The Instagram usage of Muslim women in the Netherlands

A qualitative analysis of how young Muslim women from immigrant backgrounds in the Netherlands experience the popular social network

Student Name: Lale Mahmudova
Student Number: 483305

Supervisor: Dr. Giulia Evolvi

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Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Choose an item. Thesis
June 2020

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ABSTRACT

Young, non-Western, Muslim women who live in Western societies can experience complex realities. The complexity of such realities can be traced in the contradicting social conditions these women live through from a young age, consisting of their macro- (school, work, media, friends, mainstream media) and micro (home, community, Mosque) environment. When the micro- and macro environment differ, they can both demand diverse expectations from an individual, often requiring certain skills of adaptation and navigation to satisfy both needs. The social conditions that make up the realities of young Muslim women in Western societies are conceptualized as their composite habitus. The habitus influences the responses, decision-making processes, views, and opinions as they navigate themselves through life (Waltorp, 2015). It is of the interest of this study to understand how the habitus of young Muslim women in the Netherlands translates to their social media usage. By selecting the case of one of the most popular social networks amongst young people at the moment, which is Instagram, this paper aims to comprehend which strategies young Muslim women apply when they approach such an accessible, easy to use, and highly visual public platform. In order to provide a representation of real-life experiences, data was gathered by conducting 12 semi-structured interviews with young Muslim women from an immigrant background who live in the Dutch Randstad. Using composite habitus as a guiding concept, the interviews focus on the social conditions of the young women whilst growing up and living in the Netherlands, exploring their meaning-making and decision-making processes in relation to religion, ethnicity, and Dutch nationality. Grasping these processes provides a foundation to discover the Instagram usage of the women, understanding their user motivations, what is and what is not considered appropriate to post, which benefits, and which setbacks they experience from using the network. Grasping the user approach of the women discloses the perceived socio-cultural opportunities and constraints of using Instagram, revealing which strategies are applied to enjoy the former, while avoiding the latter. This allows an understanding of the way the women strategize their Instagram usage in a way that optimizes their experiences to their desired outcomes. As such, the data illustrates which strategies young Muslim women in the Netherlands apply whilst using Instagram.

KEYWORDS: *Composite habitus, Muslim women, cultural hybridity, Social media usage, Instagram strategies.*

Table of contents

1. Introduction

Muslim women make up for 5% of the Dutch female population (Schmeets, 2018) yet are rarely included in narratives of Dutch society, whether this be in mainstream media, academia, or even general society. However, with the rise of digital sphere, the 'democratic' nature of social networking sites has provided access to free global online platforms, allowing marginalized communities to finally become the narrators of their own stories (Enchaibi, 2013; Kavapci & Kraeplin, 2016; Waninger, 2015). Currently, one of the most-used social networking sites is Instagram, a visual smart-phone application that allows its 500 million daily users (omnicore, 2020) to share images with people all around the world. Digital media in general and Instagram in particular can lead its young Muslim female users to experience various new opportunities, especially when compared to traditional media. Some of these opportunities include self-representation (Caldeira & De Ridder, 2017), self-expression (Kavapci & Kraeplin), sharing counternarratives (Enchaibi, 2013), consumerism (Waninger, 2015), business opportunities (van Driel & Dumitrica, 2020), and long-distance relationship maintenance (Waltorp, 2015). On the other hand, Instagram can bring new or enhance existent socio-cultural constraints, including pressures to be 'likeable' (Ross, 2019), new manners of surveillance (Jaynes, 2019; Waltorp, 2015; Waninger 2015), dominant beauty standards and femininity ideals (Caldeira & De Ridder, 2017; Waninger, 2015), and an increase in social comparison (Stapleton, Luiz & Chatwin, 2017).

The goal of this paper is to provide an insight into the complex narratives that first and second-generation immigrant Muslim women in the Netherlands can experience while navigating themselves through the off- and online world. The complexity of these narratives is a result of these women growing up between at least two different cultures – making them cultural hybrids. Cultural hybridity leads individuals to experience different identity development processes compared to those who grow up in one dominant culture (Clammer, 2015; Friedman, 1997) – which can be especially complicated when one of the cultures that forms the identity of such cultural hybrids is highly stigmatized by the majority community in which these individuals live (Prokopiou, Cline & de Abreu, 2012). For example, in the Netherlands, non-Western immigrants and Muslims are often the focus of right-wing populist discourses (Doomernik, 2017; Sterkenburg, Peeters, van Amsterdam, 2019). On the other hand, the minority groups cultural hybrids are a part of can draw imaginary boundaries around their communities to keep out Western 'outside' influences that could generate transgressive identities (Werbner, 1997), by, for example, scrutinizing younger members for behaviour that does not reflect cultural norms and values (Waltorp, 2015). These particular, sometimes contradicting, conditions young Muslim women in the Netherlands experience can form a system of dispositions – also known as composite habitus – which allows the understanding of decision-making processes, opinions, world views, and responses (Bourdieu, 1990; Waltorp, 2015). Habitus explains how these social conditions generate unconscious strategies that aid young Muslim women to carefully navigate themselves both on-and offline while negotiating community expectations, personal aspirations, and power dynamics

of Western society. Whereas offline strategies reflect the social conditions of the habitus in the 'real world', online strategies can both reproduce such conditions while encountering new ones that are unique to the digital sphere. As previously mentioned, such online conditions can include both socio-cultural opportunities, such as identity expression, articulation, and exploration (Dhoest & Szulc, 2016; Peterson, 2020; Ross, 2019; Waltorp, 2015) as well as socio-cultural constraints, such as peer and community surveillance (Jaynes, 2019; Waltorp; 2013).

This thesis aims to explore this phenomenon of online social media strategies further by answering the following research question:

"Which strategies do young Muslim women from immigrant backgrounds in the Netherlands apply when using Instagram?"

As an attempt to answer the research question sufficiently, three sub questions are introduced – (1) How can the composite habitus of young Muslim women in the Netherlands be described? (2) What are the socio-cultural opportunities young Muslim women in the Netherlands experience when using Instagram? (3) What are the socio-cultural constraints young Muslim women in the Netherlands experience when using Instagram?

1.1. Social relevance

The incredible rise in the popularity of social networking sites during the last years can allow marginalized groups in society to benefit greatly from such 'democratic', accessible, and free to use applications. On such sites, people can decide for themselves how they represent themselves (Ross, 2019), their gender (Enchaibi, 2013; Peterson, 2016), race (Peterson; 2020), religion (Kavakci & Kraeplin, 2016; Waninger, 2015), or body type (Caldeira & De Ridder, 2017; Peterson, 2020). Amongst such platforms, Instagram is currently one of the most used and popular social networks, especially amongst younger users (Ross, 2019). In the Netherlands, although Facebook is still the most used app in the country, many young Dutch people are switching to Instagram. It has even become a place where new careers blossom, as Instagram is also home to popular content creators, also known as 'influencers', who financially profit from the public nature of the app when they use their platforms for advertising brands they collaborate with (van Driel & Dumitrica, 2020). This highly visual focus has also made Instagram the topic of many negative narratives and claims of it being dangerous to the self-esteem, body images, and mental health of its, especially younger users (Barr, 2019; Hern, 2018; Macmillan, 2017). Whether opportunistic or damaging, Instagram seems to be to, at least some extent, quite influential in modern society, hence the societal relevance of studying how it is used.

What is also considered is that, 4.9% of women above the age of 15 in the Netherlands identify as a Muslim and nearly 41% of all Muslims in the Netherlands has a non-Western immigrant background (Schmeets, 2018). These numbers reveal that a significant part of Dutch society consists of female

Muslims, making it socially relevant to explore their usage of such a popular, potentially influential, network.

1.2. Scientific relevance

Although various academic research has been done on the effects of social networking sites on societal groups (Alhabash, & Ma, 2017; Jaynes, 2019; Ross, 2019; Stapleton et al, 2017), when Muslim women are the topic of research, it is often focused on influential veiled (Hijabi) Muslim women who have large numbers of followers and often make a living off the platform (Kavakci & Kraeplin, 2016; Peterson, 2016, 2020; Waninger, 2015). Others who are focused on the 'regular' Muslim woman are based on blogging platforms (Enchaibi, 2013) or more specifically Dutch Moroccan youth (Leurs, Midden & Ponzanesi, 2012). This paper intents to expand this line of academia into the specific context of a 'regular' young Muslim women with non-Western ethnic roots in a Western society, and what a platform such as Instagram can mean to them. This context in particular is still relatively under-explored by English-speaking scholars, which is why this topic is considered scientifically relevant.

In addition, most of the academic papers found on young Muslim women mentioned above were conducted by white and Western scholars, many of who base their research on visual discourses, and some of them on interviews, analysing the social group from a distant and Euro-centric perspective. I believe that my personal background as a 25 year old Muslim woman who immigrated to the Netherlands at the age of five from Azerbaijan, I can contribute to this research from a different and closer perspective, as I have lived through many similar experiences as the women that I am studying.

1.3. Sample

The paper uses the case of Instagram to analyse which opportunities and constraints 12 young women from the Randstad area of the Netherlands can experience whilst using social media platforms. The women were collected by posting a request on my private Instagram and Facebook profile, as well as by asking around my personal network. The data is collected through in-depth qualitative, semi-structured interviews with Muslim women with Moroccan, Egyptian, Pakistani, Bosnian, Azerbaijani, and Turkish ethnicities. The women are between 20 and 27 years old and live in cities such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, and the Hague or areas surrounding these cities, such as Hoofddorp, Nieuw Vennep, and Purmerend. The women's educational background ranged from Dutch MBO college, HBO university of applied sciences, and Universities.

Although the Instagram app is free to use for everyone, it requires access to the internet and a smartphone to download the app and use most of its functions (on the Website you can only view, scroll and send direct messages). As a result, the regardless of the app's popularity, it might not be equally accessible for everyone. However, the sample selected is not affected by such digital divides, as the women in this research are all digital natives and reside in the Netherlands, in which 93% of the

population has a smartphone (Consultancy, 2018) and the usage of social media is very high (Boekee, Hoekstra, & van der Veer, 2020).

1.4. Outline

After the introduction, this paper presents the theoretical framework in the second chapter, which thoroughly describes the social conditions that influence the female Muslim habitus and illustrates how they translate to the digital sphere by exploring the socio-cultural opportunities and constraints that can be experienced when using Instagram.

The third chapter introduces methodology, where the use of qualitative semi-structured interviews is justified for its strength researching personal experiences and undiscovered phenomena and thematic analysis provides the groundwork for the coding process. The chapter further operationalises the guiding theoretical concepts (strategies, composite habitus, socio-cultural opportunities- and constraints and uses them as a foundation for the interview by designing it in three segments – (1) composite habitus, (2) Instagram usage, and (3) pro's and con's of Instagram.

The fourth chapter presents the analysis by providing the most relevant data to the research and sub questions, dividing them in 11 emerging themes – (1) religious identity, (2) ethnic identity, (3) national identity, (4) education/motivation, (5) relationship maintenance, (6) self-expression, (7) counternarratives, (8) memory tool, (9) privacy concerns, (10) modesty, and (11) likeability. The chapter combines presentation with the discussion of each theme in relation to the theoretical framework.

The fifth chapter presents the conclusion of the chapter, in which the sub questions are answered in relation to the presentation and the discussion of the 11 emerging themes from the data. Based on the sub questions, this chapter will answer the research question.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter will provide a total of six paragraphs that thoroughly explore the social and cultural conditions young Muslim women in the Netherlands are exposed to, both on- and offline. The first three paragraphs focus on social and cultural conditions in the offline world – providing framework for the first sub-question of the paper. The final three paragraphs aim to explore social and cultural conditions of the online world, and Instagram more specifically, describing some of the main socio-cultural opportunities and constraints that its usage provide. This provides a foundation for the final two sub-questions of the paper. Firstly, I begin by exploring the Dutch context in regards to non-Western immigrants and Islam.

2.1. Non-Western immigrants and Islam in the Netherlands

The Netherlands is home to a large multicultural society, in which nearly 14% of all Dutch citizens have a non-Western migrant background (Cbs, 2020). Most of these non-Western migrants reside in the bigger cities of the country, as was measured by the Dutch central bureau of statistics (CBS, 2020). In its yearly analysis, the CBS illustrated that, in 2019, nearly 55% of all citizens of the Hague and Amsterdam, 52% of all citizens of Rotterdam, and 35% of all citizens of Utrecht had a non-Western immigrant background.

In the Dutch context, there are two popular concepts that are frequently used to label whether someone is a Dutch native or not. Firstly, there is the term “Allochtoon”, used to describe people who have at least one parent who was born abroad, and/or people who were born outside of the Netherlands themselves. On the other hand, there is the term “Autochtoon”, which refers to people who themselves and whose parents were born in the Netherlands (Doomernik, 2017). Although not the focus of this study, it is important to recognize that the label “Allochtoon” has grown into a tool for the “othering” of namely non-Europeans, especially those of the Muslim community. Sterkenburg et al (2019) argue that concerns rooted in colonial and racist ideologies often include Islam as highly ‘incompatible’ with the Dutch cultural values, often used as an explanation for the difficulties that Muslim minority groups find when integrating. These ideologies are still evident in Dutch media and the Dutch society, but also in Dutch populist politics (Doomernik, 2017) and is a likely result of the war on terror introduced by the United States after the 9/11 terrorist attacks (Enchaibi, 2013) as well as the murder of Dutch right wing writer and director Theo van Gogh by a young, Dutch Moroccan man in 2004 (De Koning, 2016) Due to its problematic and stigmatizing usage, the term “Allochtoon” was ‘officially’ changed at the end of 2016, dividing it into two parts: “Western-Migrants” and “Non-Western migrants” (Cbs, 2020). The label Western immigrants officially concerns everyone who themselves, or whose parents are from North America, Australia, New Zealand, the European continent, Indonesia or Japan. The term Non-Western migrants concerns anyone who is from the remaining part of Asia, Africa, South America, Middle America, and the Caribbean. Although the term “Allochtoon” has officially been

replaced, it has been widely used in Dutch society for 30 years (Doomernik, 2017) and can still be found in the language usage of people in Dutch society today.

The interest of this study lays in the development of minority identities in Western-societies, however would like to take a more specific focus on the role of urban dynamics in such processes. Hence, mentioned in the introduction, the women who will be sampled for the interview are all from the Dutch Randstad. The Randstad of the Netherlands refers to four big cities – Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, and Utrecht – as well as the smaller suburbs that surround these cities. The Randstad in particular is a topic of interest in this study for several reasons, the first one being the high percentages of non-Western inhabitants in these urban spaces. In 2019, the Dutch statistics bureau, which revealed that nearly 55% of all citizens of the Hague and Amsterdam, 52% of all citizens from Rotterdam, and 35% of all citizens of Utrecht were from a non-Western immigrant background (CBS, 2019). Urban spaces are relevant because they are believed to contribute to social cohesion within migrant communities. Knott, Krech and Meyer (2016) consider that the built environment and urban infrastructure of cities are contexts for religious place-making and an opportunity for religious creativity and performance. The presence of religion in inner cities and, increasingly, certain suburbs is displayed and discussed through examples such as clothes, buildings, sounds, rituals, and performances (p.125). The rise of transnational migration and the current refugee crisis are just some developments that, according to Burchardt (2019), have contributed to the religious diversification of cities. Migrant community and religious needs in European cities have been met through building new or recycle old places of worship for their religions, such as old churches now being used as mosques in Amsterdam (Knott et al, 2016). Consequently, urban cities become places where religious innovation is discussed, and religious events can be performed and celebrated – becoming a part of urban consumer cultures and merging together with urban identities and city images (Knott et al, 2016; Burchardt, 2019). Especially when considering that the Randstad cities in the Netherlands consists of many immigrant communities, religious diversity can become very visible in these cities. Therefore, urban spaces can draw attention to cultural differences, public expressions, and performances of identity. Not to say that the experiences of non-Western Muslim citizens in other parts of the Netherlands are not relevant, but it is here assumed that they might experience different realities and can therefore encounter dissimilar social contexts, which can be analysed separately in future research and perhaps be compared.

2.2. Composite Habitus

The main guiding concept that this research paper introduces is the composite habitus. Composite habitus is based on Bourdieu's (1990) theory of habitus, which is described as a system of structured, structuring dispositions. Bourdieu proposes that "habitus is spontaneous, unconscious, and constituted in practice, where it relates the social conditions of the moment to social conditions in which the habitus itself was produced" (p.56). As such, habitus is understood as an unconscious yet

fundamental part of human identity, based on social conditions in which a person has lived from the moment they were born. Clammer (2015) explains that the boundaries of identity cannot be fully known until performed, and the connection between identity characteristics such as ethnicity and gender are often not grasped when performed- therefore these performances are often unconscious. By analysing habitus, such taken-for-granted responses can be decoded, allowing the meaning of daily practices generated by unintentional strategies to be understood. Besides responses, the social conditions a habitus develops in also shapes and forms future aspirations of what is and is not accessible for a certain group of people, the group which an individual considers as 'us' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.64). Thus, a young Muslim woman's practical relation to her future, which in turn also controls her practices of the present, is founded, defined, and limited by the relationship between her habitus and the chances objectively offered to her by her social world, and the power structures that are dominant in it. Consequently, these women are likely to generate in advance responses to situations that are identical or similar to past production conditions of their habitus, leading them to adjust themselves to a likely future.

Bourdieu (1990) argues that all individuals who are the products of the same objective conditions have the same habitus: "A habitus is understood as a system of dispositions common to all products of the same conditions, as they are highly likely to have been confronted with similar situations, although not necessarily in the same order" (p.59). Therefore, the individual habitus of members of the same class is united in a "relationship of homology", as within the homogenous nature of a class habitus, the production characteristics of each individual habitus still leaves space for diversity. Analysing the habitus of a person or group of people allows for improved decoding of their practices and works, leading ordinary practices to be understood as more than simply automatic and impersonal, exposing the objective meaning behind actions as organized strategies. As class alone is not a sufficient characteristic to explain the complexity of the habitus of young Muslim women in Western societies, Waltorp (2015) introduces the concept composite habitus to expand the focus from class onto gender, religion, and culture. Waltorp illustrates how various contradicting realities within the lives of young Muslim women in Western Societies co-exist in the 21st century by demonstrating how composite habitus influences the ways in which these women think, act, form opinions, and, ultimately, perform their identity in the digital age (2015, p.53). Basing her ethnographic study specifically on young Muslim women from migrant backgrounds in Copenhagen's social housing areas, Waltorp demonstrates how smart-phones and digital media can be used to navigate, negotiate, resolve, and possibly even dissolve the conflicting and contradicting aspects of these women's lives (2015, p. 64). Although this allows new opportunities, this digital access can also intensify the complexity of composite habitus by, for example, allowing different versions of the self to be managed, maintained, explored, and created on different types of social networking sites. As such, the way Instagram is used for the mentioned purposes can differ significantly from Facebook, Snapchat, or Twitter.

So, how to understand which aspects of the habitus could be especially influential for the women analysed in this study? Prokopiou et al (2012, p. 47) proposes that ethnic minority children's cultural identities are not just formed by practices represented by their macrosystem's dominant society, but also the practices, values, and beliefs represented by their minority community. Minority communities are argued to have an influential role on the identity development of such children. As opposed to ethnic Dutch kids, minority children move "towards multiple identities through dialogical negotiations of different and similar aspects of belonging within their majority and minority communities, mainstream and community school settings, living in a multicultural society, and a wider international context that encourages trends towards globalisation" (p.50). As such, minority community as well as the dominant society in which one find lives can both illustrate conditions that construct the habitus. A variety of daily experiences such as Mosque visits, Quran classes, growing up in community neighbourhoods, working for Dutch employers, having Dutch colleagues, going to a Dutch school, and being exposed to Dutch mainstream media can therefore be of strong influence the identity construction of young Muslim women.

As the composite habitus of young Muslim women in the Netherlands is expected to be strongly influenced by "contradicting" structures, such as them being a woman, a Muslim, having an immigrant background, and living in a Western-European country, the following paragraph will explore such structures through the concept of cultural hybrid identities.

2.3. Cultural hybrid identities

As previously mentioned, the women chosen for the subject of this study are assumed to experience particular social conditions because of four main characteristics – In this paragraph, these characteristics and their relation to identity development will be explained by applying the theories of cultural hybridity and the third space. Firstly, cultural hybridity in the context of ethnic and/or religious minorities in the West are explained, followed by the role of gender in such conditions.

The process of identity construction and the position of the self are continuously developing, constantly being formed and reformed by circumstances, time, space, historic, sociocultural contexts, and societal power structures. In this identity construction process, culture and ethnic background can play a meaningful role. Just as identity, culture and ethnicity must always be performed dynamically, constantly reproduced and acted out in a person's everyday life in order to be manifested. In this sense, performance is conceptualized as "the creation, presentation, or affirmation of an identity, either real or assumed, through action" (Clammer, 2015, p.2160). Ethnic and multi-ethnic identifications are not only individualized but also resonate with group identities. People can identify as members or non-members of certain communities or cultural groups through cultural codes, styles of dress, public conduct, customs, literacy, artistic modes of creativity (including music), humour and language (Armstrong, 1982, in Yuval-Davis, 1997, p.195; Clammer, 2015). Because of their constant development, identities of ethnic minorities in the West are not just "static comparisons between

various ‘beings’, e.g. being Turkish or Dutch, but are more of a continuous process in which people find themselves in constant negotiations of the various micro- and macro systems that form and influence their multiple cultural identities” (Prokopiou et al, 2012, p.38). Adding to that, the continuous changing environmental, political, and religious condition in which the world finds itself can result in the development of new modes of identity expressions (Clammer, 2015, p. 2164).

When a person experiences various, sometimes contradicting, cultural manifestations throughout their life, their identity construction can differ significantly from those whose identity is formed around one dominant culture (Clammer, 2015). People who experience this are also referred to as cultural hybrids. Just as all acts of identity, hybridity is “the practice of attributing meaning, only fully understood in terms of its social context and the way in which acts of identification are motivated” (Friedman, 1997, p.85). Cultural hybridity can become a way for people to identify themselves, and sometimes the world around them, in such terms (Yuval-Davis, 1997). National and cultural hybrids that have lived in more than one culture, for seeking refuge or migrating, allow counternarratives to emerge in Western societies. These counternarratives can both evoke and erase the boundaries of their adoptive nation and can be perceived as threats to the notion of a nation state (Bhabha, 1994). In the Dutch context, examples of this are political claims of right-wing politicians of the “Islamisation” of Europe and the Netherlands because of Muslim migrants and refugees (Louwerens, 2020). Ensuring these counternarratives do not become too overpowering, nation-states develop policies and strategies. The Netherlands has citizenship tests, that push migrants and asylum seekers to adopt the norms, values, and languages of the host country in order to be accepted in Dutch society and even obtain a Dutch passport. In such tests, Western values and lifestyles are often presented liberal, whereas values that differ from these are deemed as more oppressive and intolerant (Burchardt, 2019). Another, newer, Dutch policy is the “Burqa ban”, introduced in the summer of 2019, prohibiting anyone whose face is veiled, and therefore not visible, to enter government buildings, schools, hospitals, and public transport (Guy, 2019). In their study on two different ethnic minority youth groups in the UK (Pakistani and Greek) Prokopiou et al (2012) noticed that stigmatized minority groups, such as Muslims, are a more likely to face discrimination and difficulties being accepted in Western society as opposed to Western-European minorities. The study showed that, even when confronted with stereotypes, a country like Greece is associated with science, civilisation, and philosophy, as opposed to Pakistani students, who at time felt the need to hide their cultural or religious background in fear of being discriminated and treated differently. Marginalized minorities can therefore experience more difficulties and complexities in order to be and feel integrated in society, having to deal with dominant power struggles and the constant sense of “othering” by white and/or Western dominating environments (Prokopiou et al, 2012, p.49). It is noticeable that, in some cases, cultural hybridity becomes more of a middle-class privilege (Friedman, 1997) because it is only performed in comfort, rather than fear of becoming a liability, by those who have the material and social security to do so. Factors such as job position, educational background, or literacy level can

provide ‘fortunate’ cultural hybrids the opportunity to situate themselves in society in such a way that their ethnic background is used in their advantage (Clammer, 2015). As a response, religious minority communities can claim their collective identities and enhance social cohesion by drawing symbolic and spatial boundaries between themselves and “others”, through, for example, houses of prayer, separate cemeteries (Burchardt, 2019) and community weekend schools (Prokopiou et al, 2012). Besides dangers of racist rejections, Werbner (1997) argues that transnational communities also actively construct their boundaries for protection the protection of their community honour, fun, worship practices, and celebrations of rituals, ceremonies, or nostalgic remembrances for a lost home. The authenticity of their culture and religion is maintained by setting up such ‘boundaries’ as an attempt to keep out the “danger” of what they perceive to be transgressive hybridity. The information provided here provides a bit of context to the life of a young Muslim woman from an immigrant background in the Netherlands and the constant reminders that emphasize her difference from the Dutch societal “norm” – White, individualistic, straight, Christian or Atheist, and liberal. Consequently, these women are highly likely to experience different identity construction processes from their peers. Together with all those who would fall under the category “Allochtonen”, young Muslim women in the Netherlands are born or grow up “between” different cultures, can be referred to as cultural hybrids.

Populist politics regarding the protection of the nation state, stigmatisation of international and foreign cultures through notions of multiculturalism and diversity, and the ‘privilege’ of being a cultural hybrid for only some minority groups have led various academics to challenge the concept of cultural hybridity. Bhabha (1994) proposes a future where we reject standardized practices of identification and instead find ourselves in a ‘third space’ – a fusion of all cultures into a new heterogeneous homogeneity, where citizens from different cultures are not exoticized. The third space allows to celebrate the double nature of the subaltern people of Western society as “part of the modern world and one of its defining characteristics” (Friedman 1997, p. 78).

A final important characteristic in the identity development process of young Muslim women is their gender. Gender can play a very significant role in the experiences of individuals in general, as is also the case with migrant communities in the West (Yuval-Davis, 1997). As such, being a cultural hybrid Muslim woman can mean something completely different from being a culturally hybrid Muslim man in terms of lifestyle, world views, experiences, and expectations. Women in particular can find themselves marginalized by hegemonic ethnic projects, leading them to discover manners of resistance through survival strategies within the constraints of specific social situations (Kandiyoti, 1988, in Yuval-Davis, 1997, p.195). Yuval-Davis (1997) argues that women’s distinctive ways of dressing and behaving has often come to symbolize the group’s cultural identity and its boundaries, especially in the cases of minority groups. A Muslim woman’s decision of what to wear can become part of her negotiating norms around her identity, piety, aesthetics, and consumption. This can both generate and reflect norms and ideas related to self-identity, moral authority, and consumption

(Peterson, 2020). As previously mentioned, minority groups can draw boundaries to keep out the 'dangers' of transgressive hybridity: those that could violate them moral and/or social boundaries of such communities (Werbner, 1997). In the case of the children of immigrants, social control can be more exercised on girls than on boys, as women are expected to be the primary bearers of a distinctive 'home' culture through factors such as traditions, customs, food, and language. For people from immigrant backgrounds, the schools and public spheres they are exposed to can differ culturally to that from home. As such, these communities can put more emphasis on the significance of women behaving culturally appropriate (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p.196). As 'different' cultural traditions are often defined in terms of culturally specific gender relations, control and surveillance of the behaviour of women behaviour can be used to reproduce ethnic boundaries. Women themselves can participate and collude in such practices themselves as well, especially women of older generations. This is reinforced by Waltorp's (2013) ethnographic research on multicultural housing areas where many Muslim communities in Copenhagen live, where the young Muslim women she researched disclosed that they often experience social control as they are watched by nosy neighbours. Her research also revealed that stricter rules apply to young women compared to men in terms of where one can go, what one can do, and what time one is expected to be home. As such, the notion of age, generational differences, and gender (Yuval-Davis, 1997) can play a significant role in the experiences of cultural hybrids (Friedman, 1997) both outside (Prokopiou et al, 2012) as within the boundaries of their own communities (Werbner, 1997; Waltorp, 2013). Leurs et al (2012) argue that, because of such restrictions within community boundaries and stigmatisation outside of them, the Internet can provide especially meaningful opportunities to Muslim girls, "allowing them to negotiate their individual gender positionality in the context of Islam, their peers, and their families while countering stereotypes of Dutch society" (p.168). The next paragraphs will dive deeper into Instagram as a platform and explore which opportunities as well as limitations Instagram in particular can allows culturally hybrid young Muslim women.

2.4. The Instagram platform

Before diving into the opportunities and limitations of Instagram as a social network and their meaning for the identities of young Muslim women in the Netherlands, it is first important to understand what it is about the platform that makes it an interesting the subject for studying minority identities. Gershon (2010) argues that "people's beliefs and attitudes about media and its functions shape how they use it media" (p.290). Such ideologies depend on local concepts of the self, relationships, and communication in general. Media ideologies can refer to the materials people used for media communication, such as smartphones, the channels of communication themselves, such as Instagram, and codes and semiotic systems of signification, such as language or emoji usage. Also, the structure of technology is argued by Gershon (2010) to influence the ways in which participant usage structure is shaped, allowing or restraining the ways in which communication can take place and

circulate through the medium, and who can actually participate in it. As such, I will explore Instagram as a social networking site and dive a bit into what it 'technically' allows its users to do.

Instagram was founded in 2010 as a mobile phone application, firstly available for all apple users, before also becoming available for android users in 2012, after the app was bought by Facebook. The app was created to share photos specifically made by mobile phones, shared in very simple and minimal effort ways (Blystone, 2020). Since then, Instagram had also become available as a website (Instagram.com), where posting pictures, videos, and stories is not possible, rather only permitting users with an account to view, engage (likes and comments) and send messages. Instagram mostly revolves around the process of both posting and observing pictures and videos, as well as following other people's profiles, being able to privately message them, and *liking* and *commenting* on their content. These features are also visible to other users, meaning anyone that visits an Instagram profile can see how many likes and comments each post has, as well as who has used those features. Throughout the last years, Instagram has added many features to expand its services, including posting long Instagram videos on Instagram Television (IGTV), doing a livestream, tagging people and locations in content, and photo and video editing tools. Another newer aspect of Instagram has become "Instagram story", a feature that allows users to post pictures and videos on their profile that only stay there for 24 hours, and afterwards disappear (Blystone, 2020). Unlike the Instagram wall, the story function does not allow other users to see who has commented on what is posted. This function allows users to more easily share what they are doing throughout the day, what they are thinking about, and who they are with.

During the rise of digital media in the 21st century, a significant growth in the 'attention economy' occurred. The attention economy is a social state in which society gives value to people's ability to attract visual media attention. Although such attention used to be more dependent on traditional media platforms, social networking sites have made it more accessible for the everyday citizen to gain such 'screened' attention. Through visual social media platforms, such as Instagram, it can become even easier to become aware of the ways which one present themselves and how others perceive them. This awareness has become central to society's understanding of the world (Marshall, 2019 in Kavakci & Kraeplin, 2016, p.856). The attention economy's effect on meaning-making processes in modern society can increase pressures of appearing "aesthetically pleasing, funny, or interesting" when using social media platforms, influencing user decisions on what they can and cannot post (Kavapi & Kraeplin, 2016; Ross, 2019).

The reason why Instagram is the subject of this study, rather than other social media platforms, lays in its growing popularity amongst especially Dutch youth. The Newcom Research & Consultancy B.V. published a national Dutch social media research at the end of January 2020 stated that Instagram is one of the most used social media platforms in the Netherlands, with 5.6 million users. When it comes to daily social media usage, Instagram appeared to experience the highest rise in the last year, but is still used less frequently when compared to Whatsapp and Facebook. Nevertheless,

the network appears to remain quite a popular app for especially younger audiences (Boekee et al, 2020). Compared to the private messages of Whatsapp, the broader focus of Facebook on sharing posts of other accounts and writing out thoughts, the 24 hour long stories only visible for private friends on Snapchat, and the videos that can require quality camera's and editing skills on Youtube – Instagram has maintained its easy-to-use mentality by sticking to its simplicity and photo-and video-sharing capabilities (Blystone, 2020). Some of the main motivations for using the app include usage convenience, time passing, self-expression, self-documentation, social interaction, and information sharing (Alhabash & Ma, 2017).

Now that I have provided some technological and material context regarding Instagram, it is time to dive into the possibilities the app can create for its young female Muslim users. The next paragraph will begin by exploring the opportunities that can occur when using the app while the final paragraph will conclude some limitations.

2.5. Opportunities on digital media

The digital space brings along with itself many new opportunities and possibilities, which can sometimes vary per type of user. In this paragraph, the opportunities that are relevant for young Muslim women in particular are presented.

One of the opportunities that Muslim women can experience whilst using social media platforms is a sense of privacy and invisibility, allowing one to be invisible from social control and escape "curious looks" (Waltorp, 2013). Young Muslims can more easily debate topics that are difficult, uncomfortable, or unsafe to discuss in face-to-face contexts, express their voice, create counter-narratives to dominant media outlets, and negotiate ethnic and religious identities (Enchaibi, 2013; Leurs et al, 2012). Although social media platforms are known for having a highly public nature, and user profiles can be observed by everybody who visits it profile, these profiles can still enable certain 'invisible' relationships through private spaces, such as private messages (p.565) as well as closed profiles that only a selected number of people can "follow" (Ross, 2019). Also, Instagram allows new relationships to emerge (Waltorp, 2015) as it allows easy access to users all over the world.

An additional form of digital communication that has emerged with the rise of social media is memes. Bellar et al (2013) described memes as "an idea, belief, or behaviour that is spread through a given culture or social system through social or information sharing" (p.4). Memes come in various themes, including religion and ethnicity, and are often humorous. Religious and/or ethnic memes can be focussed on traditions, practices, and other religious characteristics, understandings, and experiences, allowing creators and audiences to make sense of their beliefs and experiences through the online production, consumption, and circulation of visual expressions (Bellar et al, 2013). Memes can also incorporate more complex messages and images that also stimulate expressions through which identities can be communicated, negotiated, and critiqued (Aguilar, Campbell, Stanley &

Taylor, 2016). Such communication can function as 'inside jokes' as they often require a certain knowledge of Islamic religion, experiences, and phrases in order to understand them.

Furthermore, Instagram provides users with the opportunity for self-expression (Alhabash and Ma, 2017), self-representation (Caldeira & De Ridder, 2017), as well engaging with and exploring multiple 'constructions of the self' (Kavakci & Kraeplin, 2016, p.865). Also, Instagram can provide young Muslim women with a platform for developing a certain authority that determines how they will combine their religious subjectivity (modest fashion) with Western neoliberal culture. As a result, new forms of Muslim habitus are generated, as female Muslim users of all races, nationalities, ethnicities, body types, and social classes can gain a certain authority to represent themselves as a part of the Muslim community as well as of Western societies – by, for example, portraying themselves as both fashionable and modest (Peterson, 2020) or independent (Kavapci & Kraeplin, 2016), and feminine and prosperous (Waninger, 2015). The self-representation that Instagram allows young women who do not fit into the dominant beauty ideals, especially those of mainstream media, can grant them a greater agency in the creation of images. Unlike the case with traditional media, Instagram allows women to be the narrators of their story: they can frame it to their liking and make decisions on what they want and do not want to be shared: as such, different views of femininity can emerge (Caldeira & De Ridder, 2017). In opposition to the popular beauty depictions on mainstream media – white, young, able-bodied, heterosexual, well-groomed, thin, and attractive (Gill, 2007, in Caldeira & De Ridder, 2017), new beauty standards can emerge, especially when wide audiences are reached.

As such, the online space can generate a new culture, one that fosters new social behaviours that challenge traditional ideologies, stereotypes, patriarchal norms, and power structures (Enchaibi, 2013), blur the boundaries between modesty and immodesty, and religion and culture (Kavakci & Kraeplin, 2016), expresses forms of femininity and social status (Waninger, 2015). In these 'democratic' spaces of social media, 'regular people' can become financially successful online personas, also known under the term of influencer. Influencers have become popular because of their realistic and relatable characteristics, as opposed to famous celebrities such as actors or singers. They become popular on digital media through intimate video blogs (vlogs), pictures and stories in which they share information about their personal lives, experiences, hobbies, or interests (van Driel & Dumitrica, 2020). As a result, fashionable Muslim women have used Instagram to share their passion for fashion, make-up, or a certain lifestyle and have built careers off of this. These women, also known as Hijabistas, can experience business opportunities, provide a platform to discuss (female) religious practices and experiences with fellow Muslims or those interested in Islam and share fashion, beauty, or lifestyle related content (Kavakci & Kraeplin, 2016; Peterson, 2016; Waninger, 2015).

Nevertheless, platforms such as Instagram cannot be viewed as free from dominant popular culture ideologies, as plenty of accounts are still reproducing traditional gender stereotypes as well as feminine ideals (Caldeira & De Ridder, 2017). Even Hijabista accounts can reinforce dominant femininity and class discourses (Waninger, 2015) or Islamic beauty norms (fair skin, thin body type)

(Peterson, 2020). Therefore, Hijabistas can both disrupt and reinforce norms in both the Western dominant society as well as dominant Islamic/Middle Eastern communities (Peterson, 2020).

2.6. Constraints on digital media

Now that we have went through various opportunities that the digital space can allow its users, especially those of marginalized communities, it is also important to mention the limitations that social media platforms can bring.

The first limitation concerns surveillance and privacy. Modern day's attention economy causes social media users to be more aware of being seen peers, family and community members, which can lead to an increased fear of judgement. As a result, public social media platforms can facilitate increased control and supervision by parents and family members in new 'digital' manners (Waltorp, 2013, 2015) and allow new manners of peer and community surveillance to occur (Jaynes, 201). As mentioned in paragraph three, women in minority communities in the West are more likely to experience surveillance and social control as opposed to their male counterparts (Yuval-Davis, 1997, Waltorp, 2013). Consequently, minority women can experience higher surveillances with their mobile phones and social media usage compared to men, as they face different expectations considering romantic relationships, the public places which can and cannot be entered, and modest clothing choices. The fear of gossip resulting from such monitoring can lead women to apply certain strategies when managing their social life and social media usage, ensuring that nothing that could harm their honour and reputation can be found publicly on the Internet, including any signs of romantic relationships, sexual interest, or revealing pictures (Waltorp, 2015, p.59). Likewise, Jaynes (2019) argues the digital sphere also encourages peer surveillance by not just observing but also taking screenshots of what is observed. Consequently, such imagined surveillance can lead users to also create certain strategies in the offline world as well, such as by being mindful of the ways in which they act or dress in public (Duffy & Chan, 2018 in Jaynes, 2019). Jaynes (2019) highlights the gendered element of screenshots and relates this to the feminist theories on the regulation and scrutiny placed on female bodies by themselves and others. Such monitoring and surveillances does not only originate from communities and social circles, but can also come from "strangers" who, due to Instagram's public nature, can publicly voice their criticism in the comment-section of young Muslim women's profiles, condemning them for behaviour they perceive as 'immodest' and 'inappropriate' (Kavakci and Kraeplin, 2016). As such, mobile technologies and social media open new spaces, with gender-, peer-, and intergenerational relations being influenced and reconfigured in the process (Waltorp, 2013).

Moreover, the attention economy that has emerged with the rise of social media platforms is also related to the second constraint that can be experienced whilst using Instagram: new pressures of creating likeable content. The concept of *receiving likes* can increase such pressures, as it can suggest users that if posts are not *liked* enough, they are not appreciated, admirable, recognized, or socially

acceptable (Ross, 2019), contributing to the post-feminist ideal of 'having it all' while hiding the real work that goes into creating such images (Duffy and Hund, 2015, in Peterson, 2020, p.2). As a result, this could encourage users to keep their audience's responses in mind before visually representing themselves on Instagram (Ross, 2019). Regarding their own content, users whose self-worth tends to be influenced by approval of others can perceive Instagram as a platform to achieve their self-validation goals (Stapleton et al, 2017). On the other hand, Instagram users can experience correspondence bias when it comes to the content posted by others, which is "the tendency to presume that the actions and words of others are a representative of their personality as opposed to being affected by their immediate social context" (Stapleton et al, 2017, p.147). This can lead to the perception that the images on Instagram are truthful, without considering the context that lead to these images. Chou and Edge (2012) argue that this is especially likely to happen when being exposed to images of strangers or far acquaintances, creating assumptions that others are always happy, joyful, or energetic. What can add to such experiences, is the so-called 'filter bubble', which refers to "idea that someone's online media consumption mirrors their interest, world-views, and political agenda's" (Pariser, 2011 in Caldeira & De Ridder, 2017). Also, Stapleton et al (2017) argue that, the younger someone's age when being exposed to social media usage, the higher is the risk of exposure on social comparison information – which could negatively influence mental well-being (p.148). What becomes evident here, is that the attention economy's pressures of appealing likeable and being valued by your social media content together with the 'perfect looking' images posted by other users can trigger negative self-esteem issues, social-comparison, and harm mental health. This can be problematic in the case of Instagram especially, as it is especially popular amongst younger audiences, whose identities are still developing. This phenomenon has caused social concerns, with media referring to Instagram as harmful for mental health (Barr, 2019; Hern, 2018; Macmillan, 2017). Since then, Instagram has shown initiative in regard to such concerns, i.e. by Instagram started with removing the visibility of the likes feature for anyone but the user behind the post in over eight different countries. The decision has been made with the hope that Instagram users will focus more on the posted content rather than the popularity of it, expectantly resulting in a more comfortable environment for self-expression (Meisenzahl, 2019). However, this has yet to be applied to Instagram apps everywhere.

Another limitation that Instagram can create is the decreasing personal nature of the app. Although Instagram was initially created with the purpose of sharing pictures and videos with friends and family (Blystone, 2020), it has now become increasingly professionalized by direct marketing ads from corporations as well more indirect ads from influencers (van Driel & Dumitrica, 2020). The content of popular influencers can quickly escalate from the self-expression of their hobbies, interests, and talents to content that is adjusted to appeal to the marketing initiatives of the brands that financially and/or materialistically sponsor them in return for advertisements. User generated content has become subject to the algorithms that have been implemented by platforms such as Instagram, in which promotion and ranking tactics are applied the audience usage. Algorithms can support the

circulation of content put out by influencers, therefore strengthening the socio-cultural power dynamics that their influential status gives them. However, it can also work in their disadvantage. Audiences can perceive influencers as more authentic than Hollywood celebrities because of the intimate and personal experience that their content usually provides. However, this very authenticity is put under question when commercial products are advertised, as audiences can feel that influencers value financial gains over the online community (van Driel & Dumitrica). This can result in Instagram users unwillingly and, perhaps even unconsciously being exposed to advertisements and marketing strategies, potentially influencing their purchasing power.

Finally, what must also be taken into account, is that, in the Islamic religion and culture, female modesty and honour are of great significance (Kavakci & Kraeplin, 2016; Peterson, 2016; Waltorp, 2015). Therefore, modesty, piety, and humility are some of the elements that can reveal the religious identity of a young Muslim woman in the digital images she posts (Peterson, 2016). Waltorp (2013, p.559) poses the question of "how to imagine a good and desirable life and still be recognized a moral Muslim woman, while negotiating the often conflicting and contradicting expectations from family, friends, and the broader Danish (or in the case of this paper, Dutch) society?". Consequently, young Muslim women in digital media "carefully walk a line between practicing Islamic ethics of modesty and piety without appearing oppressed or controlled by their religion, while participating in mainstream fashion trends without being subsumed by a focus on appearances" (Peterson, 2016, p.261). Based on research on Muslim women on Instagram, Peterson (2020) argues that social media platforms "reveal interconnections between Islamic desire to cultivate a more ethical and pious disposition and the neoliberal pressures within social media spaces to present an authentic but perfect image" (p.1199). Therefore, young Muslim women can experience the use of smart-phones and social media as both "a socio-technological and a moral platform" where they can incorporate and negotiate the newer, developing notions of modesty and autonomy" (Waltorp, 2013, p.567). This space, in which the "new" is introduced and experimented, is referred to as a moral laboratory. A moral laboratory offers a space for the production of beginnings and is enabled through the activities of presenting, audiencing, and interacting on these new online public spaces of appearance and visibility. As such, ideals about morality and modesty are reconfigured within social media and mass media, and onto the offline world. In the case of being a moral platform, social media both enables and constitutes a meeting point of different generations and traditions, often conflicting and challenging each other. This can lead to young Muslim women constantly moving around and skilfully navigating themselves in multi-spaced on- and offline places. On the one hand, social media platforms and mobile technologies enrich and influence manners of experiencing every-day practices, perceptions, and movements. On the other hand, these platforms allow new or adjusted layers of locality, morality, visibility and invisibility. At the crossroads of differences in traditions, norms, values, generations, and future possibilities, the "ideal moral woman" is negotiated (Waltorp, 2013, p.568).

3. Accountability and Design of Research

Now that the theoretical framework is thoroughly described, I will move onto the methodological part of the research paper. This paragraph will provide a thorough explanation of the design of this research paper, including a thorough explanation of the research sample, the research and analysis method that have been selected to conduct this research, a clear conceptualisation of the guiding theoretical concepts, and any concerns regarding the reliability and validity of the research paper.

3.1. The research method

3.1.1. Justification

For its strengths in analysing personal experiences in depth and detail and discovering new phenomena, qualitative research is chosen as the most suitable method for this thesis. Flick (2007) argues that qualitative research is "characterized by the usage of text rather than numbers as empirical material, begins from the idea that social constructs of reality should be studied, and is interested in the perspectives, experiences, and knowledge of the participants regarding the issue that is studied" (p.2). Out of the numerous available qualitative methods, semi-structured interviews are expected to be the most fitting to answer the research question in this paper, as it has been argued to be especially helpful in areas where new research discoveries can be made (Wethington & McDarby, p.2). Wethington and McDarby (2015) argue that, through face-to-face interviews, the researcher can more easily indicate whether the respondent has correctly understood what is asked. The observation of participant behaviour that such interviews allow assist the researcher to ask for clarifications or further elaborations in the conversation, which can limit misunderstanding certain words or phrases and can provide richer data. Also, semi-structured interviews allow a healthy balance between standardized questions that form the foundation of the conversation and open-ended techniques, such as additional and probing questions, that allow the interviewer to ask for personal examples and experiences and form a more natural conversation with the respondent (Hermanowicz, 2002). and, if conducted well, such a natural conversation can help create a personal, comfortable, and trusted ambiance between the interviewer and the interviewee. This aids the interviewer in acquiring a proper understanding of the perspective and experiences of the interviewee.

3.1.2. Limitations

Nevertheless, some limitations can also come with qualitative research in general and semi-structured interviews in particular. Firstly, qualitative research methods allow in-depth understanding of personal experiences, therefore making them unfit to generalize the experiences of entire societal groups (Flick, 2007; Wethington & McDarby, 2015). As such, qualitative research is not suitable to make conclusions about general populations. However, the new findings that emerge can still generate valuable new discoveries and provide theoretical foundations for future research on similar topics.

In addition, due to the duration and flexibility of semi-structured interviews, researchers need a certain amount of training to understand when the conversation is taking too long and when to switch to the following question before focussing too much on just one topic (Wethington & McDarby, 2015). Such training also includes researcher sensitivity when conducting designing, conducting, analysing, and discussing the interviews. If sensitivity is not practiced, there is a risk in making respondents feel uncomfortable, harming them, or the larger social group of which they are a part (Kvale, 2007, Wethington & McDarby, 2015). As the topic of this paper is Muslim women, and Muslims can find themselves stigmatized by right-wing populism (Doomernik, 2017) and general media (Enchaibi, 2013), this is an especially important mistake to avoid. In order to minimize such occurrences, I conducted three pilot interviews to test the quality of the questions, prepare for time management, practice possible probing questions, the use of comprehensible language, and practice sensitivity. The women chosen for the pilot interviews were chosen based on their close similarities to the research sample – they were all in their mid to end 20s, from the Randstad area, from immigrant backgrounds, and religious (one was Muslim, the other were Christian and Hindu). Numerous constructive consultations with the research supervisor as well as feedback from the pilot interviews highlighted important topics of sensitivity, such as romantic relationships or clothing choices – this aided a more sensitive approach to the conduction of the final interviews and the analysis of their data. In addition, to guarantee confidentiality, the interviews were completely anonymous, giving the respondent pseudonym names when their words were quoted. To ensure that respondents had an understanding of the research topic, the purpose of the analysis, and their interviewee rights (i.e. only answer what they want and feel comfortable answering), respondents were given well informed consent forms, which they read and signed before the interview (Appendix D). The form also made respondents aware of their right to withdraw from the interview at any desired moment. I also reached out to the Erasmus University ethics committee and received an ethical approval to conduct this research.

It also has to be taken in consideration that, interviewee reserve, a reference to a reserved, careful, and distant attitude from the respondents, can emerge during an interview (Broom, Hand & Tovey, 2009). However, as I myself am a young Muslim woman from an immigrant background, such reservations were expected to be minimal, as respondents are likely to feel comfortable, understood, safe, and not judged by someone who resembles them and recognizes their experiences. I reinforced my position as an 'equal' in the interview frequently, for example, by giving personal examples from my own life before asking certain questions, in order to let the respondents know they not alone in their experiences. Also, although many of the respondents did not know me directly, they knew the person that recommended them to me, as I used my personal network for allocating participants. This feeling of having mutual friends and/or acquaintances can also provide a condition of trust, as it can feel less like talking to a complete stranger. What is important to keep in mind that, although such 'friendship-like' interviews can provide rich data, they can also blur the boundaries between

appropriate and inappropriate questions asked and information shared. This can trigger respondents to overshare on personal information they did not intent to share in the first place. In cases that researcher sensitivity was not optimal and such oversharing would occur, the consent-forms mentioned that the respondents will be able to read the transcriptions of the interview, allowing them ask for the withdrawal of any information from the data. In such a case, the ethical decision to respect the wishes of the interviewee will be prioritized, and such data will be removed from the paper. However, this did not happen, and all respondents gave full consent for their experiences to be reflected in the data.

On a final note, during the thesis writing process, the COVID-19 epidemic had reached the Netherlands, requiring Universities, schools, offices, and public places to be closed, and Dutch citizens to stay indoors unless necessary. Consequently, the interview process could no longer be performed as face-to-face conversations and had to become Skype and Zoom interview sessions – limiting the benefits of a face-to-face conversation, such as noticing body language, facial expressions, and creating a personal, comfortable ambiance. In addition, new problems occurred, such as a dependence on proper internet connection and phone/laptop battery during the whole interview to remain proper data collection quality. Nevertheless, I as the researcher as well as my sample group are digital natives, making it easier to adjust to these 'online measures', as everyone had a working phone and/or laptop as well as proper internet connection at home to perform a videocall. In addition, as the interviews had to occur from the homes of the respondents, public places being closed, which, on the one hand, could make the respondents feel more comfortable when talking about certain topics from the comfort of their own bedroom, with a stranger not sitting directly, but only virtually, across from them. This could create higher feelings of comfort and safety. On the other hand, the respondents might not be home alone, and therefore might feel less comfortable to talk out loud about certain topics, perhaps fearing the possibility of the conversation being overheard by someone else. They might also feel uncomfortable to speak in front of a web cam. As such, interviewee reserve can become a bit more of a problem than initially anticipated. Nevertheless, I began every interview with a little conversation to familiarize myself with the respondents a bit and ensure that they were in control of which questions they did and did not want to answer. Also, I made sure to remind them of the consent form by re-phrasing that if they would feel more comfortable to share certain information after the interview through an e-mail or Whatsapp message, this would be possible. Likewise, would they feel regretful about some information that was mentioned, they could mention this, and it would be removed from the data. However, neither of these situations occurred and the respondents all agreed to their data being used after reading the transcribed interviews.

3.2. Reliability and Validity concerns

Reliability and validity ensure research quality, and therefore are important factors to take into account before conducting a research. This paragraph will elaborate on how concerns regarding reliability and validity were minimised.

Payne and Payne (2011) propose that in order to ensure research quality, two important questions must be answered – (1) Can we get similar results if the study was repeated? and (2) Even if the same results were obtained, would they measure what was intended to be measured? The first question concerns reliability, addressing the fact that results of the research can be replicated if performed by someone else, provided that all other basic conditions remain the same. Ensuring that all respondents understand the questions in the same manner is a critical aspect of obtaining such reliability. In order to avoid different respondents understanding certain questions in different manners, three pilot interviews were held, as mentioned in the previous paragraph. Pilot interviews allowed the questions to be tested in regard to their clarity and understandability. If not, the phrasing of the questions or the wording choices were altered until the desired result could be obtained from it. I.e. when asked about relationships, two out of three respondents mentioned, rather than asking "what is your relationship status?" it sounded more pleasant when asked if they are currently in a relationship – as the former sounded more forceful and formal (something that would be asked in an formal survey), while the latter sounded more like a personal request to open up. As such, the pilot interviews also allowed critical feedback by respondents, allowing the interviewer to improve certain aspects of the interview questions or the skills of the researcher herself; ensuring reliability.

The second question concerns validity, which refers to the data collection measuring what the methods were intended to measure (Payne & Payne, 2011). In this paper, validity was guaranteed by the operationalisation process that is introduced in the fourth paragraph, where the guiding concepts of the research – Instagram strategy, composite habitus, sociocultural opportunities, and sociocultural constraints – are conceptualized. The operationalisation process helps assure that the interview questions can be designed in such a way that the data they will collect will answer what the research- and sub questions actually ask. Likewise, external validity – a reference to the limited ability of the operationalisation process to generalise (Payne & Payne, 2011, p.2), is avoided as qualitative research is more concerned with the details of the observation, rather than with generalizing the results. Because generalisation is not the goal of this research paper, no such claims will be made about the data – rather, the unique experiences that the data consists of will provide a theoretical foundation for further research on the same social group.

3.3. The Research Sample

For data collection, 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted. Each interview lasted approximately between 45 minutes to 1.5 hours. In order to narrow down the sample selection and make sure the respondents were from the same generation, the sampling procedure focused on women who were in the age category of 20-27 years. In addition, the selection focussed on women who live in the Randstad area. As was highlighted in chapter two, the Randstad area refers to four big Dutch cities – Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht (and the smaller cities and suburbs that are located around them) and is known for having high percentages of non-Western immigrant minorities (CBS,

2019). As a result of such high concentrations of non-Western minorities, urban spaces have been argued to provide better opportunities for religious place-making, creativity, performance, and consumerism (i.e. restaurants where the food is halal) (Knott et al, 2016) which in turn re-forms urban identities and city images (Burchardt, 2019). Moreover, Werbner (1997) argued that minority communities build boundaries to protect themselves against the 'dangers' of transgressive identities, which can result from high exposure to the majority Western society. Also, Waltorp's (2013) research illustrated that young Muslim women from social housing areas in Copenhagen that were highly populated by non-Western immigrant communities experienced social limitations of where a girl is and is not supposed to be seen as well as surveillance by nosy neighbours and family members. The theories provided here provide groundwork for assumptions that identity development in urban areas highly populated by non-Western communities can generate different social conditions for the formation of habitus as opposed to other areas of the Netherlands. Therefore, in order to sample women who, more or less, are familiar with similar social conditions, the selection focussed on the Randstad. However, levels of education, relationship status, or employment status were not considered as relevant sampling characteristics – on the contrary, diversity in these areas is expected to deliver richer data, as they can display different points of view.

The respondents were sampled by applying purposive- and snowball sampling on social media. Firstly, purposive sampling was applied by personally approaching women from my network by sending them a direct message on Instagram and Facebook, where the research topic was explained in full detailed before requesting their participation in the interview. Snowball sampling was applied by posting a message on Facebook and Instagram explaining the research topic and asking if anyone was interested in participating. As a Muslim woman from an immigrant background in the Netherlands myself, my social media network provided a platform for friends and acquaintances to respond to my posts – by tagging potential respondents that fit the sample, sharing the message on their pages, or even suggesting that they were interested in participating themselves.

The sampling procedure began officially on April 14th, 2020 – after the official ethics approval from the Erasmus ethics committee was acquired. All the women in this study used Instagram often, and almost all of them did this daily. All 12 interviews were conducted in the Dutch language – because the native language (or most-used daily language) of most respondents was Dutch – therefore their thought processes and verbal language skills are assumed to be in their most natural habitat when speaking and hearing in Dutch. This is expected to aid a more comfortable, safe, and pleasant atmosphere during the interview conversation, as the respondents would not have to put too much effort into translation processes and searching for the correct words for certain thoughts.

The ethnicities of the respondents were Moroccan (four), Egyptian (one), half Moroccan and half Egyptian (one), Turkish (three), Bosnian (one), Pakistani (one), and Azerbaijani (one). Note: Bosnia official falls under the European continent but is still considered relevant to the non-Western context because it is an Islamic country and, therefore, falls outside of the Christian Western 'norm'.

Moreover, 11 out of 12 interviewees were born in the Netherlands, while the 12th one was born in Azerbaijan and only moved to the Netherlands at the age of 15. Out of 12 respondents, three were veiled (Hijabi) and nine non-veiled. The respondents lived in Rotterdam (four), Amsterdam (one), The Hague (one), Utrecht (note: one respondent who recently moved to Hilversum but was born and raised in Utrecht), Hoofddorp (three), Bijnsdorp (one), and Purmerend (note: although not from the Randstad, this respondent is included because she lived in Rotterdam for her studies). Furthermore, the respondent's relationship statuses were divided between single (six), relationship (three), engaged (two), and married (one). Some anomalies were that one of the respondents used her account as a 'ghost-account' by not posting any pictures of herself and only actively following others. Another anomaly was that one of the respondents had two accounts – one public account which she used as a school experiment for running a successful influencer account, and another private account where she just followed friends and posted more personal content. As she claimed to use her public fashion account actively, and her private account not that much, the interview was focussed on the former. In addition, five respondents had public accounts and seven had private ones. Finally, seven respondents has private accounts and five of them had public accounts – with follower numbers varying between numbers as low as 100 and as high as 10.000, and everything in between.

3.4. The interview design

Now that the research method has been discussed extensively and the research sample has been presented, this paragraph discusses the guiding concepts of this research paper and operationalizes them. In turn, the operationalisation process provides the guiding framework for the interview design – as the questions can only provide relevant data if they relate to the guiding concepts. Sub paragraph 3.3.1 conceptualizes the leading theories of this paper, which are – strategies, composite habitus, sociocultural opportunities- and constraints. Sub paragraph 3.3.2. goes on to explain the design of the interview – including its main themes and example questions.

3.4.1. Operationalisation

The research question aims to answer which strategies are used by young Muslim women in the Netherlands. To conceptualize what is used by 'strategies', two theories are applied – the theories of Dhoest and Szulc (2016), who research how diasporic gay men in Belgium use Facebook based on social, cultural, and material contexts, and Waltorp (2015), who explores social media and the composite habitus of young Muslim women in Copenhagen. Dhoest and Szulc (2016) explain how conditions such as the presence of conservative family and friends on social media platforms, professional concerns, social dependence of community members, and psychological security influence Facebook strategies in terms of negotiating their sexuality. Examples of such strategies included being selective over which pictures are and are not posted, which people are and are not allowed to be 'publicly' friends with them, and sometimes even having two separate Facebook

profiles, on where they are 'out' as a homosexual man, and one where they are not. Waltorp (2015)'s provides a more religious and female context regarding the influence of on and offline surveillance and moral expectations by family and community members and how this influences the strategies that women apply when deciding what to post on public social platforms. Her study provides examples of strategies such as only negotiating romantic relationships in private messages and being selective of who they accept to follow them on their profiles. Therefore, in the context of this paper, when referring to strategies, what is meant are the conscious manners in which a Muslim woman in the Netherlands uses the Instagram app. This usage concerns all aspects of the app, including what is and what is not posted, who is and who is not followed, whether the Instagram page is private or public, and whether factors such as background, clothing choices, and the tagging of locations are of influence. Using this conceptualisation, the design of the interviews aims to identify social, cultural, religious, and, if applicable, material contexts, to clarify the conditions that could influence these strategies.

Besides the research question, the guiding concepts from of the sub-questions must also be conceptualized, beginning with composite habitus. As explained in the theoretical framework, composite habitus can be conceptualized as the various predispositions that influence the ways in which someone thinks, acts, and forms opinions, playing a vital role in the construction and development of their identity (Bourdieu, 1990; Waltorp, 2015). Based on this explanation, when asked what the composite habitus of young Muslim women in the Netherlands is, the focus lays on the past and present social conditions experienced by these women, and the roles such conditions have on world views, decisions, and meaning-making processes. Based on the sample of this research, the conditions will be divided in three categories –religion, ethnicity, and nationality (Dutch-ness).

Next, sociocultural opportunities are conceptualized as any social and/or cultural new possibilities, door openings, and means of doing, performing, or practicing something that would likely not have been possible without Instagram. This conceptualisation is based on theories mentioned in chapter two of Kavapci & Kraeplin (2016), Waltorp (2015;2013), Waninger (2015), and Peterson (2016, 2020), who have mentioned numerous socio-cultural opportunities for Muslim women to experience, including – self-representation authority, maintaining relationships, challenging dominant stereotypes and beauty ideals, and negotiating new boundaries that between neoliberal Western values and Muslim values, leading to new forms of Muslim habitus.

On the other hand, sociocultural constraints are conceptualized as limitations, restrictions, or restraints that users may experience when using Instagram due to certain social or cultural conditions, including power structures, surveillance, morality, and pressures to be "liked". This conceptualisation is based on Ross's (2019) paper on likes, images, and media ideologies on Instagram and Caldeira and De Ridder's (2017) study on body positivity on Instagram, where socio-cultural constraints regarding social expectations of being "likeable" online and dominant beauty standards are illustrated and linked to the attention economy of the digital age. Regarding the topic of surveillance, visibility, and

awareness of visibility, the concept of socio-cultural constraints is also inspired by Waltorp's (2013, 2015) and Jaynes' (2019) studies. Waltorp's social media constraints are more so linked to social expectations and surveillance that are related to Muslim migrant communities who live in the West. Jaynes' (2019) focus lays on surveillance performed by (especially female) peers through screenshots. The topic of socio-cultural constraints based on these theories does not only refer to newfound limitations because of Instagram, but also to already existing ones that can become enhanced or strengthened by it. An example is the introduction of 'screenshots' as a way for practicing surveillance on peers by providing 'prove' of what they are doing on the internet, which reinforces already existing feminist theories on the female body being subject of inspection and regulations (Jaynes, 2019).

Finally, this paper often uses the word 'ethnic' in the data (i.e. ethnic language, ethnic food) – this is a tool to reference the numerous ethnicities that are present in the research sample and is not meant to in derogatory, demeaning, or exclusive terms.

3.4.2. Interview design

Based on the operationalisation of the guiding concepts, this sub-paragraph will demonstrate how the guiding concepts form the interview questions. The final interview had a total of 71 questions. The questions were all centred around the personal experiences, feelings, and views of the young Muslim women whilst using Instagram. The interview was designed in such a way that questions would provide a structural guide for the coding process. This was done by dividing them into three segments: (1) demographic, (2) Instagram usage, and (3) the perceived pros and cons of Instagram. Appendix A gives an overview of the interview questions in English, the language in which they were originally designed, whereas Appendix B illustrates the questions translated in Dutch, the language in which the interviews were conducted.

The first segment consisted of 14 questions and aimed to answer what the composite habitus of young Muslim women in the Netherlands is, thereby aiming to answer the first sub-question of this paper. Based on the conceptualisation of composite habitus, the questions in this segment centred around the current and past social conditions that surround the women I studied. Therefore, questions were concentrated on three types of conditions that are expected to influence the habitus – (1.1) national conditions, (1.2) ethnic conditions, (1.3) religious conditions. Questions on national conditions focussed on the experiences, views, thought, and opinions of the Dutch environment in which the women currently live and/or grew up in (i.e. Do you feel at home in the city in which you live?). The questions on ethnic conditions related to the context of the respondents' ethnicities and the meanings, performances, and views that related to this (i.e. would you say that your ethnicity is a big part of your identity?) The final questions of this segment focus on religious identity and the meaning-making, performances, and experiences that relate it (i.e. personally, what does it mean to you to be a Muslim woman?)

The latter two segments are collectively designed to identify opportunities and constraints experienced by the women whilst using the Instagram app. This is because only the answers of the respondents to questions about the app can indicate whether they can be considered an opportunity or a limitations. The second and third segments also explored how these opportunities and constraints related to the social conditions that form the habitus of the respondents. To begin, the second segment, which consisted of 41 questions, aimed to indicate how Instagram is used, including who the respondents follow, what their main usage motivations are, what makes them decide to post and not to post certain images. An example is: does what you're wearing matter in a picture? By asking the question as such, the respondents can identify whether she sees Instagram as an opportunity to express their personal fashion choices or as a limitation to wear what she wants because she feels judged. The questions in this segment also focussed on the social conditions of the habitus, and therefore attempted to clarify if user behaviour was related to nationality, ethnicity, and/or religion. An example of such a question is: do you mention your religious identity on your account?

The third and last segment of the interview, which consisted of 16 questions, switches the focus more on to the women's perceptions on positive and negative aspects of Instagram – by focussing on how the women when using the app and what they believe they gain and/or lose from it. This segment, again, allows respondents to illustrate themselves whether they experience functions of the app as an opportunity or constraint – but focusses more on their feelings towards the functions of Instagram. An example is: sometimes you hear that Instagram negatively affects young people's self-esteem, other times you hear people feel very inspired by Instagram. How do you when you use Instagram?

3.4.3. Research process

The period of research conduction was between April 17th and May 5th , 2020. The interviews were recorded through a phone recorder and were saved on SURFdrive.nl, because it ensures complete privacy and safety and is a Dutch storage for research and education purposes specifically. Once the interviews were conducted, the data was fully transcribed within one-five days for quality purposes – after which they were send to the respondents to get final approval to use the data. The interviews were transcribed using ATLAS.ti, which simplified the process by merging the interview sound with the opportunity to type. Once the interviews are conducted and transcribed, the data was coded with thematic analysis. Firstly, data was segmented by identifying a beginning and ending point for each segment during the reading of transcribed interviews. This helped achieve a nuanced analysis by clearly defining the boundaries of segments within the complete context of what is being said, making it easier to distinguish between different themes (Guest, MacQueen and & Namey's, 2012). The structured aspect of semi-structured interviews assists this process, as the interview questions were already structured based on the main segments of this paper. The segmentation of the data laid the foundation of the coding process, as Guest et al (2012) call it a "multi-part description, in which you identify an instance of meaning in the text and describe it. This meaning leads to the identification of

the themes" (p.5). Next, the data was screened again, this time labelling components and defining what they are, what they are not, and how they could relate to each other. A structural codebook was created by differentiating between the commonalities, differences, and relationships found in the data. Although initially I meant to do with Atlas.ti, I did not enjoy this process whilst using the application and, in the end, decided to do it manually instead. The codes were defined by labelling them, providing them with a short and full definition, and describing when to and when not to use them (Guest et al, 2012, p.6). The full codebook is illustrated in appendix C and shows eleven codes – the first three, religious identity, ethnic identity, and national identity refer to the social conditions that influence the identity development process of the women and, therefore, help define their habitus. Codes number four (education/motivation), five (relationship maintenance), six (self-expression), seven (counternarratives), and eight (memory tool) refer to experiences on Instagram that were meaningful, added value, associated with optimistic emotions, and provided opportunities of the respondents. On the other hand, the ninth (privacy concerns), tenth (modesty), and eleventh (likeability) codes included sub codes that mentioned restrictions and limitations that users encountered when using Instagram, characteristics that they felt were missing from the app to optimize usage, and other topics that included in unpleasant, unsafe, or uncomfortable user experiences. The next chapter will explore in full detail the data that was collected from the interviews and their relation to the guiding concepts of this research paper.

4. Analysis and Discussion

The twelve interviews that were conducted with young Muslim women from the Dutch Randstad provided a lot of rich data. This chapter will present the most relevant themes that occurred in the data and explain their relation to the theoretical groundwork. The analysis is divided based on the three sub questions of the thesis, beginning with the composite habitus, then moving on to socio-cultural opportunities, and ending with socio-cultural constraints.

4.1. Composite habitus

The data that described the composite habitus of the women in this study is presented through the three main themes that guided the interview questions of its segment– (1) Religious identity, (2) Ethnic identity, and (3) National identity.

4.1.1. Religious Identity

When it comes to their religious identity, eleven out of twelve women in the study described religious affiliation as something that was a big part of their identity. These eleven women described being a Muslim as something that was highly important to them, who they are as a person, and the decisions that they make on a daily basis. Such decisions of course represent numerous occasions, but the main themes in this data were not drinking alcohol, only eating food that is halal, fasting during Ramadan, giving money to charities, being a nice person to people around them, reading the Quran, doing personal research on Islam's teachings, dressing modestly or wearing the Hijab. What was also re-occurring, was that most respondents associated their upbringing and childhood memories with their religion, such as taking family trips to the Mosque, going to Quran classes on the weekends, learning how to pray, celebrating religious holidays such as Eid (the end of Ramadan), and being raised with Islamic norms and values. Furthermore, religious affiliation was often mentioned in discourses that involved a structural guide to live a good life, be a good person, a personal relationship with God, and feelings of internal peace, and sense-making of difficult, uncontrollable situations (everything happens for a reason). Such discourses do not necessarily concern a 'visible' performances, but can be understood a more of an internalized manifestation of Islam – not always recognizable to the eye but traceable in the personal feelings, actions, decisions, and behaviour of the women. When it comes to relationships, some of the women also mentioned that their religious identity influenced the fact that they would not move in with someone until they are married. Many of these experiences, especially the ones that take space from the childhood of these women, can be understood as the social conditions in which they have lived from the moment they were born, which forms, at least some degree, of their habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). As a likely consequence of these conditions, most interviewees had in common that, although they grew up Muslim, they did not take it for granted what that meant to them, as many of them mentioned self-educating on what Islam really means and what it teaches – rather than assuming what they hear from other. As such, the habitus allows us to understand that a likely reason for the women in this study to become interested in their religion as they grow

older, is because it has been such a significant, nostalgic, and mostly meaningful, part of their conditions growing up. Some of the ways in which such self-education was mentioned included – participating in active discussions with fellow Muslims both on the Internet as well as in person (such as with family members), reading the Quran and analysing what it actually says, and following Instagram and Facebook pages that provide information and inspiration about religious teachings. Most participants pointed out that, although growing up they took many religious practices as a given, as they have matured and grown older, they had become closer with their faith, not just practical, but also spiritual manners.

"I used to have a hard time with it, with my religion and with my background, because I kind of lived in two worlds. I would come home, and it would be the Islamic, North-African traditions that I had to follow. When I went to school, it where the Western, Christian, or Atheist traditions that I had to follow. There was never one straight line. And throughout the years, I had a hard time with that, I never knew who I was, I never knew exactly what I believed in. Of course, it is something to hold on to, from home, but at the same time, especially when you are young, you don't know which direction you want head towards. But now, when you start to read about it yourself, and do your own research, you embrace everything, and at a certain point that is just who I am. And I cannot see it differently anymore". *– Mona, 20 years, Purmerend/Rotterdam*

Here, many forms of religious manifestations have been mentioned as a way of visibly and invisibly performing religiousness in the everyday life of the young Muslim women I interviews (Clammer, 2015).

"Look, being Moroccan or being Dutch, that is a matter of having an ethnicity. But being a Muslim, everyone can be a Muslim. It does not matter which societal group you are from. Whether you come from Sudan, or Canada, or wherever, everyone can be a Muslim. It is a religion that a lot of people can have, from every part of the world. So, if I run into a Muslim, and he is from Chile or Mexico, then you instantly feel connected. You instantly feel connected with a person who is also Islamic, because it gives you the feeling that you have a click. It's like, you stand in life where I stand in life, which is to worship God, and there is nothing more that you do. You know? That is our purpose in life, to worship God. It does not matter what your ethnicity is. A Dutch person who, for example, is converted to Islam, you instantly feel a connection to one another. So, imagine that I go to a country now, say Japan, on a holiday, and I run into a Japanese Muslim, you will instantly start a conversation with each other. Then, your ethnicity, whether you are Dutch, Moroccan, Japanese, it does not matter. So, being a part of a societal group that is so big: Islam, the Muslims, it gives you a sense of fulfilment ". *– Bella, 25 years old, Hoofddorp.*

As is apparent here, the meaning making of a religious identity can be experienced in a more spiritual and fulfilling manner than a nationality or ethnicity – as religion is mentioned to be more of a commitment, a choice, whereas nationality and ethnicity can be considered more of a coincidental occurrence, as you cannot choose where you were born or where your parents are from. Although Yuval-Davis (1997) and Werbner (1997) propose that ethnic and multi-ethnic identifications resonate with group identities, the data shows that this can be the case with religion as well, if not more strongly. Nevertheless, ethnicity and nationality can both contribute to identity development in their own manners. The next subparagraph will begin by discussing the social conditions surrounding ethnicity.

4.1.2. Ethnic Identity

When it came to meaning-making, respondent narratives varied, with most of the women expressing more importance and pride to their ethnic roots and cultures, while few others perceived it as less significant to their identity. Overall, ethnicity was often associated with what was happening at home, as opposed to what the world looked like outside of the house (school, work, friends). Most women mentioned their upbringing (i.e. parents), norms and values (i.e. being polite to elders), habits (i.e. hospitality), and emotions (i.e. higher temperament) when they were mentioning their ethnicity. Because for most women, their realities at home looked quite different from the outside world, navigating such differences were pointed out by some respondents as difficult at times, especially during their childhood, as they were feeling like they were searching for which box they exactly fit in.

"I think it can perfectly be both. It's not a 50/50 things, it's not expressible in numbers. I feel at home here, and when I am in Egypt, I also feel at home there. On the other hand, over there, sometimes you get comments like 'oh you're too Dutch", and then here you get comments like "oh you're too Egyptian". It's never really enough. And that used to be a struggle, at first, like, who am I? especially in high school I had an identity crisis, like, where do I belong? I do not being anywhere. But now, now I have accepted that I am both. Both cultures compliment me in my personality, and there is nothing wrong with being both. You just get the best out of both cultures" – *Fayza, 24 years old, the Hague.*

Ethnic minority children's identities are formed by macrosystems of their dominant society and practices from their minority community (Prokopiou et al, 2012). As both can be so influential for identity development, it appeared a bit trickier for most respondents to identify what these characteristics meant for them on how they can be distinguished when they look at their identity. Such developments relate to Prokopiou et al (2012) argument that the identities of ethnic minority youths in the West are never constant but continuously developing.

Furthermore, experiences through ethnic food, language and frequent trips to their or their parents' birthplaces seem to keep most of the interviewees in touch with their roots and their ethnic culture.

Less frequently, attending ethnic wedding ceremonies, consuming ethnic music and television series, and wearing ethnic clothes were also mentioned. Here it is evident reproduced performances continuously manifest ethnicity and culture in the lives of the respondents (Clammer, 2015). Few respondents also mentioned that, although their cultural norms and values play a part in their identity, they still critically asses which cultural norms and values do not fit with their personal beliefs, opinions, and views on the world. Here, the women who mentioned this appear to not take for granted the conditions of the part of their habitus that is their ethnicity, and consciously make the decision to analyse what is valuable and makes sense to them, and what does not reciprocate their own personal values and opinions. Such examples include more traditional ideologies on the role and expectation of women within family structures, relationships, religious communities or general society.

Quite a few respondents also mentioned their ethnicity providing them with skills of adaptation, allowing them to know how to adjust to different people from different cultures. This can be understood as the ways in which cultural hybridity is performed on a daily basis, depending on the environment in which someone finds itself.

"I see it as an added value, speaking an extra language, knowing an extra culture, feeling home in both worlds, is for me, the best of both worlds". *– Tina, 27 years old, Rotterdam.*

As is exemplified by Tina, for some respondents, cultural hybridity can be used as an advantage. As the women who participated in this research all had a respectable literacy level (for most Dutch was their native language) and were all educated, they could use such privileges to their personal advantage (Clammer, 2015; Friedman, 1997). However, such privileges did not apply to all respondents, as feeling othered, discriminated against, or prejudiced were also experiences that were mentioned when asked about what their ethnic identity. Several women in these interviews have pointed out different levels of feeling othered that they have experienced, including receiving job interview questions about the Hijab, being granted unequal opportunities by teachers when growing up, being questioned on whether they were 'Dutch enough' (language skills, educational background), being followed around a store, or being told that they look too pretty for your ethnic background. One respondent said:

"When I say that I am Pakistani, I used to get weird responses to that, like 'Oh you are pretty for a Pakistani', comments like that. And I used to not think about it, but now I think that is really an ugly thing to say. What do you mean to say? That Pakistani's can't be beautiful?" – *Sara, 26 years old, Rotterdam.*

Such experiences were mentioned more often by respondents who were more 'visibly' non-Western (i.e. darker skin tone, veiled). Here it appears that, even when literacy, education, and familiarity with

the Dutch culture could provide certain privileges, physical appearances that fall further outside of the Western norm can make it more difficult to use cultural hybridity as an advantage. As such, cultural hybridity can not only work as a class-privilege (Clammer, 2015; Friedman 1997), but perhaps also as an appearance-privilege. It could be such experiences of othering, discrimination, or injustice that allow the cultural hybridity of young Muslim women to only be be understood in the terms of its social context and acts that motivate its identification (Friedman, 1997). This might be why most respondents who experienced such conditions were the same ones who had different responses to particular situations in which they were the minority. These women mentioned that their reply to questions such as "where are you from?" or "what is your ethnicity?" depended on the context and, frankly, who was asking them the question. When a fellow non-Western Dutch citizen were to ask the question, the context was more easily interpreted in a 'get to know you' context, whereas when a white Dutch person were to ask the same question, it was is easier interpreted in the context of not belonging or looking different. Although this does not amplify that this is the intention of the person who asks the question, it can still be experienced in such ways by respondents – as they generate in advance responses to situations that resemble similar past circumstances (Bourdieu, 1990), circumstances that made them feel aware of their 'differences'. It must be noted that, such distinctions were made less often by respondents who had little to no experiences of feeling othered, disadvantaged, prejudiced, or discriminated. It might be exactly such matters of othering that resulted in several respondents mentioning that
their ethnicity should not be considered 'special' and that they are just as much part of the Netherlands as any other social group. This resonates a preference for Bhabha's (1994) third space – where cultural hybridity is celebrated as part of society, rather than a distant, diverse aspect of it.

"In the Netherlands they can see quite quickly that you are Moroccan, but they always ask you if you feel more Moroccan or if you feel more Dutch. So, do you speak Dutch at home or Moroccan? Which language do you speak with your child? Which language do you speak with your parents? Which language do you speak with your partner? They want some kind of confirmation, like, are you "Moroccan Moroccan" or are you "Moroccan Dutch", and are you fully integrated?"

- *Bella, 25 years old, Hoofddorp.*

It is visible in this subparagraph that, as argued by Bhabha (1994), the counternarratives that cultural and national hybrids awaken in Western societies, can be experienced as somewhat of a threat to the, in this case, Dutch nation state. Through the Dutch integration policies, not just the state, but also its citizens, can use the policies to understand the degree to which people of non-Western backgrounds have Western values and lifestyles, and therefore are deserving of their citizenship (Burchardt, 2019). Complexities can emerge from power structures, such as cases with teachers and employers, but also encounters with peers in Western-dominant environments. Consequently, such conditions can

influence feelings of belonging (Prokopiou et al, 2012) and strengthen the othering (Doomernik, 2017) of those that do not look like the 'Dutch norm'. The next subparagraph will provide more detailed context about such Dutch condition.

4.1.3. National Identity

When it came to national, Dutch identity, the interviewees brought up matters like mindset (i.e. being outspoken), structure (i.e. Dutch infrastructure), ways of thinking (i.e. Dutch verbal expressions), and habits (i.e. eating with knife and fork rather than hands). The 'Dutch-ness' of the respondents' identity was often associated with home, childhood memories, family, and friends. Thinking and speaking in the Dutch language, feeling particularly Dutch when being abroad, growing up with Dutch school systems and in being around Dutch society for all or most of their lives are some of the most mentioned aspects of what made the respondents feel and identify as Dutch.

For the respondents that grew up in multicultural cities, such as Rotterdam, or who have moved to multicultural cities, such as the Hague, have mentioned that a culturally diverse environment plays an important role in them feeling at home in a location. They generally had less experiences feeling 'othered' compared to respondents who, at one point in their lives, had lived in less diverse locations. Being exposed different cultures, being able to eat diverse and/or halal foods, having a Mosque that is very involved in the neighbourhood, not feeling different when walking down the street, and being surrounded by people who look like you and share your experiences, seems to influence feelings of belonging, especially whilst growing up and being a child. Such respondents were also more likely to express strong feelings of love and admiration towards their city. As such, both religious and various ethnic characteristics becoming part of city experiences through consumer culture and the presence of urban spaces such as mosques clearly do not just play a role in the way that Muslims can practice their religion, it can also influence the extent to which they feel at home in an urban space (Knott et al, 2016). Besides Islamic representation, most respondents also pointed out that the general cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity of cities also made them feel more at home and strengthened feelings of belonging (Burchardt, 2019).

Additionally, most respondents have pointed out that, especially when they are abroad, they feel very Dutch, as people are often interested in asking them about Dutch customs, habits, and ways of life rather than their ethnic identity. 'Dutch-ness' seemed to become more obvious when compared to different cultures on a vacation or an exchange study period through structural mannerisms (i.e. eating or driving habits). The social context abroad can provide different meaning-making conditions for the habitus as opposed to the Dutch social context. Nevertheless, even in such international conditions, few respondents have said that they still have experiences where people would raise questions about them not looking like someone from the Netherlands. In such cases, the context can change depending on the social conditions of such questions – i.e. if it is asked by less educated hotel staff who are genuinely curious why someone from the Netherlands wears a Hijab, the context can be

perceived as a matter of interest and curiosity. However, when someone abroad states that "you look too exotic to be from the Netherlands", the context can quickly change to discourses of cultural hybrids not completely belonging to the Western society in which they live (Bhabha, 1994)

Another emerging theme in the context of nationality, is one that has also emerged with religion and ethnicity – navigating spaces of belonging.

"I can also mingle well in different groups. But sometimes I have the feeling that, you are yourself, but with every group you put up this kind of mask, kind of. With Moroccan Dutch people you put your Moroccan mask on, and when you are only around white Dutch people, your put on your 'white girl' mask. So, you are always kind of adjusting yourself, your whole life you are actually being a chameleon. Sometimes it can be exhausting, but I have learned to stay myself whilst being that chameleon, so it does not have to cost that much energy to be that way." - *Maryam, 23 years old, Rotterdam.*

This shows a re-occurring discourse, where numerous respondents explained how they adjust mannerisms depending on where they are and who they are with. For example, Nicki pointed out that, although she feels very much Dutch and Moroccan, when she is in Morocco, she would be considered too Dutch, whereas in a group of white Dutch people, she will always feel like a Moroccan. In some cases, the different realities in which cultural hybrids can find themselves can prove to be complicated or even exhausting, as it requires skills of adaptation that are, sometimes unconsciously and sometimes continuously performed depending on the majority or minority community around them. This shows the ways in which culture and ethnicity performed by someone who is a cultural hybrid, and the ways in which it can differ from someone who's identity is formed around only one dominant culture (Clammer, 2015). It also shows that, cultural hybridity is not necessarily always used as an advantage rather than a liability (Clammer, 2015; Friedman, 1997), sometimes it is also used as a surviving and belonging mechanism – helping cultural hybrids navigate their way through life without falling 'outside of the boat' too much.

4.2. Socio-Cultural Opportunities

4.2.1. Instagram Wall and Instagram Story

Before diving into the social media opportunities and constraints that the women in this study experience, it is important to highlight that the data showed a difference in the usage of an Instagram wall compared to Instagram story.

The Instagram wall was more so perceived as a location where pictures were posted for a long-lasting time, whereas Instagram story was taken a lot more lightly because the content is only there for 24 hours, and it does not illustrate to other followers who has liked or commented on this content. As such, the Instagram wall was often referred to as a place where the women posted pictures

and/or videos of higher quality, with decent lighting, on which their make-up and/or clothes look good, where their environment or background looks nice, and where the focus is on themselves or their special experiences (i.e. graduations and birthdays, wild life safari). Also, the importance to preserve an aesthetically pleasant Instagram wall was mentioned by several respondents (i.e. all pictures must have similar filters, colour tones, and fashion styles).

On the contrary, when referring to Instagram story, most women mentioned content that included food ate or cooked, the locations they visited, the people who they are with, the events where they find themselves (i.e. festivals and concerts), and the things that they find funny (i.e. memes and videos). Few respondents also pointed out that they were more likely to post pictures of themselves without make-up, looking less dolled up, or even just waking up on an Instagram story, but not the Instagram wall. In addition, when it came to sharing points of views, opinions, charity fundraisers, political and social topics, religious verses, holiday celebrations, or quotes that represent feelings, most respondents referred to Instagram story. What is visible here is that the pressures of the attention economy to present likeable and appealing content (Chou & Edge, 2012; Kavapci & Kraeplin, 2016; Ross, 2019), can weigh less on a not so 'long-lasting' function as the Instagram story, allowing a higher feeling of comfort to not always share 'perfect' images but also realistic ones.

Now that these differences have been established, the following sub paragraphs will introduce emerging themes in Instagram opportunities.

4.2.2. Education and Inspiration

Learning and finding inspiration about things one is interested in or passionate about was one of the dominant narratives in respondent motivation to use Instagram. These narratives related to improving, inspiring, or motivating personal interests of the respondents – such as make-up skills, fashion styles, interior home designs, locations where to eat out, wedding inspiration, and recipes for cooking. For most of the respondents, however, such interests were often closely related to either their ethnic, or national identity – i.e. Turkish food recipes, improving Turkish language skills, Rotterdam restaurants, Dutch/Moroccan influencers. Similarly, the religious identity of most of the respondents could also be retraced in inspiration and education they seek from Instagram, including following Muslim influencers to see how they practice their religion, how they wear their Hijab, how they apply modest fashion, but also what their lifestyle looks like. Here, we see that, just as Peterson (2020) proposed, Instagram allows Muslim women to combine their religious practices with Western neoliberal culture, leading to new forms of Muslim habitus by challenging the boundaries of what can be perceived fashionable and modest (Kavapci & Kraeplin, 2016). New forms of Muslim habitus therefore consist of new online social conditions where modern and modest fashion choices, make-up looks, and lifestyles can challenge the 'Muslim norm' as well as the 'Muslim stereotypes' (Peterson, 2020). In addition, religious accounts that were focused on sharing inspirational Quran verses,

educational facts, or just reminders to take a daily moment for Islamic spiritual and performative practices were also frequently mentioned.

Another manner of self-educating for two respondents in particular was also following people who live in completely different countries, cultures, and circumstances than they do. Fayza said that Instagram has provided her with the opportunity to learn more about another branch of the Islamic religion.

"I am a Sunni Muslim, and there was this account that was focused on Shia Muslims, and they had this journey to Karbalah (Iraq), and we as Sunnis hear all these things about Shias, and sometimes they are incorrect. And then you think alright, I want to know what the deal really is. So, I followed that account and I saw that whole journey and I thought it was amazing. And I thought, you know, there are so many misconceptions and so many things of which you think 'why is this being said and why is hate being spread in media'? But then you follow such an account and you stumble upon new things. And that is actually nice. So, I see Instagram as a connecter, and you just get to know people who you would not have met without social media." – *Fayza, 24 years old, the Hague*

By exposing themselves to such different lifestyles, Instagram provides an opportunity to learn something from very different realities, an opportunity that would not have made itself easily possible would it not have been for Instagram. In these cases, some types of Instagram accounts provide counternarratives that can challenge traditional ideologies, stereotypes, and dominant media narratives (Enchaibi, 2013; Leurs et al, 2012). As such, Instagram appears to frequently be used to educate, skill, or inspire the respondents, however, all varying based on their personal interests.

Several interviewees also mentioned that they used Instagram not just to post travel pictures, but also to look up the destinations they were going to travel to in order to observe what other Instagrammers were doing there. Observing activities, nice restaurants, and even locations that would provide them the perfect background for a nice 'Instagrammable' picture. One respondent mentioned that she was part of a female Facebook group where girls would share 'Instagrammable' picture locations in popular travel destinations, which other girls could save and use during their trips.

4.2.3. Keeping up with others and maintaining relationships

Another emerging theme regarding Instagram usage was keeping up with the lives of others and maintaining relationships on Instagram. Such engagement consisted of the respondents liking and commenting on others' content, direct messaged content they find amusing, and direct messaging them responses to Instagram stories. Such messages could consist of both verbal language as well as emoji's. In addition, nearly all respondents mentioned that one of the main reasons they use and like Instagram is because it allows them to keep up with their friends, family, and acquaintances (i.e. colleagues and classmates), without having to constantly start WhatsApp conversations of phone calls

with them. This allowed them to indirectly maintain relationships by knowing what others are up to without having to be told directly. Although such maintenance was often referred to not being as deep and detailed as, for example, it would be in a Whatsapp message or a phone call, it was generally considered easier and more convenient.

Likewise, Instagram's engagement and communication tools were especially appreciated when it came to close friend and family using it – as some respondents mentioned that, although they did not very much care for likes and popularity on Instagram, they did appreciate it when something they posted received a lot of nice comments, especially when this came from friends, family and acquaintances. However, few respondents did admit that they did care about receiving a certain number of likes, at least around their normal average, as it provides a certain reassurance that they posted a nice picture. However, such narratives were not dominant amongst all interviewees, as plenty of them did not care for likes and comments at all. Also, one respondent had mixed feelings about this seeing likes and comments as a compliment, as she said:

"It's very double. When I get a lot of comments on my picture, saying 'oh how beautiful', or something like that, it almost makes me feel guilty. I know I shouldn't, but I feel bad that I kind of gave people the invitation to say 'oh how beautiful'. But on the other hand, it is fun when my friends, cousins, uncles and aunts say 'oh what a nice picture', then I think like 'I know right! Thank you'. – *Tina, 27 years old, Rotterdam.*

Here we see Instagram engagement functioning as a sense of self-validation as a certain reassurance that their content is enjoyable, whereas for some in the form of likes (Kavapci & Kraeplin, 2016; Ross, 2019; Stapleton et al, 2017), and for others in the form of verbal or emoji commentary.

Moreover, Instagram also provides a platform to keep up with the lives of people outside of the social circle of the respondents: influencers, celebrities, and pop culture in general. Whereas celebrities were only mentioned by a few respondents, following influencers was something that almost all but one respondent mentioned. Whether this was Hijabi fashion influencers, influencers that share the same Dutch-Moroccan identity as the respondents, popular fashion and make-up influencers, travel influencers, or lifestyle influencers. Besides for educational and inspirational purposes, as discussed in the first sub paragraph, keeping up with the personal lives of these influencers is also a reason for respondents to follow them. This is not surprising, as the intimate content and relatability of influencers are some of the main characteristics that explain their popularity (van Driel & Dumitrica, 2020).

Besides maintaining relationships and keeping up with others, Instagram also offers opportunities for generating new romantic, friendship, or professional relationships. Two respondents mentioned that they had met men they were romantically interested in in the past on Instagram, and one of the respondents was in a current relationship with someone she met on Instagram. What was

even more obvious from the data, were the friendships that were made on Instagram. Several respondents have said that they have made friendship connections on the app with people who share similar interests or mindsets with them, or people they just happened to bond with. While some of these friendships grew to become active online, long-distance friendships, other became friends who have met up and seen each other in real life.

"I was in Istanbul and a girl direct messaged me saying 'I have followed you for so long and I also live in Istanbul, would it be nice if we would meet each other?' And I was with a friend who also thought that would be fun, and we did it. And she took us to such nice places, and it was so much fun, and she was so sweet and nice. And without Instagram, you know, it would have never happened ". – *Fayza, 24 years old, The Hague.*

We see here that smart phones and social media can allow relationships to emerge and be maintained in newer, more accessible, and also more private manners (Waltorp, 2015).

On another note, a several respondents were introduced to people who shared their creative or professional interests, such as photography, fashion, videography, or architecture. These relationships offered opportunities for artistic collaborations, such as modelling photoshoots. It also provided the possibility for new communities between likeminded individuals who share similar interests, hobbies, and passion. In addition, professional relationships also emerged in the forms of the respondents gaining professional clients for the work they illustrate on Instagram. As such, Instagram can function as a certain portfolio for users who share their professional and artistic work on Instagram.

4.2.4. Self-Expression

Another dominant theme that provides an important opportunity for most of the respondent was self-expression. Self-expression has been mentioned in various forms, including creative, emotional, opinionated, and humorous expression. Creative expression was shared through cooking, make-up skills, (modest) fashion choices, photography, videography, storytelling, singing, and (interior) architectural design. In such self-expression, ethnicity and culture was also evident – (i.e. posting Pakistani and Moroccan food, writing Instagram captions in the Turkish, Arabic, or the Bosnian language, and wearing Pakistani or Moroccan dresses).

"My religious side I prefer to keep personal, but with my ethnicity, I love it, so I also enjoy sharing that. I think the clothes are beautiful, and the accessories are beautiful, and my country is also beautiful. So, I think it is nice to just share that. And that is often received very positively. People like to see that very much". - *Sara, 26 years old, Rotterdam*

This correlates with the ways in which culture is manifested through constantly reproduced performances (Clammer, 2015), which here translates from Sara's daily life to her social media usage.

Quite a few respondents enjoyed Instagram as it allowed them to create and share content that they are interested in or passionate about. In some cases, this content creation also leads to special opportunities – such as doing photoshoots, receiving free gifts or discounts from brands in exchange for promotion, and finding a community with other users who share the same passion for content creation. We see here that the authority these women have over their own pages (Caldeira & De Ridder, 2017; Peterson, 2020) provide them with the ability to be the directors of their own narrative and experience creative and sometimes even commercial opportunities from doing so (Kavapci & Kraeplin, 2016; Peterson, 2016; Waninger, 2015).

Moreover, opiniated expression, mostly about social, political, climate, injustice, or religious topics, was also a dominant reason for Instagram usage. The data revealed that Instagram story in particular was used to raise awareness, share opinions, or initiate a discussion on topics by sharing informative posts from other accounts, writing personal points of views, or asking followers what they think about a certain phenomenon. We see here that Instagram can allow the debating of topics that are too difficult or uncomfortable to discuss face-to-face (Leurs et al, 2012), while challenging traditional ideologies, stereotypes, patriarchal norms, and power structures (Enchaibi, 2013).

Furthermore, emotional expressions, both positive and negative, were also pointed out as topics respondents frequently share on Instagram story in particular, especially through quotes. Whereas some respondents made it clear that they do not want to share personal emotions on Instagram, several others often used the app to find and share quotes that match their emotional state.

Finally, the expression of humour, almost always mentioned together with memes, is an aspect of Instagram that nearly all respondents enjoyed. Although some referred to just general, funny memes and videos, most respondents followed and shared meme pages that related to their religious, ethnic, and/or national identity (i.e. Allochtonen memes, Moroccan memes, Muslim memes, and Rotterdam memes).

"There is an Insta page it's called Azeri Dictionary I believe, and they post Azerbaijani sayings and proverbs, which they translate to English. And sometimes that sounds really funny and I will repost it on my story, as a Meme joke." – *Indra, 25 years old, Hoofddorp.*

As Aguilar et al (2016) argue, memes can allow certain 'inside jokes' because they narrate experiences that can only be understood if familiar with that context. Indra uses memes about translated traditional sayings, originally only familiar to those who are familiar with Azerbaijani culture, to share these inside jokes with others, potentially inviting them into the narrative. This makes sense, as the theoretical framework illustrates that memes can assist in the meaning making process of beliefs and

experiences (Bellar et al, 2013) and can enhance the negotiation and communication of cultural identities (Aguilar et al, 2016).

4.2.5. Creating and supporting counter-narratives

Leurs et al (2012), Enchaibi (2013), Kavakci & Kraeplin (2016) Peterson (2020) and Waninger (2015) all mentioned that through both text and images, Muslims can allow counternarratives to emerge through the public nature of digital media. These counternarratives can oppose mainstream media and dominant ideologies on, for example, Muslims women being oppressed, Muslims being dangerous, or Non-Western people being different and foreign. Various women in this study mentioned expressing such counternarratives in different ways.

"In my stories I sometimes mention Islam or, for example, two days ago I shared a post about a non-profit organisation that helps Syrian refugees, and then I said with that 'it is now Ramadan, and the entire Islamic Ummah is now busy giving back', so in that sense, I use it to be a kind of advocate for Islam, and kind of, place it in a good light.. instead of everything that is said on the news." – *Mona, 20 years old, Rotterdam/Purmerend.*

Several interviewees also pointed out that they enjoyed the fact that, on Instagram women in general, and Muslim women in particular, can show diversity and abolish certain misconceptions, showing the world that being a Muslim women, whether veiled or not, is really not that different in terms of which activities you partake in, how you spend your time, or which career perspectives you can have. This was often mentioned in narratives about Hijabi influencers. Not only because such lifestyle influencers illustrated that one can be both fashionable and dressed modest, but also because many of the women behind these accounts enjoy professional opportunities, such as modelling jobs, clothing lines, and collaborations with big brands. Business opportunities that, in the past, were not typically linked to women who dressed modestly, were veiled, or were Muslim, were slowly becoming normalized and more accessible because these Hijabi influencers gain a lot of popularity on the internet. Additionally, one respondent mentioned that, as Hijabi influencers can enjoy international followers and global recognition, people who live in locations or countries that are not exposed to many Muslims, can become familiar with it.

"Indirectly, as a Muslim woman, you also get a stage, because if other Moroccan or Muslim women with a Hijab become very well known as an influencer in a certain part of the world, and I visit that place on a vacation, it won't be such a culture shock for them, because they have seen it on their Instagram feed, you know?" – *Bella, 25 years old, Hoofddorp.*

Here it is noticeable that a growing global visibility of Muslim women on Instagram, especially when they are veiled, can assist in normalizing diversity and challenging Muslim discourses not just in general society but also in certain industries, such as the fashion, modelling, and advertising industries (Kavapci & Kraeplin, 2016; Peterson, 2016, 2020; Waninger, 2015).

4.2.6. A trip down memory lane

Most women who were interviewed have mentioned the fact that scrolling through their Instagram profile allows them a certain trip down memory lane, functioning as a pleasant representation of their lives, their loved ones, their travels, and their experiences – somewhat like a photo album or a portfolio of their lives. As such, Instagram provides the opportunity for its users to save, reflect, and share their favourite memories.

At the same time, as memories do, past pictures can also illustrate memories that one might not feel comfortable sharing with people anymore (i.e. pictures with ex-friends and pictures where respondents were dressed less modestly than they would now). However, most respondents mentioned sometimes just going back to delete pictures that were either of low-quality content or portrayed them in ways that they no longer found enjoyable.

4.3. Socio-Cultural Constraints

4.3.1. Privacy Issues

The first dominant theme in this study that is interpreted as a socio-cultural constraint the concern about privacy. Out of 12 respondents, seven had a private account, and five had a public account.

While the respondents with public accounts paid little to no attention to their followers, this was not the case for those with private account. One of the ways in which the women with private accounts attempted to guard their privacy was by being quite critical of who they allow to follow them on the app. Most respondents with private accounts agreed that, in order for someone to follow them, it was important that they knew them. Although some said that roughly knowing someone was sufficient, others found it important that they really know, and like, that person in order for them to accept the follow request and send one back. On the other hand, some other respondents were a little less strict, and in some cases would allow someone that they do not know to follow them, if that account looked trustworthy. All respondents with private accounts pointed out that they strictly screen follow requests ghost accounts, sex bot accounts, or ‘sketchy’ accounts (i.e. accounts that had no pictures, accounts that had barely or no followers, and accounts that used fake or stolen pictures from others).

Moreover, three respondents had encountered actual privacy violations on Instagram – one woman had her picture stolen and used on another Instagram account, the second one had her pictures

stolen and re-used on dating apps, and the third one had her picture, name, and identity stolen, as someone made a fake-account of her and used it to send inappropriate messages to her sister in law.

"There was a girl that used my pictures, like it was her. And that scared me. I did not know she was following me, but I posted something on my Instagram story, and when I checked who had viewed that story, I saw my own picture there. And, it's a very unpleasant feeling. And I went on that profile and I saw all these pictures of myself. And I reported the account, but I know that is not useful, because someone can just make a new account with those same pictures." *– Nicki, 24 years old, Utrecht/Hillegom.*

Another interviewee, Pinar, said that the few times she had posted a picture on her Instagram story with her fiancé, she later found out in indirect manner that it was screenshotted by some girls that follow her. This has made her more hesitant in sharing pictures of her relationship on the app, as she said that "eventually, you don't know where that picture ends up." Here, we see an example of the awareness of constant 'visibility' and surveillance by peers, and how this awareness is enhanced by the 'screenshot' function of smartphones (Jaynes, 2019).

Another topic that also came up in the privacy theme is that two of the women I interviewed were a bit stricter about not allowing all family members to follow them. Where one of them just preferred to keep her, especially older, family members outside of her personal business, the other one did not allow certain family members to follow her because she believed they would misinterpret the content she posts, particularly her quotes, which would start false rumours about her – as had already happened in the past. Likewise, two respondents brought up their dislike for 'expose accounts' on Instagram and Facebook and explained how it was a contributing factor in their consciousness about what they shared on social media. Expose accounts are accounts that expose particularly women, from Muslim communities for activities that the accounts consider inappropriate, which can range from dancing to certain music, being in certain locations, posting pictures of a celebrity crush that is not considered 'appropriate', or being dressed in a certain way. This illustrates a combination of peer (Jaynes, 2019) and community surveillance (Waltorp, 2013, 2015; Werbner, 1997; Yuval-Davis, 1997) where the wide-ranging reach and engagement facilities of social networks together with the screenshot function of smartphones can provide a certain breeding ground for community and/or family members to scrutinize women in particular, pointing out their 'wrong doings' while often mocking them. By being mindful of who can see their profile, what they post, or what they wear in their pictures, the interviewees illustrate how they navigate through Instagram despite the power dynamics and surveillance conditions of their habitus (Waltorp, 2015)

As Instagram's public nature allows strangers to reach out and send messages, some of the women in this study have received inappropriate, rude, or mean comments or direct messages. Sometimes such messages could come from strange men trying to flirt or initiate sexual contact, while

other times it could come from strangers saying mean things. One respondent even mentioned that someone she knows send her an unfriendly message after she posted a picture of herself. In such cases, the public nature of Instagram opens a certain door for people, whether strangers or acquaintances, to enter someone's personal space. And where some people use this opportunity to compliment, be kind, or connect, others see it as a chance to make someone feel uncomfortable or to give unsolicited opinions.

On another note, the data observed that six respondents would only post their significant other if the relationship was serious enough, often referring to an engagement or marriage. The reason for such decisions usually ranged between either religion or ethnicity, or both – as it the culture that surrounded both ethnicity and religion was often associated by the women only introducing a significant other to the outside world when they knew they would have a future with them.

"I never posted my relationships on Instagram, because sometimes they do not last long. So, if I would have posted that every time, people would have thought I went through a whole laundry list. Even though, in reality, it is really not that bad. But, to me it's like, when I am engaged, and I know for sure, this one is going to marry me, then I will do it. Not that I am hiding anything, if you would ask me. But it's just that on social media, people can keep evidence. They can take screenshots and forward it." – *Mida, 26 years old, Rotterdam.*

It is visible here that, for Mida, surveillance played a big role in her Instagram navigating strategies – permitting users to screenshot the 'evidence' of all their intimate relationships if she would have posted them on Instagram (Jaynes, 2019) – that made her decide to share something like that if she was getting married to someone. We see moral laboratory being negotiated here, as the relationships are kept from social media audiences, not because they are a secret in the day to day lives of the women, but because such images on the internet could perpetuate rumours or assumptions that could scrutinize their morality (Waltorp 2015), and perhaps even damage their reputation. This was nevertheless not the case of all respondents, as two of them, who were in a relationship, said they already post pictures with their significant other.

On the contrary, two engaged, one married, and one still single respondent said that they prefer to keep their significant other away from Instagram completely, as they admit wanting to keep some parts of their lives just for themselves. What was noticeable was that, although going public with their 'official' relationships would not question their morality, therefore these decisions were not made in relation to religious or cultural conditions. Reasons for keeping a relationship off of Instagram varied between the idea that a romantic relationship is should be private and protecting the relationship from people could screenshotting and forwarding pictures and use them as tools for judgement and gossip. Bella, the interviewee that deleted all of her pictures off of Instagram, mentioned that, the fact that Instagram does not allow you to see who has seen and who has screenshotted your picture, has

contributed to her not posting pictures of herself, her significant other, or her son. Again, we see surveillance awareness, and screenshots in particular, as a motive to keep certain things private (Jaynes, 2019). We see here that her media ideology regarding Instagram has lower senses of privacy and safety because of its technological traits – not allowing users to see who screenshotted their images (Gershon, 2010).

4.3.2. Modesty on Instagram

As has been illustrated in the previous sub paragraph, privacy concerns regarding one's child or one's loved ones was a dominant reason for quite a few women to not share pictures and/or videos of this. In one of the cases it was even enough for the Instagram user to not post pictures of herself. Nevertheless, there were other themes that some women reflected on not posting, one of which references clothing and modesty. Whereas some respondents wore a Hijab and therefore were always dressed in ways in which their entire body is covered, some other interviewees made sure that their legs were covered to at least their knees, and others found it important that their upper arms and chest area was covered. Also, two of the respondents generally enjoyed wearing shorter clothes and did not mind posting a picture on Instagram where they wore shorts or skirts. However, only one of these respondents admitted that she was also mindful of how modest the clothes in her pictures looked because she did not want to feel judged by some of the people that follow her – referring to certain community members.

"I have a lot of people watching of who I know they are kind of judgy. And I do say very often that I do not care about other people's opinions, but I actually do on Instagram, because you just so not want negative comments or something like that. So with everything that you post, you kind of have your guard up". – *Maryam, 23 years old, Rotterdam.*

As the theoretical framework illustrates, in Muslim communities, modest manners of dressing, piety, and humility are considered important as they can reflect their religious identity (Kavapi & Kraeplin, 2016; Peterson, 2016; Waltorp, 2015). However, as in the case of Maryam, modesty can also become a manner for minority groups to guard the boundaries of their communities, therefore monitoring or even scrutinizing those who show signs of transgressive behaviour (Waltorp, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 1997). Mida, also mentioned that this uncertainty of who can see you picture, leads her to edit out her curves on her Instagram pictures, as she said:

"The way I look in my daily life, my clothes, that is what I post. But I pay attention that if I am standing sideways in a picture, that I cut out my butt. Not because I think it looks erotic, but because I know how people can look at it, and to me that is an unpleasant thought, that I think about some guys thinking that is hot and, I don't know, send that to others". – *Mida, 26 years old, Rotterdam.*

With sending to others, Mida is aware of not just online surveillance but also its manifestation through screenshots (Jaynes, 2019) making her aware of she should express herself on her Instagram page, as it can end up as a screenshot on people's phones. This idea alone makes her feel uncomfortable enough to apply editing strategies to the pictures she post.

Furthermore, nearly all respondents brought up that would never post a picture in their bikini, even if they wear one on the beach. Though, none of the women's reasons for this were related to the judgment of other people, religion, or community, but more so to their personal privacy and humility. Mostly, it was highlighted that they did not feel comfortable that other people could pictures of them with only a bathing suit on. Some also pointed out that the idea that they did not know who would see such pictures and what they would do with them, others did just not enjoy being exposed like that on the internet. This was not brought up by the veiled respondents, and therefore does not relate to them, as they are always fully covered on their pictures. Here, we see that the interviewees are carefully navigating their way between practicing the ethics of modesty, humility, and piety (Peterson, 2016) while regulating moral authority over their bodies (Peterson, 2020) by visually expressing themselves on Instagram in both ways that make them feel the most comfortable and safe. For some women, such comfort and safety laid in knowing community members would not gossip about them and peers would not be able so safe pictures of their exposed bodies and forward them to others, whereas for others such comfort and safety reflected knowing their religious practices were reflected in their images.

4.3.3. Likeability on Instagram

Furthermore, although most respondents said that they are not too critical about the pictures they post, a few had admitted that they would retain from posting certain pictures of videos, because they were not sure if it would be found likeable or entertaining enough by their Instagram followers. It is noticeable here that the attention economy, which increases awareness of visibility (Kavapci & Kraeplin, 2016), can result in feelings of pressure to post likeable content (Ross, 2019). Nevertheless, all the interviewees only edited their pictures in terms of light and filters, but did not actually alter their own appearance in the pictures in any way.

Some respondents felt mostly frustrated about beauty and body ideals that influencers were promoting as natural, when in actuality they were the result of plastic surgery and photoshop. On respondent pointed out that, the most successful influencers, were often also blonde girls with petite bodies, an appearance that did not reflect hers, which she believed could be destructive when she would compare herself to them.

"They post nothing more than pictures where they look good. And I think that everyone deals with this, it is not just a special case for me, but I think that people are just constantly bombarded with

pictures of people who look perfect, and that creates a negative self-image. And in that sense, I also have thought 'why do I not look like that?' and especially because, mostly, successful influencers are blond girls with petite bodies, and I do now have that, I am not blond, and that can be pretty destructive." – *Mona, 20 years old, Rotterdam/Purmerend.*

For Mona, this was a motive to follow influencers who had more in common with them in terms of religion or ethnic background. Another respondent, Fayza, mentioned that every now and then she would perform a 'social media cleanse' – where she takes some time to go through the people who she follows and decides who is not contributing in a positive manner to her page.

"And I just know from experience that a lot of girls especially can get a negative self-image because of Instagram. And if you follow those 'plastic fantastic' accounts, then it's always plastic surgery or you should drink this shake and then you will lose weight, it's only about that and I just think that is absolutely not healthy. And that is the negative side of social media I think, and of Instagram." – *Fayza, 23 years old, The Hague.*

Mona, Fayza and several other respondents mentioned such 'protective' navigating strategies whilst using Instagram by limiting exposure to 'destructive images' and purposefully following accounts that are less likely to have such consequences (i.e. Influencers who do not fit the Western norm, humoristic accounts, animal accounts). As a result, 'the filter bubble' in which only perfect, skinny, and surgically enhanced influencers could be found is popped (Caldeira & De Ridder, 2017). Interestingly, interviewees did not referrer to Muslim influencers in similar 'fake' narratives as other non-Muslim or non-veiled influencers, as they were often included in narratives of representation, motivation, and inspiration – whether this was in regard to their religious practices, fashion choices, or business opportunities. This is interesting, as Hijabi influencers have also been argued to perpetuate feminine ideals and social class status (Peterson, 2020; Waninger, 2015). On the other hand, it was more often influencers who fit in the 'Western beauty norm' – skinny, a fit body, long and/or blond hair, and/or scarcely dressed who were mentioned together with damaging and harmful discourses. As mentioned by Caldeira & De Ridder (2017), we see that dominant beauty standards and feminine ideals from traditional media and mainstream society can be perpetuated on social networks, especially when those networks are global and provide accessibility to 'perfect looking strangers' (Chou & Edge, 2012) who, especially female, users can start comparing themselves to (Stapleton et al, 2017). As is mentioned by Mona and Fayza, such comparisons have the potential to lead to negative self-images. Some respondents proposed solutions to make such unrealistic images more transparent, such as checkmarks that would illustrate that a picture has been photoshopped, Instagrammers displaying the 'behind the screens' effort it took them to take their 'perfect' pictures, and more transparency about the obstacles on their journey to the lives influencers often flaunt online. This can be observed as a

reference to reduce 'correspondence bias (Chou & Edge, 2012; Stapleton et al, 2017), as it is assumed that showing audiences realistic 'behind the screen' content, whether verbally or through images, can allow them to understand that it is actually not that 'natural' or 'easy' to achieve certain things or look a certain way.

In relation to the popular influencer narrative, four respondents mentioned that they were displeased with the Instagram algorithm because it made it less likely for them to see profiles who had less followers on Instagram and were 'less popular'. As algorithms are based on content that reflects the current interests of Instagram users, some respondents mentioned that they felt less exposed to 'unusual images that did not fit their direct interests but nevertheless might be something they wanted to see. Indirectly, we see that the algorithm can influence the 'filter bubble' users find themselves in, as the app can reintroduce similar themes to their screens (Caldeira & De Ridder, 2017). Therefore, regardless of Instagram's equal opportunities for everyone to reach wide audiences, algorithms were observed by some respondents as obstacles that do not allow everyone on the app equal chances to be seen, and if applicable, to grow their platform.

Also, numerous interviewees mentioned that the materialistic standards that Instagrammers were promoting on their Instagram profiles often lead people to believe that they need to purchase the same products, whether it be furniture, a car, or dietary products – while these influencers were often just paid to promote them. Such content was referred to as manipulative, and sometimes even dangerous, as audiences are led to believe that those who promote the products actually benefitted from them in some type of way, resulting in audiences desiring the same results from purchasing similar products. One of the respondents, Hanna, expressed her annoyance with the fact that influencers could use Instagram as a free marketing tool, and as the platform is not made for advertisements, they should at least pay for using it for this service. Here, another example of user frustration is evident with the ads becoming an almost normalized part of the Instagram app, putting the authenticity and the intentions of popular users under a question (van Driel & Dumitrica, 2020) but also considering them potentially harmful to members of society.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Main findings

This paper illustrated that that young Muslim women implement strategies to navigate their way through Instagram based on which outcome they desired from the app. As such, when their desired outcome was visibility – whether to find a community of likeminded individuals, create new relationships, receive attention for content creation, expand professional network, or share opinions with as many people as possible – strategies revolved around little to no boarders for people to follow the women's profiles. The public, globally accessible, and popular characteristics of Instagram were allowed the women to use the network's visibility to their advantage, exploiting it to reach desired 'success' – similarly to the women observed in studies of Kavapci & Kraeplin (2016), Peterson (2016, 2020) and Waninger (2015).

On the other hand, when the desired outcome was expression of private experiences – whether this was because content included festive events, milestones, a significant other, or relatives – strategies were highly focussed on a very selective entrance to the women's profile, only accessible to those that are well familiar with them. Besides a personal preference for privacy, there was also a general awareness amongst many women of peer, ethnic community, or family surveillance. As was predetermined by Waltorp (2013, 2015), Werbner (1997) and Yuval-Davis (1997), but confirmed by most interviews, such surveillance was often already present within the daily lives of the women, but heightened by the highly public nature of Instagram, making it easier to scrutinize the female behaviour by, for example, providing access to public accounts that 'expose' Muslim women for behaviour that online Muslim communities find immoral. This is strengthened by technological features of smartphones, such as 'screenshots', to not only safe, but also forward evidence of anything that can be perceived as worth of scrutiny (Jaynes, 2019).

Additionally, the pressures of the attention economy that put value on the visual images of the online world (Kavapci & Kraeplin, 2016) were evident in most media ideologies of Instagram, who experienced the app as a platform where pressures of producing likeable content (Ross, 2019), unrealistic beauty and body ideals (Caldeira & De Ridder, 2017), and social self-comparison (Stapleton et al, 2017) were present. As such, privacy, scrutiny, and personal insecurities could perpetuate socio-cultural limitation of the women's' habitus from their social world onto their digital world, constraining them from fully benefiting of Instagram's 'democratic' nature by creating feelings of self-consciousness and self-doubt.

Nevertheless, the women in this study navigated their ways around images that they considered negative, hurtful, or damaging, by carefully selecting accounts that made them feel good. This included Instagram accounts that provided new skills, knowledge, motivation, and inspiration, accounts that provided humorous entertainment, and accounts that challenged dominant ideologies of what beauty, success, religion, modesty, and fashion are supposed to look like. Such accounts were sometimes just focussed on personal hobbies and interests, but often included ethnicity, religion, and

nationality – supporting new meaning-making processes of what it means to be Muslim, Dutch, and Moroccan, Turkish, or Bosnian. This could be by exposure to images of Hijabi women becoming models of national Dutch advertisements, or sharing memes that mirror experiences unique to particular forms of cultural hybridity. Seeing alternative images of what success can look like on Instagram, finding new ways to maintain and create short- and long-term relationships, acquiring new skills, and learning new information provides the young women in this study with socio-cultural opportunities that expand the possibilities of their social world, and therefore, their habitus (Bourdieu, 1990). As such, they acquire new authority to both media consumption and media production, which they can shape to their preferences, while still negotiating dominant socio-cultural limitations. It becomes evident that the complexity of composite habitus, as argued by Waltorp (2015), is strengthened by the new possibilities for identity exploration and expression on social media platforms – introducing new advantages while also strengthening existing limitations. This provides the women new ways of dealing with feelings of 'othering', discrimination, and rejection in the social world as they can use the conditions of the digital sphere to their personal advantage with the agency that Instagram allows all its users, for free.

5.2. Social implications

This paper allows new familiarity of the realities of young Muslim women in the Netherlands – a significant yet often disregarded group in Dutch society, especially in positive discourses (Sterkenburg et al, 2019). By giving voice to personal experiences of this societal group in the Netherlands, a door is opened into the multifaceted, contradicting conditions of their social world (Waltorp, 2015; Bourdieu, 1990). While appreciating the complex nature of their composite habitus, this paper recognizing that it is this very complexity that makes it impossible to fully grasp its nature within the 25.000 limit of this thesis. As social media platforms such as Instagram have gained incredible dominance in the social world of humanity (Blystone, 2020), it can only be expected that their presence will increase – continuously complicating identity development of the, especially younger and marginalized groups in society. Therefore, the results provided by this paper provide a meaningful foundation for an understanding of the identity development, meaning-making, and decision-making processes of marginalized groups in Western society, both off- and online.

5.3. Scientific implications

This paper adds to existing scientific literature on cultural hybridity, habitus, identity-development of minorities in the West, and social media usage. By focussing on young Muslim women in the Netherlands in particular, this paper fills a general absence of focus on the identity development of minority communities in Netherlands and its translation to the era of social media networks, who have been argued to strengthen the complexity of identity development (Waltorp, 2015). In addition, this paper provides a more unique researcher perspective, as I analysed a

marginalized minority group in the Netherlands that I am also a part of, therefore avoiding a distant, Western perspective that the majority of such paper holds. This provided an easier approach to the research sample, created a more comfortable experience for the interviewees, and limits the results supporting mainstream Western ideologies that stigmatize Muslim women. As such, the data that was collected provides a groundwork for necessary future exploration of identity development of cultural hybrids in the Netherlands, and how this is impacted by the digital age.

5.4. Limitations

This study faced several limitations. Firstly, it is important to recognize that the habitus of any societal group is a complex focus of study, as it consists of all the conditions an individual is exposed to from the day they are born. A semi-structured interview of roughly an hour therefore is not necessarily enough to go as in-depth as possible and achieve a detailed and complete vision of the habitus. This is likely why Waltorp (2015) performed an ethnographic research of one year whilst researching the composite habitus of young Muslim women in Copenhagen. The advantage I had over Waltorp, of course, was that I myself am the result of a the same (or similar) habitus as the women in this study, and therefore a lot of context was already grasped before the research even started. Nevertheless, although the data provided a rough idea of the habitus of the women in this study, it is likely still a superficial reflection of the whole system of dispositions that makes up their composite habitus.

Also, the research included only six different ethnic identities, and therefore did not manage to illustrate stories from other perspectives, such as Iraqi, Afghan, Syrian, Somalia, or Sudan. Data that contained a wider variety of ethnicities could provide even more rich content and perhaps perspectives and narratives that have not come up in this research. Also, all but one respondent were born in the Netherlands, therefore, again, more stories from those that immigrated here during later stages of their lives could provide a wider variety of experiences. In addition, the women in this study were in the age category of 20-27, of which most respondents were above the age of 23, meaning that their experiences and senses of identity can differ from young girls still in high school or women that are older. Also, the respondents in this study were all digital natives, therefore the results cannot reflect on experiences by those who are not.

Moreover, the fact that interviews had to be conducted online, rather than in person, could have influenced the quality of the interviews, as it was more difficult to read the body language of the interviewees. The fact that interviews were online also made it more likely for some respondents to show signs of impatience towards the end of the interview, perhaps because they grew tired, bored, or distracted. This is something that could be avoided by a more personal, comfortable, and cozy ambiance that a face-to-face conversation over some tea and/or coffee would allow. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult to overcome this limitation.

5.5. Suggestions for future research

This paper provides some groundwork for the Dutch context of the habitus of non-Western Muslim women. For further research, it is suggested to focus on women from outside of the Randstad area in the Netherlands, women from a younger generation (teenagers), and women from other ethnic backgrounds than was the case in this paper. Also, perhaps the usage of other emerging social media platforms can be explored as well, such as TikTok, which has experienced a rapid growth amongst especially younger users (Boekee et al, 2020). The results of other social media network usage strategies by a more diverse sample of Muslim women could enrich the findings provided by this paper, therefore expanding the framework of composite habitus of a still relatively unexplored group in Western society.

A final suggestion for future research is also to perform either an ethnographic study, or to conduct multiple interviews over a certain period of time, to allow a deeper, more detailed and thorough representation of the habitus.

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Appendix A. – Interview questions English version

Starting questions – Personal and Demographic questions

First of all, thank you for participating in my research! Your participation is of great value and is very much appreciated. To begin, I would like to remind you of the fact that this interview will be anonymous. However, I will link your answers to a pseudonym in the results.

1. Before I make one up myself, I would like to ask you whether you have a preferred name you would like me to reference you as?
2. (If a name is mentioned): That is a nice name! Is there any specific reason that you have chosen this name?
   (If no name is mentioned): No problem! Then I will think of a name for you later.
3. So, (name) could you briefly introduce yourself and tell me a little bit about yourself?
4. So currently you live in (name city), have you always lived here?
5. Do you like living here?
6. Do you feel at home in this city?
7. (If the person has lived somewhere else before): And where you lived before, was that very different from where you live now? In what way?
8. When you are abroad, and people ask you where you are from, how do you answer?
9. Do people often ask you what your ethnicity is? How do you answer this?
10. So, you are Moroccan/Turkish/Pakistani/ and Dutch. What does this mean to you?
11. Would you say that this is a big part of your identity?
12. And you are also a Muslim woman. Could you give me some examples of what this means to you?
13. Is being a Muslim a strong part of your identity? If yes, then in which way?
14. Do the above mentioned characteristics influence your decision making, world views, and ways of doing?

Instagram Usage Behaviour

15. So, as you know I am interested in how you, as a young, non-Western, Muslim woman in the Netherlands uses the Instagram app. Could you tell me something about how you use the app?
16. Approximately how long have you been on Instagram?
17. During which moments of the day and where do you use Instagram?
18. What do you use Instagram for?
19. Do you use Instagram in a different manner than you use other platforms, such as Facebook, Snapchat, Youtube, Twitter? If yes, in which ways?
20. Do you mention your religious identity on your account? If yes, in which ways?

21. Do you mention your ethnic background on your account? If yes, in which ways?
22. Do you find it important to mention this on your Instagram account? If yes, why?
23. Is your profile private or public? Why is it private/public?
24. How many followers do you have and how many people do you follow?
25. If your account is private, what influences your decision to accept someone's follow-request?
26. If your account is private, what influences your decision to deny someone's follow-request?
27. What type of accounts do you follow on Instagram (influencers, food channels, friends, family, colleagues, etc)? Does this relate to your religion/culture/city?
28. Do you follow your friends and family on Instagram?
29. What do you base your decision on to follow people?
30. Are there accounts that you avoid following?
31. Do you like and comment on many pictures and videos?
32. Do the people in your social/family circle know about your Instagram account?
33. Do you post pictures of your friends/family on your Instagram?
34. To you, is Instagram something that you consider to be a part of your "real life"?
35. How often do you post?
36. Do you use 'Insta-Story'? If yes, is there a difference between what you post on your 'Insta-story' and what you post on your main profile?
37. When you post, what kind of topics do you post about? (Only ask this if the person doesn't mention it in the previous question).
38. Do you post both pictures and videos? If yes, do you post videos of the same content as you do pictures?
39. What makes you decide to post a picture?
40. Does what you're wearing matter when you post a picture? In what way?
41. Does the location in which you take a picture to post matter? In what way?
42. Do you tag locations in your pictures? Why yes/no?
43. If you do tag locations in your pictures, do you do this for every location that you visit?
44. Do you ever visit locations with the intent to take a picture and post it on Instagram?
45. Do you edit your pictures? What do you edit?
46. Are there things that you consciously do not post on Instagram? If yes, could you elaborate on some examples?
47. Has there every been something that you deleted of your Instagram? Why?
48. Which type of posts are the most popular on your account when it comes to likes and comments?
49. When you go through your Instagram, what are some of your favourite posted pictures/videos? How come?

50. *Create question based on Instagram content* -> if pictures with friends, ask "You have a lot of nice pictures with your friends! Are they also (ethnicity/religion)? And do they also live in this city? - if pictures with family, ask "Those are beautiful pictures with your family, you seem very close! Do you spend a lot of time together in real life?"
51. Are you currently in a relationship?
52. If you were in a relationship, do you post pictures of your partner on your profile? Why (not)?
53. Does your Instagram usage change when you are single as opposed to when you are in a relationship? This can concern the time spend on the app or the content that is posted, for example.
54. Do you think the people that follow you have a certain image of you? If yes, what type of image?
55. When you look at your Instagram page, is there a certain image that you want to create of yourself?

Pro's and Con's of Instagram

56. What are your favourite things about the Instagram app and how people can use it?
57. Are there things that you do or experience through Instagram that you would not be able to experience otherwise?
58. Have you made friends through Instagram?
59. Do you use Instagram's direct messages for communication?
60. Have you maintained relationships through Instagram? How?
61. Sometimes you hear that Instagram negatively affects young people's self-esteem, other times you hear people feel very inspired by Instagram. How do you when you use Instagram?
62. How do you feel after you post something? Think negative, positive, excited, nervous, or neutral.
63. How do the comments/likes/messages you receive from other users make you feel?
64. Do you find it important that what you post receives a lot of likes and comments?
65. Do you intent to continue using Instagram in the future?
66. Have you ever had negative experiences with Instagram? In what ways?
67. Have you ever considered deleting the app? Why?
68. Have you ever felt your privacy being violated because of Instagram? In what way?
69. Is there anything about the Instagram app has hindered you in doing, achieving, or receiving something? In which way?
70. If you could choose something, what would you change about the Instagram app?
71. If you could choose something, would you change anything about the way in which people use Instagram?

Appendix B - Interview questions Dutch version

Begin vragen – Persoonlijk & Demografisch

Allereerst bedankt dat je mee wil doen met mijn onderzoek! Je deelname is zeer waardevol en word heel erg gewaardeerd. Om te beginnen, wil ik je graag herinneren aan het feit dat dit interview anoniem zal zijn. Echter, zal ik jouw gegevens wel linken pseudoniem in de resultaten.

1. Voor ik er zelf een verzin, wil ik je vragen of je misschien zelf een voorkeur hebt voor een pseudoniem in plaats van jouw daadwerkelijke naam?
2. (Bij het geven van een naam) Wat een mooie naam! Is er een reden dat je deze hebt gekozen? (Bij het niet geven van een naam) Geen probleem! Dan zal ik er later zelf een voor jou verzinnen en deze nog met je bespreken.
3. Dus (naam), zou je jezelf kort kunnen voorstellen en misschien wat over jezelf vertellen?
4. En momenteel woon je in (naam stad), heb jij hier altijd al gewoond?
5. Hoe bevalt het om hier te wonen?
6. Voel je je ook thuis in deze stad?
7. (Als persoon voorheen ergens anders woonde) En waar jij voorheen woonde, was dat heel anders dan waar je nu woont? Op wat voor manier?
8. En als jij je in het buitenland bevindt, en er wordt jou gevraagd waar jij vandaan komt, hoe beantwoord jij deze vraag?
9. Wordt jou vaak gevraagd wat jouw afkomst is? Zo ja, hoe beantwoord jij deze vraag?
10. Dus jij bent een van herkomst Marokkaanse/Turkse/Pakistaanse Nederlander. Wat betekent dit voor jou?
11. Is dit, naar jouw eigen zeggen, een groot gedeelte van jouw identiteit?
12. Daarnaast ben je een jonge Moslimvrouw. Zou je mij wat persoonlijke voorbeelden kunnen geven van wat dat betekent voor jou?
13. Naar jouw eigen mening, is het zijn van een Moslim een groot aspect van jouw identiteit?
14. Beinvloeden deze karakteristieken jouw keuzes, blik op de wereld, en manieren van doen en laten?

Instagram gebruik

15. Zoals je weet ben ik geïnteresseerd in hoe jij, als jonge, niet Westerse, Moslimvrouw in Nederland gebruik maakt van de Instagram app. Zou je mij wat kunnen vertellen over hoe jij de app gebruikt?
16. Hoe lang heb jij de app al?
17. Op welke momenten van de dag gebruik jij Instagram? En waar doe jij dit?
18. Waar gebruik jij Instagram voor?

19. Gebruik jij Instagram op een andere manier dan dat jij andere social media platformen gebruikt? Denk aan – Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, Youtube. Zo ja, op welke manier?
20. Is jouw religieuze identiteit iets dat jij benoemd op jouw account? Zo ja, op welke manieren?
21. Is jouw etnische afkomst iets wat jij benoemd op jouw account? Zo ja, op welke manieren?
22. Vind jij het belangrijk om jouw afkomst en/of religie te benadrukken en te benoemen op jouw Instagram? Zo ja, waarom?
23. Is jouw profiel open of privé?
24. Hoeveel volgers heb jij en hoe veel mensen volg jij?
25. Indien jouw profile privé is – wat beïnvloed jouw keuze om iemands follow-request te accepteren?
26. Indien jouw profiel publiek is – wat beïnvloed jouw keuze om iemands follow-request niet te accepteren?
27. Wat voor accounts volg jij zelf op Instagram? Naasten – Influencers – Eten – Reizen. Heeft dit iets te maken met jouw religieuze of etnische identiteit?
28. Volg jij al jouw vrienden en familie op Instagram?
29. Waar baseer jij jouw keuze op om iemand wel en niet te volgen op Instagram?
30. Zijn er ook accounts die jij vermijd/ echt niet wil volgen?
31. Like/Comment je ook andere foto's en videos?
32. Weet iedereen in jouw omgeving dat jij een Instagram account hebt?
33. Post je ook foto's met vrienden en/of familie op Instagram?
34. Is Instagram voor jou iets dat valt onder jouw "echte leven"?
35. Hoe regelmatig post jij?
36. Gebruik jij 'Instagram-Story'? Zo ja, is er een verschil tussen wat je daarop post en wat je post op je hoofd-profiel?
37. Wanneer jij post, wat voor onderwerpen post je dan over?
38. Post je zowel foto's als video's? Zo ja, post je dan ook hetzelfde soort content op je video's al foto's?
39. Wat zit er achter jouw beslissing om een foto te posten?
40. Vind jij de soort kleding die jij draagt belangrijk bij het posten van een foto? Op wat voor manier?
41. Vind jij de locatie waarin jij je foto's en/of video's maakt belangrijk? Op wat voor manier?
42. Tag je ook locaties? Waarom wel/niet?
43. Als je locaties tagt, doe je dit dan voor elke locatie die je post?
44. Bezoek je wel eens een locatie puur zodat je een foto ervan kan maken en het kan posten op Instagram?
45. Bewerk je je foto's? Wat bewerk je?

46. Zijn er ook dingen die je bewust niet post op Instagram? Zou je hier wat voorbeelden van kunnen geven?
47. Is er ooit iets geweest dat jij hebt gewist van Instagram? Hoe kwam dit?
48. Wat voor posts zijn op jouw profiel het meest populair wanneer het komt op Likes en Comments?
49. Wanneer je door je eigen Instagram scrolt, wat zijn jouw favoriete posts? Hoe komt dit?
50. Over Insta content –

    Bij foto's met vrienden: Je hebt veel leuke foto's met vrienden en vriendinnen! Zijn zij ook Moslim en Marokkaans? Wonen ze ook in …..?

    Bij foto's met familie: Je hebt super veel leuke foto's met je familie! Ben je heel close met ze? Wonen ze ook allemaal in ….?
51. Heb je momenteel een relatie?
52. Mocht je in een relatie zitten, post je dan foto's van je partner op je profiel? Waarom wel/niet?
53. Verandert jouw Instagram gebruik op basis van of je een relatie hebt of niet?
54. Denk je dat de mensen die jouw volgen op Instagram een bepaald idee of beeld hebben van jou? Zo ja, wat denk je dat dit is?
55. Als jij zelf naar jouw Instagram pagina kijkt, is er dan een bepaald beeld dat jij wil scheppen?

Voor en nadelen van Instagram

56. Wat zijn jouw favoriete aspecten van de Instagram app en het gebruik hiervan?
57. Zijn er dingen die jij doet of ervaart via Instagram die jij anders niet zou kunnen ervaren?
58. Heb je wel eens vrienden gemaakt via Instagram?
59. Gebruik je de DM van Instagram regelmatig voor communicatie?
60. Heb je relaties onderhouden via Instagram?
61. Soms lees en/of hoor je dat Instagram een negatief of positief effect heeft op het zelf-vertrouwen van jonge mensen. Hoe ervaar jij dit?
62. Als jij iets hebt gepost, voel je je daar dan op een bepaalde manier bij? Is dit positief, negatief, nerveus, enthousiast of neutraal?
63. Krijg je een bepaald gevoel bij het krijgen van likes/comments of DM's op Instagram?
64. Vind je het belangrijk dat wat jij post likes/comments krijgt?
65. Ben jij van plan Instagram te blijven gebruiken in de nabije toekomst?
66. Heb je ook wel eens negatieve ervaringen gehad met het gebruiken van Instagram? Denk bijvoorbeeld aan het zien of ontvangen van beelden die je liever niet had willen zien of berichten die je niet als prettig ervaart.
67. Heb je er ooit bij stilgestaan om de app te verwijderen? Hoe kwam dit?
68. Heb jij ooit het gevoel gehad dat jouw privacy werd geschonden vanwege het gebruik van Instagram? Op wat voor manier?

69. Is er iets aan de Instagram app dat jou wel eens heeft belemmerd in het doen, krijgen, of bereiken van iets?
70. Als jij de keuze had, is er dan iets wat je zou veranderen aan de Instagram app?
71. Als jij de keuze had, is er dan iets wat je zou veranderen aan de manier waarop mensen het gebruiken?

Appendix C. – Code Book

Code		Short description	Full description	When to use	When not to use
1.	Religious Identity	Identity traits and performances related to religion.	The religious identity of the respondents relates to any performances, activities, and experiences that relate to Islam.	When the respondents mention how they practice, feel, experience, or identify with their religion.	Religion in contexts that do not relate to the identity development process of the respondents.
2.	Ethnic Identity	Identity traits and performances related to ethnicity.	The ethnic identity of the respondents related to any performances, activities, and experiences that relate to their ethnic roots.	When the respondents mention how they practice, feel, experience, or identify with their ethnicity.	Ethnicity in contexts that do not relate to the identity development process of the respondents.
3.	National Identity	Identity traits and performances related to ethnicity.	The Dutch identity of the respondents related to any performances, activities, and experiences that relate to their ethnic roots.	When the respondents mention how they practice, feel, experience, or identify with their nationality.	Nationality in contexts that do not relate to the identity development process of the respondents
4.	Education/ Motivation	Educational, motivational, and inspirational motives for using Instagram	All the motivations that respondents had for using Instagram related to feeling motivated, learning something new, or being inspired. This includes the type of accounts that were followed.	When the respondents mention any motive they had for using Instagram that provided them with a source of inspiration, motivation, knowledge, or education.	When the respondents mentioned how they assume other people are motivated to use Instagram.
5.	Relationship maintenance	Using Instagram to maintain relationships and keep up with others	All the ways in which the respondents use Instagram to keep in contact with others and keep up with the lives of others. This can range from people they actually know (friends/family) to people they do not know (influencers/celebrities).	When the respondents mention how they use Instagram for engagement, communication, or observation.	When respondents mention how they use other platforms for communication or to keep up with others.
6.	Self-expression	All forms of expression on Instagram.	Every way in which respondents express themselves on Instagram – from humour to photography to opinions.	When respondents bring up any form of expression on Instagram.	When respondents mention how other people express themselves on Instagram.
7.	Counter-narratives	Creating and supporting counternarratives	Every way in which respondents perpetuate, support, or create counternarratives to dominant Dutch or general Western society on Instagram.	When respondents bring up how Instagram supports, aids, provides them the opportunity to contribute to such dominant counternarratives.	When respondents bring up dominant Western narratives that they support, perpetuate, or create on Instagram.
8.	Memory tool	Instagram as a visual tool to reflect	Any opportunity Instagram provides	When respondents mention Instagram	When respondents refer to their Instagram

		on memories and special experiences.	respondents to reflect, look back, or relive memories by scrolling through their profiles.	being like a photoalbum, a portfolio of their lives, or a memory tool.	profile as not representative of their live, their experiences and memories.
9.	Privacy concerns	Privacy concerns when using Instagram	Every way in which respondents' privacy has been or is feared to be violated when using Instagram.	When respondents bring up ways in which their privacy already has been breached or ways in which they fear it could be breached whilst using Instagram.	When respondents talk about privacy concerns they have about other apps or networks.
10.	Modesty	Modesty on Instagram	How modesty is practiced and how this translates in the ways in which they do and do not visually present themselves on Instagram.	When respondents mention manners in which they regulate their appearance on Instagram by talking about how they do and do not present themselves on the app in terms of dress.	When respondents mention (im)modesty of other Instagram users.
11.	Likeability	Likeability on Instagram	The pressures of likeability and visibility that emerge from the attention economy and how this influences the Instagram usage or respondents.	Any reference is made to pressure, mainstream beauty/lifestyle standards, or other dominant themes that influence the ways in which users use Instagram.	When pressures of other social networks are brought up.

Appendix D – Interview consent form

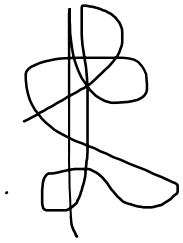
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title and version	The use of Instagram amongst young Muslim women in the Netherlands
Name of Principal Investigator	Lale Mahmudova
Name of Organisation	Erasmus School of History, Culture, and Communication
Purpose of the Study	I would kindly like to ask you to participate in my research paper about the use of Instagram amongst young Muslim women from immigrant backgrounds in the Netherlands. With this project, my aim is to comprehend and share a better understanding within the academic world of the experiences of young Muslim women when they use Instagram.
Procedures	This interview will last approximately 1 hour. You will be asked questions about your religious and cultural identity, and the way in which you use Instagram. An example of a question is: "When using Instagram, what kind of content do you post?" To participate in this interview, you must be at least 18 years old.
Potential and anticipated Risks and Discomforts	There are no obvious physical, legal or economic risks associated with participating in this study. If there are any questions that you do not wish to answer, then you are not obliged to do so in any way. However, if this is the case, please clarify this with the interviewer. Your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to discontinue your participation at any time.
Potential Benefits	The broader goal of this research is to understand the ways in which young Muslim women in the Netherlands articulate, explore, and express their cultural identities on digital media. As a result, you may also experience an enlarged understanding of the socio-cultural opportunities and constraints that can be experienced when using Instagram as a young Muslim woman in the Netherlands.

Sharing the results	The result of your interview will be transcribed and send to you. If there is anything that you would like to see excluded from the data, you can let the interviewer know. In this case, this data will be deleted immediately and not used for the research paper. When the research paper is finished, you will receive a copy, so that you can have a final look and, again, clarify if there is anything that you do not feel comfortable with sharing. This will then be removed from the paper conclusion. The research paper will be shared in the Erasmus University database, available for all Erasmus students to see. In addition, the research paper might be published in an academic article in the future.
Confidentiality	Your personal information and privacy will be protected as far as the Dutch law allows. The paper will not include any personally identifiable information. Moreover, access to your responses is solely provided to trained research staff of the Erasmus university. The results of the interview and of the final study will be made available to you immediately after their completion. Additionally, the interview conducted will require an audio recording. Once the interview is transcribed from the recordings, this will be used as data in the published research paper and might be re-used as parts of research papers and journals in the future. A pseudonym will be used to ensure your anonymity and exclude your personal information from the data. The audio recording and other documents created or collected as part of this study will be stored in a secure location on the researcher's password-protected computer and will be destroyed within ten years of the initiation of the study.
Compensation	As a token of gratitude for your participation, you will receive a thank you card and small gift in the form of chocolate in your mailbox after the interview is conducted.
Right to Withdraw and Questions	Your participation in this research is voluntary and you can decide to withdraw from it at any moment. If you decide to participate in this interview, you may stop participating at any time during the research process. If you make the decision to no longer participate in this study, there will be no penalization or punishment. You are completely free to make this decision on your own terms and no explanation will be required. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the researcher, Lale Mahmudova, at any moment

<table>
<tr><td>Statement of Consent</td><td colspan="2">Below, please be so kind to provide your signature if you have read, understoond, and voluntarily agreed with the terms provided to you in this consent from and the participation in this research study. Please keep in mind that your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years old. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.

This research project has been reviewed and approved by the ESHCC Ethics Review. In case you experience any problems during the research process or if you have any further questions that are not directed at the interviewer, you can contact the Data Protection Officer of Erasmus University, Marlon Domingus, MA (fg@eur.nl)

If you agree to participate, please sign your name below:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Audio recording
(if applicable)</td><td colspan="2">I consent to have my interview audio recorded
☐ yes
☐ no</td></tr>
<tr><td>Secondary use
(if applicable)</td><td colspan="2">I consent to have the anonymised data be used for secondary analysis
☐ yes
☐ no</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Signature and Date</td><td>NAME PARTICIPANT</td><td>NAME PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
Lale Mahmudova</td></tr>
<tr><td>DATE</td><td>SIGNATURE</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>  </td></tr>
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