niyyah*[^49], relevant in reflecting upon merit:

(...) it’s not anything to do with, if you do this deed then you will receive this many rewards. What, of course, is most loved by Allah are those things which he has commanded us to do, such as the prayer and the fast. Those are obligatory things for us, and of course these are most worthy of reward. But we can never say: “I get so and so many rewards” (...) actually there is a Hadith that says: “each action will be rewarded in accordance with the intention”, so if you have a sincere intention, then you might receive more rewards for it than if you just did it because, eventually the prayer, “it’s just something I must do”, but if you don’t have such an intention about that “I do it because I submit to Allah” like that, you consider the intention and exactly these thoughts so it could be that there is a greater reward in it, that is, Allah knows best (...).

Malika makes having the right intention relevant in relating obligatory acts of worship to merit work. By referring to the conscious commitment of prayer as a rite of worship, she prevents an instrumental and accounts oriented approach to the notion of merit work. She emphasises the need to be conscious of having the right intention in ‘the doing.’[^50] In the Islamic discursive tradition intention is an aspect of cultivating the virtue of faithfulness (*imaan*) towards God, which is the unquestionable habit of

[^49]: Niyyah is a form of conscious commitment initiating acts of worship (Asad, 2003, p. 90).

[^50]: See Jacobsen (2011, pp. 347-349) for similar findings in a Norwegian context.
obedience that God requires from those faithful to Him (Asad 2003:90). Malika’s emphasis on the relevance of right intention in ascribing meaning to merit work can be read as the constituent complementary work of both the interior, the desire to submit to Allah, and the exterior, the bodily acts, of praying as merit work. It is, however, the cultivation of inner dispositions that is pivotal for the bodily act to be a virtue of faithfulness.

The women are concerned with merit work in terms of perfecting a pious self. As we saw with Hafsa, merit work is related to continuously evaluating her mastering a pious interior transformed into doing good deeds. Further, one might say that merit work is carried out not solely with the desire of pleasing God, but also with the desire for God to recognise the individual women by responding with reward: salvation in the afterlife.

Managing wrongdoing

Based upon the women’s accentuated focus on doing good, a relevant question to pose would then be: How do they assign meaning to the opposite, i.e. doing wrong? And how do they manage desires and acts which they consider to be wrong? As we saw with Hafsa, she articulates a risk of losing all the reward she has accumulated if she gives in to her own (human) desires instead of a constant awareness of pleasing God. Mira struggles with feelings and actions of pride in the task of cultivating gratitude towards God. I ask how she manages the wrongdoings of pride, and she explains by way of a story told within the frame of merit work.
She tells me of an incident of quarrelling with her mother and shouting at her. Mira considers her own behaviour very wrong, and she explains that being good to one’s parents and talking nicely to them is an injunction in Islam. Her concern becomes to counteract the transgression from right (acting with gratitude and humility) to wrong (acting with pride) in order to “really set myself straight”:

(...) well, of course I sit and read the Qur’an or learn the Qur’an by heart, or give a presentation and so on. But, for example, to give a lecture, you’re a lot more on the front; I’m the one who knows everything they should know, that is, it doesn’t do much to help the fact that: “well, you have made a mistake, Mira, you yelled at your mother, and God said that you cannot yell at your mother. You must do something which can diminish the pride you have, which grounds you”. Then I must do something which people in general will not: clean a toilet, which is not even your own. To do something, as I mentioned previously, that diminishes your pride and grounds you; “you’re just one creature out of many, why would you be better than the rest” (...) you must restrain yourself, if you don’t then it goes downhill in regard to practicing Islam, which means that I have lost all the reward I have obtained in this life, and I have not won anything in the life after.

Mira operates with a hierarchy of practices in cultivating a humble self in her relationship with God. The voicing in Mira’s narrative gives insight into her assessment of self. One might expect that she would make apologizing to her mother for shouting at her relevant as the right thing to do. However, she evaluates her behaviour as acting against the will of God, and the right thing to do becomes performing acts that can remind her of being obedient to God. Acts considered pious and meritorious (reading the Qur’an, learning the Qur’an by heart and giving da’wa),
though, are not conducive to cultivating humility in this case. One might say that they position Mira as a devoted and knowledgeable Muslim woman and thus contain the risk of generating even more pride. In a sort of reversed hierarchy of practices, acts considered degrading by Mira and others, she claims, exactly become the right work to do in transforming a proud self to a humble self. Cleaning the toilets in FYMD becomes inscribed in this reversed hierarchy of practices. Working on the self through disciplining embodied practices to counter wrongdoings against God constitutes one self-technique in becoming a pious subject obedient to God and with the perspective of being rewarded in the afterlife.

**Responsibility**

So far I have analysed the women’s constant self-evaluation as mastering an interior transformed into good deeds with the objective of satisfying God. One might argue that this work on self is embedded in the Islamic discourse of responsibility. Cultivating a responsible interior embodied in performing good deeds (and rejecting the apprehensible) ties in with the creation of space for moral actions in this life that have effect in the hereafter (Asad, 2003, pp. 90-92). In the following, I further elaborate on how the women assign meaning to responsibility within the frame of merit work. Nabila’s engagement in voluntary work is carried out both within the frame of FYMD and within the frame of the institutionalised integration strategy of a Danish municipality. She is a role model in the ‘Role Model Corps’ (see Chapter 5) due to her achievements in Danish society. She is an example of a (religious) ethnic minority person who has
completed an education, in the healthcare field, and works professionally in the field. She gives talks and guidance to pupils in public schools to motivate them to further educate themselves and contribute to society. In reflecting upon this engagement she argues:

(...) and again it’s precisely this that within Islam it’s like this, you must be part of the society, that the notion of citizenship, which you hear people talk about a lot today, it was already established then. That to be an active part of society, to make a difference to young people, that is what I’m so very dedicated to. And the same with work, that is in health services, here it is also about making a difference, that you help other people.

Nabila legitimises her positioning as an active citizen by way of arguing that the practice was already implemented in early Islamic society (the first believing community). By this position she rejects a problematisation of Muslims as citizens in the Danish discourse of integration by inscribing the concept and practice in the foundation of the Islamic discursive tradition.

Malika equally rejects this positioning in her emphasis on being a Muslim and a fellow citizen:

(...) you can easily be religious and you can easily practise Islam the right way without being isolated, without being harmful to society, but take an active part in society and be of benefit to society (...).

The women negotiate belonging to the Danish society by articulating a convergence of the good Muslim and the good fellow citizen. By way of
this convergence the women insist on an emotional investment in and identification (Yuval-Davies, 2006, p. 202) with the Danish collective.\textsuperscript{51} Fellow-citizenship is a key issue in the Danish integration discourse on ethnic minorities in terms of their belonging to society (Grauslund, 2005). One might say that the Danish integration discourse operates with a politics of belonging in which active fellow citizenship is the ‘signifier of belonging’ (Yuval-Davies, 2006, p. 209) to the Danish collective. Muslims and Islam are inscribed in this problematic of inclusion and exclusion. It creates an ‘ethnification’ (Schmidt, 2002) of a religious grouping within a dominant political discourse of the Danish majority society that operates with divided categories of a ‘them’ who create problems for ‘us’ in problematising ethnic minorities belonging to the Danish society (Togeby, 2003). As a ‘them’, Muslims and Islam are, as the anthropologist Peter Hervik has pointed out, constructed into an enemy image by which Danishness and Muslimness are seen as incompatible. This construction gives rise to a new form of Danish nationalism that does not recognise practising Muslims as belonging to the Danish society (Hervik, 2003, p. 195).

The women contest the problematisation of Muslims as fellow citizens by positioning themselves as complying with the Islamic obligation for the

\textsuperscript{51} I equally draw on the distinction of citizenship and fellow citizenship by Korsgaard (2007). The former relates to the juridical dimension of the individual’s membership to a national community: the rights and duties, whereas the latter relates to the identity dimension of an individual’s membership to a national community: feelings of belonging (p. 25).
individual Muslim to assume social responsibility and translating this into active participation in society:

Nabila: I feel that I have a responsibility for this society, as a Muslim I have a responsibility for this society, I have the responsibility to make a difference.

Nabila articulates a relation of responsibility to the society she lives in. This responsibility goes beyond the Muslim community and relates to the Danish majority society (“this society”). She reflects on the effect that her performance of active citizenship has on the ones she helps by being a Role Model in the Role Model Corps.

(...) just the fact that I meet so many people outside school, many years later, who remember me and say: “we actually did this and that, and it was really good, and we learned a lot from it”; that gets me motivated, so in that way it’s really, really cool to be an example, when you at the same time can see that you make a difference and that it helps.

Nabila positions herself as an example with an impact on the youngsters’ decision to begin an education. She substantiates this positioning by way of the voicing of the characters in her story. In her narrative, the characters constitute others who recognise her as someone who has made a difference for the better in their lives. In the frame of FYMD Nabila takes part in organising the festival, id, at the end of the Ramadan for Muslims in Denmark. One of the largest sports halls in Denmark is rented for the purpose. She relates this engagement to the sense of responsibility towards the Muslim communities. She is particularly concerned with
organising events for the joy of children, who due to the migrant context cannot experience the id with their extended families. To Nabila, good deeds are translated into giving others joy and hope, and to encouraging them. These doings are framed in the context of:

(...) the big reward I hope to achieve subsequently, that’s what it is.

In and by the narrative, she positions herself as a Muslim who makes a difference for the better by performing active citizenship and being recognised as such by others. By positioning herself as a fellow citizen she articulates relations of belonging to the Danish society through an Islamic argumentation. Furthermore she contests the dominant discourse of integration and Islam, which categorises her into ‘them’, and claims to be recognised as part of ‘us’. She has completed an education, she is working, and she is engaged in volunteer activities. Thus, responsibility becomes articulated in terms of active fellow citizenship, and being an active fellow citizen is also performing good Muslimness, as this practice is related to the early Islamic community. One might say that active participation in society constitutes the good Muslim and is thus a mode of representing Islam the right way to the majority society.52 This understanding is articulated within the youth associations of which the women are

52 This argumentation in articulating belonging to Danish society supports the findings of Schmidt’s (2003) research on Muslim youth associations in Denmark. It is equally similar to the observations by Jacobsen (2011a) on Muslim youth in a Norwegian context and the ones of Nadia Fadil (2006) in her study of young Muslims’ claims to recognition as citizens by a Belgian majority society.
members or affiliated with. Malika relates some of the activities she co-organises within the framework of SYMD the following way:

(...) where you show that we as Muslims actually have a duty to take responsibility for the society we live in and for our fellow human beings who surround us, society in general (...) for example, we have an event which is called ‘GivBlod’. And we host it once every year in connection with ‘GivBlod’\(^\text{53}\) where we clear away all the carpets and everything from the rooms, then Give Blood come and set up all their apparatuses and all their stuff and stands and all of it, up there, and then we sit in the street and recruit people: “would you like to donate some blood?”, and we stand there with their flyers. Simultaneously with saving lives, which is an important thing in Islam and to which there is attached a lot of importance; we also help society by showing that we Muslims should take an active part in being beneficial.

To Malika, the recurring event of recruiting blood donors is a means to represent Muslims as fellow citizens belonging to the Danish society by way of their actions of responsibility. Other events are for example organising teams of collecting litter in the streets of the city. One might say that the youth associations become pedagogical settings in which the members cultivate responsibility into an everyday practice of fellow citizenship. Malika translates this idea of responsibility into her everyday life as a student:

\(^{53}\) ‘GivBlod’ is an organization under the blood bank of the regional healthcare system with the task of maintaining the stockpile of blood in the blood bank. It engages in different activities in order to recruit blood donors.
Malika narrates her transformed attitude towards being a student in a before and after she became a member of SYMD. Before becoming a member of SYMD, she was not concerned with the purpose of being a student. After becoming a member of the association, being a student is articulated as an individual responsibility with the future perspective of contributing to society. Arguably, Malika relates to the significance of the youth associations as a pedagogical setting in which she learns to cultivate individual responsibility.

In the women’s articulations of responsibility, the ethical commitment to doing good deeds is translated into being an active citizen in a Muslim minority community and a Danish majority society. In their claim to be recognised as fellow citizens they draw on both an Islamic ethics discourse of responsibility and a Danish discourse of integration. They argue that being a good Muslim is being a good citizen. By this claim they occupy a counter position to a dominant Danish discourse that problematises Muslims as fellow citizens and as belonging to Danish society.
‘The modern Islamic subject’ and articulating this-world-into-the-next

Based upon the analysis of how the women assign meaning to responsibility within the frame of merit work one might venture that the responsibility of social commitment becomes inscribed in the problematic of the individual responsibility for salvation in the hereafter. As such, the women operate with a hierarchy of responsibility in which individual responsibility to social commitment is subordinated to the individual responsibility to salvation. Nabila unfolds such a hierarchy in reflecting upon her feelings of belonging to the Danish society and her struggle to be recognised by a Danish majority as a Muslim who belongs:

(...)

(... sometimes I can feel I become a bit: “come on, I have to pull myself together”, because sometimes it just is that way: “excuse me, if you all...” sorry, one language at a time, but I don’t care: “you can think what you would like, you can bring on all your prejudices” I just become so tired that I don’t want to prove anything: “I am as I am, so take me as I am or leave me alone”. It happens that I think that, now I’m thinking it out loud. But then again that Islamic conscience says to me: “no, pull yourself together, you have a responsibility towards your fellow human beings, you have a responsibility towards the people you live with, you have a responsibility towards society, you have a responsibility towards God, and you have a responsibility towards the afterlife and you have a responsibility to make it happen”; and then you’re left with (a bit despondent laugh): “okay, pull yourself together again” (...).

Nabila draws on her Islamic conscience in intervening on the frustration she experiences and reminds herself of the Islamic obligation of

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54 Nabila formulates this in English.
responsibility. It is unfolded in a hierarchy starting with the individual inter-subjective level, moving on to the collective level and finally reaching the metaphysical level to God and the hereafter. Nabila articulates a sense of responsibility to the Muslim community and the Danish society that is subordinated to the one she has to God and the hereafter.

In the frame of merit work, to perform good deeds for the benefit of the collective relates to the sense of individual responsibility to please God and salvation in the hereafter. This perspective goes beyond the findings of some research on young pious Muslim women in Europe. In a German context, the anthropologist Jeanette Jouili (2008) emphasises that the pious Muslim women in her study operate with a sense of responsibility that is fundamentally related to the collective dimension. She analyses the women’s motivation for doing good deeds in the form of giving da’wa as an individual duty which the women owe to their (Muslim) community. This perspective has bearings on her formulation of the “modern Islamic subject”:55

(I)t is reflexive, innerself, individualized in a certain way, essentially connected to the community, the absolute and ubiquitous point of reference, where the individual selves combine to make up a ‘collective self’. (Jouili, 2008, p. 477)

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55 An objection to the term in the singular is that Jouili makes a general categorisation of Islamic subjectivities based on studying piety in a German context at the risk of essentialising modern Muslim’s religious identification.
The focus of Jouili’s conceptualisation is the sociological dimension of responsibility in which the community or the collective stands out as the ubiquitous point of reference. My interlocutors emphasise the individual responsibility to God and the hereafter. In this case, the absolute and ubiquitous point of reference for the women is the eschatological dimension. In the context of merit work, the women’s cultivation of responsibility as inner dispositions and ethical practice can be viewed as their aspirations in their everyday lives to create space for moral actions. The objective of these actions is the effect they have in the eschatological dimension. The women’s assignment of meaning to the concepts of intention, individual responsibility, good deeds and religious reward is central to understanding how the moral dimension of Islam makes sense to them in a Danish context that relates to the wider discourse of the Islamic revival. Of relevance becomes a focus on how the women negotiate becoming pious Islamic subjects and their belonging to both a Muslim minority community and a Danish majority society. In the following, I probe this question by drawing on Asad’s (2003) reflections on how the formation of individual ethics in religious traditions can be viewed as an unresolved tension between eschatology and sociology.

In the Islamic discursive tradition of requiring the good and rejecting the reprehensible, responsibility is articulated as the appropriate behaviour to acquire and exercise. This is a responsibility of the single Muslim as well as the entire community of Muslims severally and collectively (Asad, 2003). In this understanding of responsibility, religious behaviour, Asad claims, acquires its sense from a biographical teleology in which:
(T)he individual seeks to acquire the capacities and sensibilities internal to a religious tradition (al-sunnah al-diniyya) that is oriented by an eschatology according to which he or she stands alone on the Day of Judgment to account for his or her life. (p. 91)

However, Asad argues that individual responsibility is bounded by both a social dimension and an eschatological dimension and as such there is:

(...) a continuous, unresolved tension between responsibility as individual and metaphysical on the one hand, and as collective and quotidian on the other – that is, between eschatology and sociology. (p. 91)

In drawing on the above, I will attempt to nuance Jouili’s conceptualisation of the modern Islamic subject in focusing on the women’s negotiation of the tension. In doing so, I draw on the second aspect of the formation of self (Chapter 2), which deals with the mode of subjectivation. In the context of this study, the women are incited to recognise their moral obligations by the Islamic authoritative discourse which they are obliged to subject themselves to. This mode of subjectivation feeds into the self-practice of becoming pious Muslim women who please God and are rewarded with salvation in the hereafter. One might say that self-practice is the mode by which the women invest (Hall, 2006, p. 6) in the subject positions offered by the authoritative discourse. I understand this investment as the women’s aspiration to a biographical teleology that is inscribed in an eschatological dimension in which God is the absolute and ubiquitous point of reference. However, the
self-practice is unfolded in and by a social commitment by which the women’s making sense of responsibility is translated into ethical social practice in making a difference to others for the better. Responsibility is for example performed through the performance of da’wa and doing fellow citizenship. Based upon my analysis, responsibility can be said to be oriented towards both an eschatological and a social dimension. It is nevertheless the eschatological dimension which is articulated as an absolute and ubiquitous point of reference. As such, the social dimension is subordinated to the former. In applying the perspective of formation of the self to religious identification, I argue that it is crucial to take into consideration that pious subjectivation is bounded by both an eschatological dimension and a social dimension.

Asad describes the double perspective of responsibility as an unresolved tension between the two dimensions. However, based on my analysis of the women’s narratives of merit work, the tension appears to be attenuated in the everyday acts of constituting a biographical teleology with the aim of pleasing God. To make a difference by social commitment for the good of society is inscribed in such a biography. In the frame of merit work, the women cultivate responsibility as inner dispositions manifested in ethical social practice with the aim of pleasing God. In sum, the convergence of an interior and an exterior in the cultivation of responsibility can be viewed as the women’s aspiration to create an intimate relationship with God in the desire to be visible to God. One might say that the theme of merit work gives insight into how the women aspire to master an individual biography that is recognized by God. Thus,
recognition is not only enacted in social relationships in terms of being recognised by the other. The striving for piety, closeness to God, is equally a striving for God’s recognition.

**Summing-up**

In this chapter, I have explored the teleology of pious subjectivation by analysing the women’s meaning assignment to merit work. In their everyday lives, merit work informs the desire to please God and the desire for God to respond with salvation in the afterlife as the reward. With the desire to please God, an improvement of the self that relates to ethical social commitment constitutes merit work in the aspiration to become visible to God. As such, the women engage merit work as a religious concern by way of an accentuated reflexive approach. Here conscious commitment is a crucial meaning assignment to merit work. One might say that merit work is constituted by a convergence of the interior, i.e. the desire to submit to God, and the exterior, i.e. the embodied meritorious acts. However, the convergence appears to begin in a movement of cultivating inner dispositions prior to the exterior embodied acts.

The cultivation of individual responsibility is at the centre in articulations of merit work. In these articulations there is equally a convergence of an Islamic discourse of responsibility and a Danish discourse on integration in which active citizenship is pivotal. The women claim that being good Muslims equals being good citizens. By these claims they articulate belonging to the Danish society. They are simultaneously in a counter
position to a dominant Danish discourse that problematises Muslims as fellow citizens, and as such they claim to be recognised as fellow citizens by a Danish majority.

Based upon the analysis of merit work, I argue that everyday acts of individual responsibility form a biographical teleology in which the responsibility to social commitment is subordinated the responsibility to salvation. As such, pious subjectivation is bounded by an eschatological dimension that subordinates the social dimension.
Chapter 7 Narratives of Endurance and Resistance

In Chapters 5 and 6, I analysed pious subjectivation as a mode of action upon the self unfolded through the moral norms of the Islamic discursive tradition which conditions becoming a pious subject in a Danish context. In extension, I analysed the relational aspect of pious subjectivation. In this chapter, I further examine the agentival action involved in pious subjectivation. Here I amplify the focus on the relational aspects of the women’s investment in a pious subject position that is subjected to relations of dominance or claims of dominance. I argue that the perspective of situated agency is relevant in exploring the modes of action in the micro practices of everyday life by which the women negotiate piety in inter-Muslim relations and in relations between a Muslim minority and a Danish majority. The analysis of situated agency is founded upon the assumption that both endurance and resistance can be viewed as agency in everyday life dependent on the particular situation. The guiding questions of analysis are: How do the women endure and/or resist relations of subordination? In what situations are acts of endurance or resistance carried out? I begin my analysis with negotiations in inter-Muslim relations and then proceed to negotiations in relations of minority and majority.
**Negotiating difference in inter-Muslim relations: Acts of endurance**

The women tell stories of intimate relations with a husband, friends or with a generalised reference to other Muslims. These everyday stories may be viewed as narratives of the work of power relations in which the women negotiate a subordinated position to dominance or claims to dominance by acts of endurance or/and resistance. There is a tendency among the women to relate incidents with males. Making stories of gendered relations relevant and their active management of the relations could be viewed as a strategic positioning (Riessman, 2008) in the context of the interview interaction. By their act of telling, the women represent themselves as strong and active in incidents of Muslim gendered relations contesting the positioning as victims of (or passively submitting to) male oppression by a dominant Danish discourse on religious Muslim women (and a possible assumption that I might share this viewpoint or mediate the self-representation by way of this study).

In talking about her relation with her husband, Hana explains that she complies with an Islamic family structure with male leadership as head of the family. She feels that to her, it is not unnatural that the husband takes leadership. On the contrary, she explains, it would feel unnatural for her to take leadership of the family. Within this frame, Hana narrates the experience of her husband’s decision to go to a Middle Eastern country for six weeks with the objective of attending a course in Arabic to perfect his language competence. He had made arrangements with her family to support and assist her in her everyday life with two small children.
However, she contested his decision by arguing the time was not right because of the hardship of being alone with two small children. He insisted on going abroad. He argued that he had reflected much on the issue and made the decision for the well-being of the family in the sense that it would not only be a good thing for him to perfect his Arabic competence, but a good thing for the whole family. In the end, Hana aligns with her husband’s decision. She seeks guidance on the matter with the wife of a shaykh in the community. Hana seeks the woman’s guidance partly because she is recognised as a very pious woman by the community, partly because she has experience with the hardship of dealing with domestic affairs alone, with a husband preoccupied with matters of the Muslim community and often travelling abroad. The wife of the shaykh empathises with Hana’s situation by sharing her own experiences, and she advises Hana to endure the hardship by having trust in God. Taking the advice, Hana experiences the following:

how I should try to tackle it with myself and also to challenge myself, how much I actually was able to do on my own instead of being dependent all the time, and like instead of being dependent towards your husband, just letting go and leaving it to God (...) the strengthening of the relation you have with God and the faith in that He will protect you, because it’s not a bad thing that my husband wanted to go (unclear). It’s not because he wanted to have a good time or anything. It was concrete knowledge he was looking for, and that’s something which is highly encouraged in Islam, to travel to seek knowledge.

The narrative reveals Hana’s negotiation of an asymmetrical power relation by which she is subordinated to her husband’s position as the
head of the family. In evaluating his desire to go abroad, she positions herself within the moral dimension of Islam in which the acquisition of knowledge is a good Islamic deed. One reading of the narrative may be that Hana’s alignment with her husband’s decision is a situation of passive submission to his authority.

Another reading is that Hana reconfigures the authority of her husband by experiencing a movement from being dependent on him to realising her capacity to be independent of him. This reconfiguration could be read in terms of resistance to the authority of her husband. However, Hana does not evaluate the experience in terms of total self-dependence, but inscribes it in the sedimentation of her relationship with God as the absolute caretaker. Hana’s assignment of meaning to her own experience can be viewed in the perspective of the Islamic authoritative discourse. In becoming a pious subject, cultivating the virtue endurance is interrelated with cultivating the virtue of trust in God. How can the act of endurance then be perceived as agency? Here Mahmood’s (2001) appeal for a reconfiguration of the conceptualisation of agency becomes relevant: “that we think of agency not only as the capacity for progressive change but also the capacity to endure, suffer and persist” (p. 217). Drawing on Mahmood’s outline I emphasise the term ‘act’ and apply the perspective of practice on endurance. The practice perspective is hinged on the practice of sabr, patience, endurance in the Islamic discursive tradition. It entails the

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56 See also Saba Mahmood (2005, pp. 170-72) for an analysis of the relation of the practice of endurance and trust in God in the context of the piety movement in Cairo.
capacity to endure, without complaint, in the face of hardship, as it is considered an attribute of a pious character which is to be cultivated regardless of the situation one faces (Mahmood, 2001, p. 217; Mahmood, 2005, pp. 170-172). In terms of pious subjectivation, the self-practice of endurance is an active engagement of transforming the self by cultivating trust in God with the desire of closeness to God, and not in the case of Hana, a passive submission to the husband’s authority. A delimited focus on agency as resistance would not grasp endurance as transformative action related to the positioning of difference.

**Negotiating difference in inter-Muslim relations: Acts of resistance**

So far I have analysed acts of endurance in gendered asymmetrical power relations. In the following I continue to focus on gendered power relations, though with a focus on everyday acts of resistance to male authority. Moments of resistance to dominance emerge when an ‘internal other’ (Mandaville, 2006, p. 107) imposes their understandings of Islamic moral norms which contradict the women’s meaning assignment to Islamic norms.

Nabila’s story gives insight into acts of resistance to male dominance in a marriage. She was married for five years, but divorced at the time of the interview. Nabila characterises her former husband as a traditional

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57 See also Talal Asad (2003, pp. 67-99) for a discussion of the economy of pain, suffering and endurance in different religious traditions.
58 She chose her husband herself. Her parents did not agree with the choice, but accepted it.
Muslim, though, according to her, not a consciously practicing Muslim. She amplifies the distinction in claiming that many Muslims in Denmark (her former husband included) think they are practicing Islam, when, in fact, they are reproducing non-Islamic culture and national bound male chauvinistic traditions. She asserts that the reason for these practices in Denmark is migrant parents’ transmission of traditions originating in their home countries to their children. She gives the example of the forced marriage, or a husband forbidding his wife to study or work. The former husband was, according to Nabila, such a traditional Muslim:

(...) he did not practice in the same way. Well, yes, he prayed and fasted, but in here (points to her head) mentally and purely intellectually he was in no way conscious of the same things as I, and he was not very Islamic in his behaviour. And of course it created a lot of conflicts, for instance he forbade me to go to the Mosque, well it’s completely insane. I couldn’t go to FYMD; I couldn’t participate, even though I was used to being very active before I got married to him (...) so it’s those kinds of things I have been through a lot during this marriage. I got a divorce a couple of years ago, and it has just made me stronger, but at the same time I have thought: “I’m never ever getting married to someone who doesn’t practice again; I will never ever marry someone who doesn’t have an understanding of Islam and knows what Islam is about”. Because I know that if I choose (someone) who has this understanding, then he will never treat me that way because it’s not me he fears, it’s God, and he knows that it’s God who sees your different actions.

Nabila makes the difference between a traditional Muslim (in the sense she has outlined) and a conscious practicing Muslim relevant in ascribing meaning to true Islamic practice and false Islamic practice. One can say that the crucial distinction is a discrepancy between extority: he does
pray and fast, and _interiority_: he is not conscious of a ‘true’ Islam. She positions her former husband as not being a conscious practicing Muslim such as herself. The difference is accentuated by the husband prohibiting Nabila from performing good Muslimness: going to the Mosques, being active in FUMD. Nabila resists the dominance of her husband and divorces him with the argument that he is not acting in a correct Islamic way in their marriage. The Muslim marriage was annulled. Divorcing him has empowered her, she feels stronger. In articulating the non-negotiable criteria of a future husband, Nabila differentiates herself even further from her former husband. In my reading, the statement is a claim of the former husband’s non-Muslimness in contrast to Muslimness. To be a conscious practicing Muslim is to do good Muslimness. A good Muslim fears God and enacts the Islamic standards for virtuous conduct because he/she is accountable to God. In fearing God, a future ‘real’ Muslim husband would not act towards her the way her former husband did. He would have the awareness of being accountable to God, who sees everything.

According to Mahmood (2005), many Muslims consider the ability to fear God one of the critical registers, by which one disciplines and evaluates the progress of the moral self towards virtuousness. The absence of fearing God is regarded as a marker of an inadequately formed self. Mahmood points out that the emotion of fearing God has epistemic value in that it enables the individual Muslim to know and distinguish between what is good for oneself and for one’s community and what is bad (pp. 140-141). In the perspective of reconfiguration of power relationships, Nabila’s inhabitation of Islamic moral norms can be viewed as subversive acts to
her husband’s authority. In legitimising resistance to subordination by arguing in the logic of the Islamic authoritative discourse of good and bad, she exposes her husband’s failure to distinguish between good and bad. In what she recounts and by telling her story, Nabila positions herself as empowered by the experience that transformed her to a strong and independent Muslim woman in control of her own life.

In the following I proceed to analyse negotiations of difference in other situations of inter-Muslim relations. Stories of resistance focus on experiences of contesting other Muslims’ claims to represent ‘true’ Islam and their attempt to enrol the women in this understanding. In these stories, difference is made relevant in two ways. On the one hand, the women experience being positioned as subordinated by the claims. On the other hand, the women resist by subordinating these claims to their conception of ‘true Islam’. As such, claims to domination are negotiated by alleging that the opponent/opponents do not inhabit the Islamic religious norms which the women claim are ‘true’ Islam. They articulate the difference as the division between a moderate Islam and a radical/extremist Islam in negotiating ‘true’ Islam. They consider radical or extremist Islam as politically oriented, based upon a rigid interpretation of Islam and a strict categorisation into good and bad Muslims. They criticise radical Muslims in Denmark for isolating themselves, not participating in society as well as refusing dialogue with the non-Muslim majority. In contrast, they insist on a positioning as moderate Muslims with a focus on the spiritual dimension of Islam and the improvement of oneself with the objective to become a better person. In positioning
themselves as Muslims belonging to the Danish society, they insist on performing active citizenship by participating in society, engaging with the non-Muslim majority by way of dialogue. Some of the women refer to Hizb ut-Tahrir and the DawaCenter as examples of radical Islam. Others make a generalised reference to "some Muslims". Making the stories of opposition to radical Muslims relevant in the interview interaction equally ties in with the women positioning themselves as representing ‘true’ Islam and good Muslimness towards me. In extension, one might say that the women position themselves in counter to a wider public discourse in which Muslims are positioned as a threat to Danish society and Danishness.

Hafsa in particular insists on the position as a moderate Muslim several times during her interview. She substantiates this position by stories of experience with, according to her, radical Muslims. In grammar school she was confronted with groupings where she sensed “it was all wrong”. The wrongness consists in the groupings’ monitoring and evaluating other

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59 In a report by The Danish National Centre for Social Research (SFI), the two associations are categorised as extremist in their Islam interpretation as well as anti-democratic. Both associations caution Muslims against voting in the parliamentary democratic elections on the grounds that it displaces the sovereignty of God to the one of humans. They advocate jihad in terms of armed combat, though the DawaCenter is of the opinion that jihad is not to be carried out in Denmark (2014, pp. 14-16). The women’s positioning of Hizb ut-Tahrir as counter figures to their own claim of doing good Muslimness is in congruence with the findings of Khawaja (2010). However, in her study the young Muslims do not refer to the DawaCenter.

60 See Rytter & Pedersen (2011) for an exploration of Muslim identities in the context of a political discourse of securitisation in Denmark after 9/11.
Muslims in the grammar school in terms of correct or incorrect Islam practice. The evaluations could for example end up in an assessment of others’ practice as bida, innovation of accepted religious practice or belief, which is considered haram by some groupings of Muslims: “if you performed exactly something which they consider bida, well, then you had almost become non-Muslim-sort-of.” Hafsa gives the example of one grouping assessing her celebration of birthday as innovation. She contested being positioned as a Muslim performing incorrect practice by arguing that she celebrates birthday in terms of gratefulness to God for the life he has given her. Another experience of confrontation was with a close friend who began questioning Hafsa’s belief and wanted to discuss the matter with her arguing he wished the best for her in the hereafter. Hafsa contested his attempt to discuss her faith and argued that she was indeed quite conscious of the nature of her faith in God. When the friend concluded that Hafsa was on the wrong path and would risk ending in hell in the afterlife, Hafsa defended her position by scolding the friend, who – being a human – is not to judge how others would be accountable to God. Hafsa broke off the friendship. In what she told and by telling her story, Hafsa positions herself as a moderate Muslim.

In inter-Muslim relations, the women negotiate piety in the exchange of opinions on practice and faith. These negotiations may imply discussions, with pronounced conflicting positions in claims of representing ‘true’

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61 The celebration of birthday is a point of disaccord among Muslims. One argument is that it is haram. Another argument is that it is not haram if the celebration is motivated by the gratitude of having been given yet another year.
Islam. In Chapter 5, I analysed the self-practice of accumulating Islamic knowledge in the cultivation of piety. The women equally legitimise contesting competing claims to represent ‘true’ Islam by way of positioning themselves as knowledgeable and consciously practising Muslim women. These counter positions can be viewed as small acts of resistance of the everyday life (Oikonomidoy, 2007, p. 24) to the workings of power in inter-Muslim relations.

Research suggests that young Muslims’ claims to authentic Islam practice in Denmark is equally a critique of what they perceive as their parents’ ‘culture’-bound Islam practice. This may be viewed as a strategic positioning in intergenerational struggles by which the parents’ authority is reconfigured (Schmidt, 2004). This positioning in opposition to their parents is not articulated in my data. Although some of the women articulate a highly generalised critique of a culture-bound Islam understanding by some Muslims in the parental generation, they describe their parents as active helpers and role models, encouraging the women’s Islamic engagement. Johansen (2002) categorises the parental generations into ‘traditional practising Muslims’ and ‘seeking Muslims’. The latter category covers parents who are consciously practicing Muslims transmitting Islamic practice to their children (p. 34). The women’s parents fit into this category which may explain the positioning of the parents as helpers and role models.62

62 Mira, for example tells me that she borrows edifying Islamic literature from her father.
Negotiating difference in minority-majority relations: Acts of endurance

How do the women negotiate the positioning of difference by the majority? In exploring this, I probed my interlocutors’ positioning by the majority by asking them if they had experienced that being Muslim was of significance in the everyday interaction with non-Muslim Danes. Salma (replies that being a visible Muslim is obviously of significance in the interaction) formulates it as: “it is always there, some way or another, it is always in the air (...) ‘oh, but she is different’”. Being visible Muslim by wearing the hijab is the fundamental assignment of difference by the majority. However, Salma quickly emphasises that she primarily has positive experiences with non-Muslim Danes even though other Muslims can have other stories to tell, implying that they have had negative experiences. Some of the women understood the question in terms of experience of discrimination (though I did not formulate the question with that term). They immediately stated that they had no experience of discrimination: “now, I haven’t experienced any discrimination myself, but if I think of what some of my friends have experienced”, Hana answered: “I must admit that I don’t have any big discrimination stories to tell, no I do not (laughs)”. This rejection may be grounded in sensitivity towards being perceived as someone who is discriminated against. An objection to this argument may be that the reason for their answers is indeed that they do not experience discrimination by the majority. However, situating the rejection in the context of the interview interaction, stories about discrimination would position the women as victims subjected to
marginalisation by the majority. It would destabilise the strategic positioning in the interview interaction as strong and active pious women in a Muslim community as well as in a Danish majority context. The anthropologist Lise Galal (2009) points out that a minority’s silence on the uneven power relationship between majority and minority constitutes a strategy to negate the position as a stigmatised minority defined as a victim of the superiority of the majority (p. 82).

In the context of my study, the women’s negation of talking about experiences of discrimination (their understanding of the question) can be viewed as a strategy of minority actors. In further exploring this strategy, I apply the perspective of endurance. Negating experiences of discrimination may relate to the Islamic discourse of enduring hardship (here in relations with the majority) and as such to pious subjectivation. I base this reading upon the analysis of the women’s positioning as representing ‘true Islam’ to the majority in Chapter 5. In negotiating relations to the majority, they make themselves available to a plethora of questions on Islam and being Muslim, the women partly consider to be preconceptions by the majority. However, with the objective of da’wa they conduct themselves as knowledgeable Muslim women, responding and explaining kindly and politely. As such, the continuous response to demands of accountability by the majority may be viewed in the light of enduring difference. Negating what they understand as an invitation to talk about experiences of discrimination in the interview interaction can be comprehended as an aspect of cultivating endurance without complaint in the hardship of power relationship between minority and majority.
Despite negating experiences of discrimination by the majority, the women make experiences of difference relevant in other stories of everyday life. Suha is confronted with questions by the majority that she feels are based on prejudices:

(...) people have hidden prejudices. The people at my school have hidden prejudices, and they show by means of their questions. I have experienced it every time. If it’s about work, at school, on the bus, you’re just sitting there talking to people, and always you get asked the same question, over and over again; of course I’m happier that they actually ask the question instead of them sitting there with their prejudices.

She is approached with questions on parental authority (did your parents arrange your marriage?); on the hijab practice (do you wear the hijab in bath? Do you sleep with the hijab? Is your husband allowed to see you without the hijab?). A key theme in the experiences of difference is the women’s negotiation of this positioning by acts of endurance. Suha negotiates her positioning of difference by the majority and the demands for accountability by responding to the demands. She endures the hardship in a power relationship in which she is positioned as the ‘other’

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63 In Khawaja’s (2011) study of young vocal and visible Muslims in Copenhagen, the women talk of having to defend themselves and Islam towards similar questions from the majority as the women in my study narrate. The talk of defence leads Khawaja to point out that the women position themselves as defenders towards the intruding gaze of the majority. However, the women I interviewed do not articulate the experiences as having to defend themselves, but as an opportunity to explain Islam as well as why and how they are Muslims. The difference may tie up with the latter’s engagement in da’wa towards the majority in which the central focus is to represent Islam the right way. Therefore the majority’s questions are comprehended as an opening to inform about Islam.
who is to answer for her person. In a sense, engaging a continuous explanation of oneself is an act of endurance.

Some of the women articulate experiences of situations at work in which they are positioned as different by their Danish colleagues. Mira tells of an experience from her student job as an administration assistant:

(...) I could tell that it was very normal that if a Dane made mistakes with the papers, or made mistakes concerning amounts of money, or accidentally shipped the wrong letter somewhere. But if I did that, the entire department would be ablaze, and then it was really bad, and I had to have a talk to straighten out this and that. There was no room for me to make mistakes, which meant that I had to make a huge effort, and it took up a lot of my energy (...).

Difference between Mira and the colleagues is activated by a distinction of normality and abnormality in who makes ‘mistakes’. The abnormal (Mira’s mistakes) calls for negative reactions by the colleagues and sanctions by the manager. Mira evaluates the experience as a non-acceptance of her making mistakes. However instead of for example looking for another job, she enacts endurance of the non-acceptance of mistakes by exerting herself even further in order to succeed in her job.

Oscillation between resistance and endurance

Exerting oneself to the uttermost is a practice of endurance Nabila enacts at work in the healthcare sector during the Ramadan when Nabila fasts. In contrast to the other months of the year, the Ramadan makes a difference
in the colleagues’ evaluation of her work. Here tiredness at work is viewed as a shortcoming due to the fasting, and she receives comments from her colleagues:

(...) “yes, but it’s so unbelievable that you’re not allowed to eat all day”, they might say, and that type of comments which keep coming and “it’s not good for your health” and “blah-blah-blah” (...).

Nabila attempts to negotiate the positioning of difference by asking her colleagues why it is legitimate to be tired when she is not fasting and problematised during the Ramadan. She further argues by way of drawing on rational scientific knowledge:

where you respond “well, listen up, there are scientific articles which show that fasting is healthy, etc., what it does to the blood sugar, what it does to the body, what it does to…”, and then they shut down, they don’t listen to what they don’t want to hear. Such things can infuriate me; but that’s the only problem I have had at my workplace, if you can put it that way, I have not really had any other problems. And that can annoy me because I feel a bit like I’m being evaluated during Ramadan, every year, and I almost have to account for the mishaps I have caused. Everyone has flaws, but, in my case, there is just a greater focus on it as soon as it’s Ramadan, right? Not because it’s more severe than the rest of the year, that is, there are always some things which you might overlook, etc. (...) I just feel like I’m not only supposed to be there 100%, or even 110%, but rather 1000% during the Ramadan, and I must be sure everything is in place to make sure I will not hear anything from anyone.

Her arguments are not recognised by her colleagues – “they shut down”. One reading of Nabila’s story could point to her negotiation as an act of
resistance. Questioning the colleagues’ evaluation of her work in terms of legitimacy and illegitimacy and turning to arguments based upon scientific knowledge are counter acts in the power relation between her and her colleagues. However, Nabila’s attempts to contest the positioning of difference by her colleagues do not lead to a reconfiguration of the power relationship. Instead, Nabila disciplines herself into an extreme self-monitoring of her work in order to not make mistakes that can further sediment the colleagues’ equation between mistakes and being a practicing Muslim. One might argue that Nabila shifts mode of action from resistance to endurance by exerting herself to the uttermost. Nabila’s experience points to situations in which an oscillation between acts of resistance and acts of endurance are at play. It gives insight into the two modalities of action as interchangeable and situated in a particular moment of social interaction structured by an uneven power relationship.

**Negotiating difference in minority-majority relations: Acts of resistance**

So far I have analysed acts of endurance in relations with the majority. In extension, I have demonstrated an oscillation between acts of endurance and acts of resistance which unfolds the perspective of endurance and resistance rather than *either-or*. In the following, I probe the women’s enactment of resistance to the positioning of difference in relationship with the majority.
In general, the women have the opportunity to perform daily prayers in the public majority space (educational institutions, work places). Mira, though, tells the story of an experience at the time she was a pupil in grammar school. The headmaster banned the Muslim pupils from performing their daily prayers at the school. However, the pupils contested the ban and wrote a letter of complaint to the Ministry of Education in order for it to rule on the issue. The ministry replied that the individual institution was entitled to make such decisions. The headmaster maintained his prohibition. The pupils continued performing their prayer, but now in secret. They would find a room available for the purpose and take turns praying. Those not praying would stand outside the room watching out for teachers in the corridor, while the others performed the prayer. Mira evaluates that her experience of praying in secret, despite the ban, made her stronger in her faith: “I felt I was a good Muslim”. Her assignment of meaning to her actions is she was performing good deeds by worshipping God under these difficult circumstances. Challenging the positioning of difference by micro practices in one’s everyday life can be viewed as small acts of resistance to the uneven power relation with the majority leading to empowerment. Mira’s acts of praying in secret are small acts of resistance that empower her in doing good Muslimness.
Some research (Karam, 1998; Zuhur, 1992; Ahmed, 1992; El Guindi, 1999) studying Muslim women’s motivations to don the hijab apply a perspective of resistance. Motivations for the practice in Muslim majority contexts are partly viewed as resistance to restrictions on women’s mobility in public places. The hijab is seen as a claim to move freely in public space while observing the rules of gendered conduct – partly as resistance to a neo-colonial Western discourse on the veil as a symbol of oppression. Other research (Rasmussen, 1999; Christiansen, 1999) nuances this perspective by including a focus on the religious dimension of the motivation for hijab practice. Yet another perspective is delimited to the hijab as an embodied religious self-practice (Mahmood, 2005). Research on Muslim minority contexts in Europe (Johansen, 2002; Jacobsen, 2011a; Minganti, 2007) points to the tendency of young Muslim women emphasising motivations founded in becoming consciously practicing Muslims and not in objection to marginalisation of the majority societies. This tendency can equally be discerned in the motivation for the women’s hijab practice in this study. All of the women emphasised religious motivation. In donning the hijab, they follow the Islamic injunction and a practice of submission to God. All of them are raised in homes in which female Muslim practice includes wearing the hijab. Most of the women donned the hijab at the time of the first menstruation. Others wore the hijab at an earlier age, though in an on-and-off manner based on curiosity as well as an eagerness to follow the example of their mothers. However, they articulate the right intention to wear the hijab, after having
understood Islam correctly and becoming a conscious practising Muslim. Miriam and Nabila donned the hijab at a later age than the other women. Their motivation was that they became conscious practicing Muslim and experienced closeness to God. To them, the natural step was therefore to don the hijab. However, Nabila’s story is singular in terms of the motivation. She equally articulates contesting the marginalisation of Muslims by majority society as an aspect in her decision:

(I’ve had) enough of society, enough of the way Muslims were spoken of. The way second-generation immigrants were spoken about, the way they portrayed Muslim women as being oppressed, etc., and I wanted to be a part of changing that perspective, I would not stand for it. Because I see myself, also at that time, as a strong woman who wants to get an education, who wants to be a part of society, and who does so much exactly to not have that picture; exactly to provide a good picture of Islam and what being a good Muslim entails; but I felt that time and again it felt like it didn’t help anything despite how much you tried (...) So it was, yes, it was a protest, but before it was a protest then it was that I got closer to God and began to practice more and I had reached a stage where I wanted to wear my headscarf for God’s sake and for Islam.

Nabila unfolds an objection to being positioned in a hierarchy of difference by the majority society and articulates a protest against the marginalisation of Muslims. By donning the hijab she claims to be recognised by the majority as a Muslim women belonging to the Danish society. However, she attenuates this aspect by emphasising the religious motivation in terms of closeness to God and reaching a stage in her Islam practice where the next step is to don the hijab. Nabila’s story is interesting in terms of her motivation being articulated as both resistance
to marginalisation and submission to God. Johansen (2002) points out that despite young Muslim women’s religious reasoning for donning the hijab, its symbolic (religious) value increases in the context of the politicised battlefield of belonging to Danish society (p. 117). This could be viewed in congruence with the above reading of Nabila’s story. However, another reading would suggest that Nabila’s primary meaning assignment to donning the hijab is closeness to God. Based upon my previous analysis in Chapters 5 and 6, it is reasonable to argue that the hijab practice is one element among others in the inhabitation of religious norms. As such, it constitutes one of several self-techniques in pious subjectivation. In Chapter 6, I demonstrated how Nabila appeals to her Islamic conscience and reminds herself of the Islamic obligation of individual responsibility in moments of frustration over her struggle to be recognised as a Muslim belonging to the Danish majority. In pious self-practice the submission to God, the hijab practice and the Islamic obligation of individual responsibility that informs the individual striving to please God are interrelated.

This interrelatedness reframes the readings of motivation for donning the hijab into a broader spectrum of action than resistance to the marginalisation of a majority society. Although resistance is articulated, it is assigned a subordinated meaning to the one of the embodied submission to God.
Da’wa as resistance?

Above I analysed the women’s response to the majority’s demands for accountability by applying the perspective of endurance. In terms of da’wa, their response can be seen as small acts of enduring the hardship of being positioned as different. However, another reading is possible. Below I explore a reading that goes beyond the one of endurance by applying the perspective of resistance. Negotiating piety by responding to a structure of address in which the women are marginalised can be seen as small acts of resistance in the place of small acts of endurance. In claiming to represent ‘true’ Islam and being good Muslims and citizens, the women strive to challenge the majority’s stereotypification of Islam and Muslims. Craig Calhoun (1994) points out that struggles of identity politics are about claims to recognition and legitimacy in the resistance to imposed identities by dominant discourses’ representations of particular groups (pp. 17-21). With this perspective on the power struggle in identity politics, the women’s performance of da’wa can be viewed as claims to recognition of pious Muslim subjectivity. As such, the performance of da’wa is small acts of resistance to the representations of Muslim in Danish majority society.

So far I have analysed the women’s negotiation of piety in inter-Muslim relationships and in relationships to the majority in the perspective of situated agency. I have demonstrated how the women in their everyday lives oscillate between small acts of endurance and small acts of resistance in negotiating a pious subject position in relationships of dominance or claims to dominance. Both modes of actions are modalities of active
engagement in social interactions in which transformation of the self and reconfigurations of asymmetrical power relations are involved.

**Summing-up**

In this chapter, I have analysed the situated agency of the women’s negotiation of piety in relationships of power in which they are subjected to dominance or claims to dominance. I have shown that the women negotiate a pious subject position by small acts of endurance and small acts of resistance both in inter-Muslim as well as in majority relationships. These are situated practices of everyday life in which an oscillation between endurance and resistance takes place. Situated agency is thus not either endurance or resistance, but both endurance and resistance. Both modes are active engagement in the negotiation of piety. They are enacted in negotiations of representing ‘true’ Islam and good Muslimness and have the capacity to reconfigure uneven relationships of power in inter-Muslim as well as in majority relationships.
Chapter 8 Narratives of Choice

In this chapter, I analyse if and how an ethics of Islamic piety intersects with other constructions of subjectivity. The point of departure is the assumption that different configurations of personhood cohabitate the same cultural and historical space. The Western European context of this study makes it is relevant to explore if and how an Islamic ethics of piety intersects with a (neo)liberal ethics of personal authenticity and autonomy in becoming a pious subject.

Choice

All the women articulate the realisation of a ‘true’ self based on an individual choice of becoming a consciously practising Muslim: “to be a Muslim is to be myself”, “(…) this (Islam) was the answer to my life of how I wanted to live my life, for me it made sense (…)”. Islam is a way of life that is chosen because it makes sense to the individual women. In stories on interaction with others who demand an account, choice is the fundamental argument by which the individual woman explains being a pious Muslim.

Suha in particular emphasises that these discussions do not only take place between her and ethnic Danes. She narrates experiencing several discussions with a Muslim fellow student at the university. The fellow student pities Suha because she declines to participate in campus life with parties and drinking alcohol. In the discussions, Suha argues: “this is my
lifestyle, and it is one that I have chosen.”. Returning to the interview interaction, she concludes:

This kind of discussion I have had with her thousands of times, and she is a Muslim (...) she has just chosen another lifestyle than I have, and she should feel free to do so. But she should also be able to understand that I have chosen another lifestyle. But she still feels sorry for me. So once again, it’s not just ethnic Danes (...)

Suha makes the right of choice central in her argument of why she implements an Islamic lifestyle. In amplifying the argument, one might say that she emphasises the right of choice in articulating the reciprocity of recognising individual lifestyles.

Mira tells the story of how she explained her donning the hijab to her Danish classmates in public school:

(...), when I started wearing a headscarf I was 14 years old going on 15, and when I came to school wearing a headscarf, and they could not understand it and they wanted a logical explanation of why, and my explanation was more spiritual and more personal and did not convince them. Obviously, because my choice has some thoughts behind it, which are my own, but I was tired that everything always had to have a logical explanation, well, that you should sense an explanation, you should visualize it, I became tired of it, so...

Monique: was it your classmates who asked you?
Mira: yes it was my classmates, and of course there were all those weird gazes and the unnecessary comments from people who went to that school; and I became tired of it, so I got up and said: “now I will give a lecture, it will not be dry facts, it will solely be about my own experience and thoughts which you will hear, because it’s not everything which has a logical explanation; and I have made a choice, and you must respect that, and if you cannot understand it, well then
it must be as with everything else you don’t understand, there is nothing you can do about it”.

Mira demands to be recognised as a hijab-wearing Muslim girl by positioning herself within the discourse on choice as a right. She experiences that she cannot convince her classmates by offering a spiritual explanation as they demand a rational explanation for her action. She thwarts their demand by making the argument of choice central in her explanation for donning the hijab. In a further development of her argument, she asserts that the choice is founded in individual reflexion and experience. By arguing that the choice is a result of her own thinking, she rejects what she perceives to be an assumption that she has donned the hijab based on pressure or compulsion from her family. In what she has told and by telling it, she positions herself as an individual acting on the basis of personal choice. She develops her narrative of individual choice during the interview by linking the donning of the hijab with the experience of a rapid self-development in choosing ‘true’ Islam and engaging in da’wa work. Mira positions herself as one who realises a true self in becoming a pious Muslim based upon a personal choice.

How does a perspective on the convergence of two different modes of subjectivation shed light on the women’s articulations? In Chapter 2, I outlined this study’s understanding of a (neo)liberal ethics of individual authenticity and autonomy. I build upon Taylor’s (2007) and Rose’s (1996) conceptualisations of this ethics and transfer it to the perspective on the formation of the self. I understand (neo)liberal ethics to be the discourse of
freedom in which individual authenticity constitutes the mode of subjectivation to realise a ‘true’ self. Authentic personhood is constructed through self-practice of choice that is constituted as the prime value irrespective of what the choice is between, or in what domain the choice is to be executed. The women’s self-narratives unfold a coming into being of a selfhood which is constituted by an Islamic ethics of piety and the orientation towards authentic personhood of (neo)liberal ethics. On might say that in the narratives of choice, an ethics of Islamic piety intersects with a liberal ethics of personal authenticity and autonomy in their positioning as pious Muslim women. The fix point of convergence is authenticity. The Islamic revival discourse of authentic Muslimness based upon the return to and the practice of ‘true’ Islam converges with a (neo)liberal discourse of personal authenticity in which self-realisation based upon individual choices makes the authentic (Western) self. One might say that the women speak themselves as authentic pious Muslims through a progressive type of self-narrative. They evaluate their mode of being, closeness to God, by self-narratives that configure their experiences of choice related to realising a ‘true’ Islamic self in an increment movement. One might say that this type of self-narrative constitutes a self-technique to master a pious self biography in a Danish context. Their self-narratives give insight into how pious subjectivity is constituted in the intersection of an ethics of Islamic piety and a liberal ethics of personal authenticity.
Summing-up

In this chapter, I have analysed the narratives of individual choice and demonstrated how Islamic ethics and (neo)liberal ethics converge in becoming a pious subject. The women’s argumentation of being Muslim as an individual choice and the realisation of ‘true’ Muslim selfhood situates the construction of an Islamic self within a discourse of Islamic authenticity and one of personal authenticity.
Chapter 9 Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis has been to explore how young Muslim women engaging in the Islamic revival invest the moral dimension of the Islamic discursive tradition in their everyday lives in Denmark. I have applied the perspective of religious identification with the theoretical framework of ethical self-formation in order to analyse how the women invest in pious subject positions by way of self-practices in a Danish context. The analysis applied addresses the aspects of the determination of the moral substance which is to be worked upon if an individual is to realise himself or herself as a particular subject; the mode of subjectivation; the way an individual is incited to invest in a subject position; the self-techniques applied to transform oneself into a particular subject and the teleology of self-formation. I have shown that these aspects are interrelated in the women’s pious subjectivation. I have also shown that closeness to God, piety, is the substance to which the women give attention and cultivate in order to realise themselves as pious subjects. Moreover, I have demonstrated that the women are incited to invest in a pious subject position by recognising the authoritative discourse of Islam, in particular the Sunnah of the Prophet. I have shown that they apply particular self-techniques in their everyday lives in transforming themselves to pious selves with the objective of pleasing God and aspiring to salvation in the afterlife. By analysing these aspects I have given an account of how the women govern themselves in everyday life as moral subjects of their actions.
I have analysed the mode of subjectivation by which the women are incited to recognise the authoritative discourse of Islam and the ways they invest in a pious subject position offered by the discourse. I have shown how this mode feeds into particular self-techniques that may be viewed as the complementary movements of cultivating inner disposition and behaviour in everyday micro practices. I have analysed the two aspects through the grid of reflexive and transitive movements and demonstrated that self-forming activities are embedded in social interaction. I argue that a ‘Sunnahfication’ of everyday life takes place. This ‘Sunnahfication’ encompasses both the reflexive and the transitive movement of subjectivation. The women activate the exemplary models of the Prophet Muhammad and his wives as a self-technique in striving to be a good example. As such, the present is continuously related to the past in the constitution of the good example. The self-techniques applied to become a good example consist of work on emotional dispositions by cultivating feelings of love, joy and humility; the bodily practice of the hijab and acquiring and accumulating Islamic knowledge which is linked to the cultivation of faith. The accumulation of Islamic knowledge becomes an unending task in the perfection of a pious self.

Knowledge acquisition is a means to legitimately assess various claims in the Muslim communities to represent ‘true’ Islam. It is equally the base upon which they recognise religious authorities of establishment Islam by assessing if the truth claims make sense to them and can be incorporated in the context of their lives. By way of these self-techniques the women evaluate and position themselves as knowledgeable and devoted Muslims.
who negotiate relations to others by working through the power of the good example. I have analysed the relational aspect, or the transitive movement, of pious subjectivation by focusing on the good example as a da’wa strategy. I have shown how Islamic knowledge and behaviour are interrelated in a moral practice of everyday life by which the women claim to have an impact on others. In giving da’wa, the women constitute themselves as good representatives of Islam to both a Muslim minority community and the Danish majority society. In extension, I have shown that they exercise religious authority in both a Muslim community and a Danish majority. They are new types of Islamic authority figures.

Pious subjectivity appears to be constituted by way of the mastering of inner pious disposition transposed into (bodily) practice. A hierarchisation of the interior and the exterior takes place in which the exterior is subordinated to the interior. The women’s cultivation of inner pious disposition is by way of reflecting on and evaluating how Islam makes sense to the individual woman based upon the intellectual/mental activities of reading the founding texts, edifying literature, as well as attending lectures and darses. Giving da’wa entails the intellectual competences of transmitting Islamic knowledge and the one of argumentation in order to influence others either to become consciously practising Muslims or to reconfigure a majority person’s perception of Islam and Muslims. Thus the constitution of pious subjectivity appears to be a movement from the interior towards the exterior.64 The

64 In the Egyptian context, Mahmood (2005) observes the inverse: The movement is from the exterior towards the interior in the constitution of pious subjectivity.
complementarity of the two is evaluated by a reflexive self in order to reach ‘closeness’ to God.

Building further upon the analyses of mode of subjectivation and the self-techniques I have analysed the teleology of pious subjectivation. The analysis of merit work unfolds the women’s religious concern of pleasing God and the desire for God to respond with the reward of salvation in the hereafter. An accentuated reflexive approach characterises this aspiration. A daily perfection of the pious self that relates to ethical social commitment constitutes merit work in the aspiration to become visible to God. Merit work is constituted by a convergence of the interior, the desire to submit to God, and the exterior, the embodied meritorious acts. However, the emphasis on cultivating the right intentions prior to meritorious acts points to a movement from mastering inner dispositions towards meritorious behaviour. Cultivating inner dispositions takes place prior to the exterior practice of merit work.

I have shown that the cultivation of responsibility is at the centre of merit work. In the women’s articulation of individual responsibility they draw

Based upon her data, Mahmood concludes that it is the bodily acts in themselves that constitute specific inner dispositions through which the pious subject comes into being. She exemplifies with the donning of the hijab by analysing it as a bodily practice that cultivates modesty. In this perspective, it is the veiled body that constitutes the modest interior. It is not simply an expression of the self’s modest interior, but the very means by which this interiority is acquired (pp. 121-122, 160-161). This difference between her study and mine appears to be empirically based. Mahmood characterises the mosque movement she studied as unique in comparison to other currents within the Islamic revival in that it strongly emphasises outward markers of religiosity, i.e. ritual practices, styles of comporting oneself, etc. (p. 31).
on an Islamic discourse of individual responsibility and a Danish discourse on integration in which active citizenship is pivotal. By claiming that being good Muslims is equal to being good citizens the women contest a dominant Danish discourse that problematises Muslims as fellow citizens. In positioning themselves as good citizens informed by an Islamic impetus to individual responsibility they articulate belonging to the Danish society and demand to be recognised as legitimate fellow citizens by the Danish majority. Merit work is constituted by both religious and civic engagement. With the analysis of merit work, I have shown that by way of cultivating individual responsibility in their everyday lives, the women aspire to an individual biography that pleases God who rewards the single woman with salvation in the hereafter. Their meaning assignment to merit work situates them in a relationship with the eschatological dimension which informs their ethical social engagement.

I have further explored the relational aspect of pious subjectivation by way of analysing the women’s negotiation of piety in inter-Muslim relationships as well in relationships with the majority. I have applied the perspective of ‘situated agency’ in order to analyse the modes of action at play in the negotiations. I have demonstrated how the women in their everyday lives oscillate between small acts of endurance and small acts of resistance in negotiating a pious subject position in relationships of dominance or claims to dominance. Both modes of actions are active engagements that have the capacity to transform the self as well as to reconfigure asymmetrical relationships of power. The modes of action can be viewed as constitutive of agency. In extension, the approach of
'situated agency' has enabled different perspectives on the same situations. An example is giving da’wa to the majority. The practice can be read either as small acts of endurance or small acts of resistance.

The perspective on the oscillation between small acts of endurance and small acts of resistance is not a concluding one. On the contrary, it is an opening to further explorations of the interplay between the two modes of action as manifestations of agency in the micro practices of everyday life.

I have analysed narratives of choice and shown that pious subjectivity in Denmark is constituted in the convergence of an Islamic ethics and a (neo)liberal ethics. The fix point of the convergence is authenticity. The women’s argumentation of being Muslim as an individual choice and the realisation of ‘true’ Muslim selfhood situates the construction of a pious self within the discourse of Islamic authenticity and the Western discourse of an authentic self.
Resumé

Titel: Narrativer om fromhed – en analyse af moralsk selvdannelse blandt unge muslimske kvinder i Danmark.

Formålet med denne afhandling er at undersøge, hvordan unge Muslimske kvinder, der deltager i den islamiske vækkelse, investerer i den islamiske moralske dimension.

Afhandlingen anlægger et teoretisk perspektiv på religion som en diskursiv tradition, der tilbyder bestemte subjekt positioner, individer indtager og forhandler. Den argumenterer for at anvende et selvdannelsesperspektiv på religios identifikation for at undersøge, hvordan islamisk from subjektivitet produceres i en dansk minoritets kontekst. Denne rammesætning skaber den analytiske forbindelse til at undersøge, hvordan religios identifikation konstitueres i hverdagslivet.

Undersøgelsen er baseret på kvalitative interviews med 10 unge muslimske kvinder. Det empiriske udgangspunkt er at analysere, hvordan kvinderne gør islam relevant i deres hverdagsliv. Analysen er bygget op omkring fire aspekter ved etisk selvdannelse: bestemmelsen af den etiske substans, underkastelsesmåder, selvteknikker og det etiskes subjekts teleologi.

Analysen er baseret på kvindernes selv-fortællinger og struktureret omkring fire nøgle narrativer: ”Narrativer om det gode eksempel”, ”Narrativer om belønningsarbejde”, ”Narrativer om udholdenhed og modstand”, ”Narrativer om valg”. Kapitlet ”Narrativer om det gode eksempel analyserer, hvordan kvinderne gennem selvpraktikkers refleksive og transitive momenter underkaster sig en ‘sunnahificering’
English Summary

Title: Narratives of Piety – An analysis of the formation of moral selves among young Muslim women in Denmark.

The thesis explores the following research question: How do young Muslim women engaging the Islamic revival invest the moral dimension of Islam in their everyday lives in Denmark?

Theoretically, the thesis is grounded in studies of anthropology of religion and identity studies. The thesis argues for applying a perspective on Islam as a discursive tradition that offers particular subject positions for individuals to invest in and negotiate. It argues for applying the perspective of ethical self-formation as a theoretical framework on religious identification in order to explore the production of pious subjectivity within the discursive tradition of Islam in a Danish minority context. This framework creates an analytical link to the constitution of religious identification in everyday life.

The study is based on qualitative interviews with 10 young Muslim women engaging the Islamic revival in Denmark. The point of empirical departure is to analyse how Islam is made relevant by the women in their everyday lives. The framework of analysis consists of four analytical aspects of ethical self-formation and their interrelation: Determination of the ethical substance, mode of subjectivation, self-techniques and the telos of the ethical subject.

The analysis is based upon the women’s self-narratives. It is structured around four key narratives: ‘Narratives of the good example’, ‘Narratives of merit work’, ‘Narratives of endurance and resistance’ and ‘Narratives of choice’. The thesis argues that a ‘Sunnahfication’ of the women’s everyday
lives takes place constituted by both reflexive and transitive movements of self-forming micro-practice situated in social interaction. The women position themselves as representatives of ‘true’ Islam in a Muslim minority community and a Danish majority society and demand to be recognised as religious authorities. The chapter ‘Narratives of merit work’ demonstrates how the women create space for moral actions that articulate this world into the next. The analysis points out that merit work informs their religious and civic engagements. These engagements relate to the women’s aspiration for an individual biography that pleases God, the reward for which being salvation in the afterlife. The thesis argues that the meaning assignment to merit work situates the women in a relationship with the eschatological dimension which informs their ethical social engagement. The chapter ‘Narratives of endurance and resistance’ demonstrates two modes of action by which the women negotiate piety. It argues that an oscillation between small acts of endurance and small acts of resistance in inter-Muslim relationships and relationships with the majority unfolds as the women manifest situated agency in these negotiations. The chapter ‘Narratives of choice’ demonstrates the convergence of an Islamic ethics and a (neo)liberal ethics in their argumentation of realising authentic Muslimness as an individual choice. The thesis concludes that the formation of a pious Muslim self is situated in the convergence of the two different configurations of subjectivity in Denmark.
Literature


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Website:

[www.brugforalleunge.dk](http://www.brugforalleunge.dk) (accessed 10.07.2013)