

**Islamic Veiling in Western Societies: A critical framing analysis of the role of  
online German newspaper comments in the (re)production or challenge of  
Islamophobia**



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## **Declaration**

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## Abstract

Islamic veils are often interpreted as a visible sign of Islam and especially as symbol for some assumed characteristics of the religion, such as oppression of women, fundamentalism or backwardness (Maconald 2006: 8). Thus, the debate about Islamic veiling habits appears suitable to gain insight into the ways that German Media discourses perceive, discuss and approach Islam and Muslims. For this purpose, this thesis investigated, from a critical discourse analytical perspective, the linguistic construction of Islamic veiling in debates among ordinary individuals on online comment sections of Germany's leading news website [www.spiegel-online.de](http://www.spiegel-online.de)

The critical analysis of this discourse sought to identify trends and patterns in the discussions about Islamic veiling practices by assessing which frames occur in what frequency (quantitative analysis) and how these frames are presented and applied in the comments (qualitative analysis). Based on a quantitative and qualitative frame analysis, the study compared common master frames extracted from the international media discourse to frames and arguments which are invoked in comments posted underneath online articles discussing the discourse on Islamic veiling habits in Western and Islamic societies.

This analysis showed that comments that (re)constructed negative views of Islamic veiling typically reflected the master frames of “intolerance”, “fundamentalism”, “oppression of women” and “backwardness”. In contrast, comments that (re)constructed tolerant views of Islamic veiling did not counterframe such master frames – rather, they drew on the German or Western values they invoke as guiding principles for the social coexistence in Europe, thus constructing their tolerance as a reluctant consequence of their democratic values rather than a recognition of the value of cultural pluralism.

Understanding the dynamics of this discourse can be of great value because Germany and other European countries are facing social challenges in terms of integration and its long-term ramifications (Bade 1997: 9; Bommes 1997: 249), not just since the current refugee crisis has occurred. The success of this endeavor is highly dependent on whether and how Germans

welcome and interact with other cultures and religions, especially Muslims, because this will shape the communal life and the public space in Germany.

## Opsomming

Islamitiese bedekking word dikwels geïnterpreteer as ‘n sigbare verskynsel van Islam, en vir al as ‘n simbool vir sommige aanvaarde eienskappe van die geloof, soos die onderdrukking van vroue, fundamentalisme, of agterlikheid. Dus blyk dit of die debat oor Islamitiese bedekkingsgewoontes ‘n gepaste onderwerp is om insig te kry in die maniere waarop Duitsers Islam en Moslems beleef, bespreek en benader. Vir hierdie doel het hierdie tesis uit ‘n Kritiese Diskoers Analitiese perspektief die talige konstruksie van die Islamitiese bedekkingsdebat in die aanlyn kommentaar van gewone individue in die kommentaar afdeling van Duitsland se hoof nuus webblad, [www.spiegel.de](http://www.spiegel.de).

Die kritiese analiese van hierdie diskoers het gemik daarop om tendense en patrone in die diskoers van bedekkingspraktyke te identifiseer deur te kyk na watter raamwerke (“frames”) gebruik word in die artikels, hoe gereeld die raamwerke gebruik word (kwantitatiewe analiese), en hoe hierdie raamwerke geherproduseer word in die individuele kommentaar wat volg op die aanlyn artikels waarin Islamitiese bedekkingsgewoontes in die Westerse samelewing bespreek word (kwalitatiewe analiese).

Die analiese het gewys dat kommentaar wat negatiewe sieninge van Islamitiese bedekking (her)produseer tipies gebruik maak van die meesterraamwerke (master frames) wat in die media gebruik word, insluitend “onverdraagsaamheid”, “onderdrukking van vroue”, en “agterlikheid”. In kontras hiermee het aanlyn kommentaar wat verdraagsame sieninge van Islamitiese bedekking (her)produseer nie sulke raamwerke teestaan (“counterframe”) nie – hulle het eerder verwys na Duitse of Westerse waardes wat hulle raadpleeg as leidende beginsels vir sosiale naasbestaan in Europa, dus konstrueer hulle hulle verdraagsaamheid is ‘n onwillige gevolg van hul demokratiese waardes eerder as ‘n erkenning van die waarde in kulturele pluralisme.

Verstand van die dinamieka van hierdie diskoers kan van groot waarde wees omdat Duitsland en ander Europese lande sosiale uitdagings ervaar in terme van integrasion en die langtermyn gevolge daarvan, nie net sedert die huidige vlugtelingskrisis nie. Die sukses van hierdie poging is hoogs afhanklik op of en hoe Duitsers interakteer met ander kulture en gelowe en hulle verwelkom, vir al Moslems, omdat dit die kommunale lewe en publieke spasie in Duitsland sal beïnvloed.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

- i. *Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority.*
- ii. *The German people therefore acknowledge inviolable and inalienable human rights as the basis of every community, of peace and of justice in the world.*  
(Article 1, Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany)

### 1.1 Introduction

This thesis will investigate, from a critical discourse analytical perspective, the linguistic construction of Islamic veiling in recent German media discourses on news websites. Based on a quantitative and qualitative frame analysis, it will compare common master frames extracted from the international media discourse to frames and arguments which are invoked in comments posted underneath online articles, discussing the discourse on Islamic veiling habits in Western and Islamic societies. Understanding the dynamics of this discourse is of great value because Germany and other European countries are facing social challenges in terms of integration and its long-term ramifications (Bade 1997: 9; Bommes 1997: 249), not just since the current refugee crisis has occurred. The success of this endeavour is highly dependent on whether and how Germans welcome and interact with other cultures and religions, especially Muslims, because this will shape the communal life and the public space in Germany.

Islamic veils are often interpreted as a visible sign for Islam and especially as symbol for some assumed characteristics of the religion, such as oppression of women, fundamentalism or backwardness (MacDonald 2006: 8). Thus, the debate about Islamic veiling habits appears suitable to get an insight into the way how Germans perceive and approach Islam and Muslims. For this purpose, the thesis analyzes the veiling debate among ordinary individuals on online comment sections of Germany's leading news website [www.spiegel-online.de](http://www.spiegel-online.de). Although a variety of different veiling styles exists within different Islamic regions and cultures (Macdonald 2006: 8; Appendix C), the

discourse in Germany mainly focuses on two types of veils. On the one hand, the debate topicalizes the headscarf or the hijab which is a piece of fabric that covers the hair and often neck and shoulders, although different styles can leave these parts uncovered; and on the other hand, discourse participants discuss the social implications of a veil called burqa. The burqa is a blue garment that covers women from head to toe, which includes the face and the eyes. It is predominantly worn in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that the Western discourse often uses the term for any form of face veiling which includes the niqab as well. This veiling style covers the face except the eyes. In summary, it can be said, if the ongoing veiling discourse on the Spiegel website distinguishes between different forms of veils then they differentiate between headscarves and face veiling, but commenters<sup>1</sup> criticize or defend veiling in general.

## **1.2 Aims and research questions**

The critical analysis of this discourse seeks to identify trends and patterns in the discussions about Islamic veiling practices by assessing which frames occur in what frequency (quantitative analysis) and how are these frames presented and applied in the comments (qualitative analysis). This analysis will aim to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What are the characteristic features of the veiling discourse?
- (2) What are the general perceptions of the commenters regarding Islamic veiling habits?
- (3) Which frames are prevalent?
- (4) How has the discourse developed?
- (5) How are these frames employed and presented? What are underlying ideologies?

## **1.3 The debate on Islamic Veiling in Europe and Germany**

The European media and accordingly the German media change their focus areas frequently depending on short-term political events and developments. In 2015 alone, the news coverage attended to three major crises that dominated the news headlines in different cycles. Due to the attack on the satire magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris, the media landscape was filled with the public discourse on terror, the war on terror and the severe threat of terror on European ground. Between the European spring and summer, the dominating news topic was the financial crisis in the Euro-

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, the term “commenters” refers to individuals who respond to content on the internet.

Zone, the instability of the Euro and the lowering “Grexit”. Since early September, the refugee crises, including all side effects, such as the rise of right-wing populist parties and the increase of right radical attacks, have taken over the headlines of European and German media. Nevertheless, the debate about whether and how Islam can be integrated in a Western society has neither lost its relevance nor its controversial and explosive nature. In fact, this debate is reciprocally connected to various other discourses (Friedrich & Schultes 2013), for example the debate about war on terrorism and the refugee crisis. But it is not just a side stream of other prominent discourses. Indeed, the general Islam debate is a substantive discourse which finds expression in an increasing Islamophobia in Germany (Friedrich & Schultes 2013: §16-19). The main question can be specified as whether and how Islamic values are compatible with Western democratic values, which are influenced and shaped by humanistic ideals from the enlightenment. Thus, the general Islam debate encompasses various subtopics and subdivisions like the integration or rejection of Sharia law, gender questions like clothing habits, role of Quran schools for the origin of Islamic terror, Islam as religious school subject and so forth.

This study focuses on one of those streams, namely female clothing habits. In particular, it critically examines and analyzes the discourse on Islamic veiling habits in German. For this purpose, it analyzes several discourse levels from the international over the national to the individual level. The main focus will be on the individual level which will be represented in the form of comments in the comments section underneath online articles of the news website *der Spiegel* which was the first news website of a print magazine and it is also the most widely-read German language news website (Bönisch 2006: 52-53).

The first two levels can be easily covered through an examination of international and German media coverage. It is of great help that over the course of the last fifteen years, scholars from several countries and continents have already conducted detailed research regarding Western media representations of Islamic veiling practices (c.f. Bullock & Gul 2000; Abu-Lughold 2002; Stabile & Kumar 2005; Klaus & Kassel 2005; Schieder 2005; Hess-Lüttich 2008; Jiwani 2009; Byng 2010; Friedrich & Schultes 2013; Rahman 2014; Al-Heijn 2015). The findings of these studies are consistently disillusioning because they reveal a completely negative perception of Islamic veils in any form in the international press as much as in the German press. This applies especially to the

reporting style of the last 15 years. Previous coverage had negative tendencies as well, but it was not as dramatic and extensive as it became during the early years of the new millennium.

In Germany, a number of court proceedings caused the increase of detailed and often highly emotional media coverage on Islamic veiling in general and veiling in government and public institutions in particular. This topic is so prominent that it received its own name – “der Kopftuchstreit” - the so called headscarf-conflict. This ongoing struggle of whether Islamic veiling practices are acceptable in Germany or particularly in public institutions, such as schools, has become more and more fierce and it culminates in the deployment of terminology such as culture struggle, civil culture clash and religious war (Hess-Lüttich 2009: 337).

Another indicator for the intensity of reactions to this topic, can be found in another German online newspaper “die Bild Zeitung”, short the Bild (the picture newspaper). The Bild is Germany’s best-selling tabloid newspaper and can thus be compared to the British Sun. It promotes a mixture of boulevard topics, political articles and socio-cultural information. Furthermore, it is known for its proclivity for simplification and sensationalism. Nevertheless, Bild is one of the most widely read and most influential newspapers in Germany (Klein 2000: 178-180). Hence, the comment section underneath the articles in the online edition [www.bild.de](http://www.bild.de) can provide interesting insights into the thoughts of its readers. In addition to that, the Bild offers emotion buttons underneath selected articles. In those cases where the emotion buttons are set up, they completely replace the comment section. The reader can instead respond to the question: How do you feel about this? One can choose between *Lachen* (laughing), *Weinen* (crying), *Wut* (anger), *Staunen* (gaping) and *Wow* (cf. Appendix A). This way of expressing one’s opinion is received well and used frequently. An article from 14. June 2015 that covered the story of a Muslim junior lawyer, who lost her internship due to her hijab, triggered 2264 hits on the emotion buttons. This is almost three times as much as the amount of comments on the most discussed veiling article from the Spiegel website. It is also noteworthy that 90% of the 2264 hits on the emotion buttons were hits on the “anger” button. Unfortunately, the absence of a comment section which could have provided further explanations renders it impossible to find out what the exact reasons for the anger are. Nevertheless, the general framing of the article seems to suggest that the anger is triggered by the behavior of the lawyer and not by the fact that she lost her internship, since the article reports that she refuses a later offer of having her job back and frames this behavior as a PR stunt in its headline<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Kopftuchstreit nur ein PR-Gag? (Headscarf-conflict just a PR-stunt?) (Bild 14. June 2015)

Although the fact that the exact reasons and motivations behind the emotions cannot be retraced renders the data unsuitable for this analysis, it shows that the topic is highly emotional and that it motivates people to express their opinion publicly. Further, the fact that so many people have such strong feelings about the topic raises other central questions: Why is there such a heated debate? Why has this debate become so prominent over the last fifteen years? Why has this debate grown so fierce only now? In order to understand this, the following paragraphs will give a brief overview of Islam's history in Germany.

#### **1.4 The history of Islam and Migration in Germany**

As Germany has historically been a Christian country, the history of Islam in Germany is essentially a story of migration. Since World War 2, different types of migration have influenced and shaped the development of the German population, economy, society and culture (Bade 1997: 9). This includes the displacement of people of German origin in Eastern Europe (Bade 1997: 12- 14); immigrants for work purposes (Bade 1997: 14-18) as well as asylum seekers and other refugees (Bade 1997: 18-22). The story of Islam starts in 1964 with the so-called recruitment agreement between Germany and Turkey (Bommes 1997: 251). As a consequence of the “Wirtschaftswunder”<sup>2,2</sup> of the 1950s and 1960s in West-Germany, additional labor forces were needed urgently. Thus, the government entered recruitment agreements with several countries throughout those years (Bommes 1997: 251). The people who took this opportunity and moved to Germany were called Gastarbeiter (guest workers) in the public discourse of the republic (Bade 1997: 14), and their status becomes clearly visible, in this label, as guests are supposed to leave again. Thus, there was never a far reaching concept for permanent integration; in fact, it seems like the opposite was the case. The predominantly male guest workers were initially not integrated in the German society, but rather isolated and kept separate in shanties (Bade 1997: 32). This attitude and the complete lack of any strategy would shape the migration and integration processes in the following decades (Bade 1997: 9).

The end of the official recruitment period in 1973 forced the people to make decisions regarding their future residence (Bommes 1997: 258). Their options were either returning to their home country, which some of them have been alienated from over the time, or stay in Germany with its not yet adopted culture. Many people decided to stay and initiated the reunion with their families, which

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<sup>2</sup> The expression “Wirtschaftswunder” (economic miracle) refers to the post-war era in German history which was shaped by the economic prosperity of the middle-class and the focus on bourgeois values and an idyllic world.

means that their families immigrated to Germany in order to live there permanently. The extent to which the guest workers had been isolated from the rest of German society led to a disinterest in integration on both sides and thus to the rise of badly integrated subcultures (Bade 1997: 16-17), especially that of the Turkish/Muslim migrants. This disinterest is apparent in the fact that the first German Islam conference was held in 2006, more than forty years after the first guest workers had entered the country. In keeping with this lack of attempts at integration, Friedrich & Schultes (2013: §45-§50) point out that the media display very high expectations regarding the assimilation of German Muslims as well as their obligation to explicitly declare their affirmation of the German values in contrast to any non-Muslim German immigrants.

This development of a hardly integrated subculture has been reinforced by the fact that Germany has refused to accept that it is an immigration country (Bade 1997: 16) up to the present day. This becomes apparent in many recent developments, including the governing party of Germany, the CDU's (Christian Democratic Union) abandonment of its plan of debating the launch of an immigration law even under the pressure of the current refugee crisis (Spiegel<sup>29</sup> 2015).

A comparison of the situation in Eastern and Western Germany before the reunification in 1989 is necessary as both parts were strictly separated and thus different social dynamics have evolved since the German partition. Just like in West-Germany, the immigrants were kept apart from the German population; in fact their existence was silenced and completely denied by the government (Bade 1997: 17-18). According to Bade (1997: 18), the pursued strategy of marginalization and exclusion can be likened to a "German form of Apartheid" that led to suspicions, mistrust, fear and hatred, as well as the proportionally high xenophobic tendencies in the former East Germany. Although the guest workers there had mainly been from Vietnam and Mozambique (Bade 1997: 17), the general resentments against foreigners erupted openly after the authoritarian rule ended with the downfall of the Eastern German regime in 1989 (Bade 1997: 18).

Due to this historical context of separatism in Germany, Islam is closely and almost exclusively connected to Turkish, Kurdish or Arabic immigrants and their culture in the public consciousness. Neither the knowledge of traditions and cultures of Muslims from other countries, nor the awareness



for the plurality of Islamic civilizations are prevalent. Furthermore, integration problems have been solely explained through the differing religion instead of the structural conditions of Germany's status as a non-immigration country. Accordingly, Islam has been labeled in the public discourse as an intolerant, rigid religion which is incapable of integration (Hess- Lüttich 2009: 331). Any attempt of preserving Islamic habits within a Western society, including all types of Islamic veiling practices of the female body, is thus interpreted as a sign of intolerance on the side of the Muslim citizen. Accordingly, Islam has been apprehended as an unwelcome intruder rather than a guest in German society. These underlying resentments have been evoked and stoked up by the events of the 9/11 terror attacks on the World Trade Center (Hess-Lüttich 2009: 337; Friedrich & Schultes 2013: §21), after which the legal fight for the German-Turkish teacher Fereshta Ludin's right to wear a hijab was immediately categorized by German mass media as a sign of intolerance and a reinvigoration of radical forces (Schieder 2005: 13; Hess-Lüttich 2009: 331). The public sensitivity for this topic appears to have lasted until the present day and has been fueled from time to time by different kinds of incidents on the domestic and national level, such as terror attacks and court proceedings. Given the enormous role of the media in attitude formation and socialization, its contribution to the discourse through its implementation of specific media frames will be the focus of this paper.

### **1.5 Critical Discourse Analysis as Approach to the Veiling Discourse**

According to Gee (2011: 20) the term discourse refers to "language-in-use". Other scholars prefer the definition "discourse as social practices" (Van Dijk, 1995). Both definitions relate to the same phenomenon or conceptualization. In this sense, discourse refers to the fact that language in specific contexts shapes social reality and in return is shaped by social reality (Gee 2011: 20). Critical discourse analysts view discourses as social practices that influence things like status, solidarity, distribution of social goods and power" (Gee 2004: 33). In doing so, they acknowledge that language contributes to the construction of social reality. This construction is typically employed by "dominant social groups [so-called elites] to maintain control over the members of a dominated group in a modern society" (Van Dijk 1995: 22). Accordingly, pursuing critical discourse analysis means "gaining insight into discursive practices that (re)produce dominance" (Mongie 2013: 76). The aim of such insights is not merely to understand the dynamics, but rather "to challenge such reproduction in the interest of empowering dominated groups" (Van Dijk 1995: 24).

The aim of the present study is in accordance with the given definitions of critical discourse analysis

as it will attempt to detect and analyze bias and the exercise of power in the discourse of Islamic veiling habits and its implications for the Islam debate in general. Taking into account that various studies have already assessed the veiling discourse on the macro-level, this research will focus on the micro-level. In particular, it will show what the discourse, exercised by ordinary individuals, looks like. For this purpose, it analyzes online comments on a prominent German news website. This examination intent is to uncover correlations between media master frames and individual master frames. In doing so, the study seeks to create awareness for the implications of the negative and biased framing of Islam, its habits, and traditions and thus it tries to enable a more balanced and less biased discourse in general.

### **1.6 Structure of the Study**

This thesis investigates connections between the editorial discourse on Islamic veiling and the online comments of individual readers in order to get a more comprehensive insight into German attitudes towards Islam in general and veiling in specific, and the ways in which these are discursively realized. For this purpose, the next chapter starts with a detailed overview and summary of the research on media coverage of this topic. This will include a critique of common representations of Muslim women and their veiling practices in the Western media that is based on Said's (1979) concept of Orientalism, a critical discourse analysis of colonialist and neo-imperialist discourses.

Chapter 3 will provide the theoretical framework for the empirical research. Accordingly, it starts with a discussion of the major concepts for this study, followed by a brief presentation and justification of the selected analysis approach. In the subsequent sections, frame analysis and its various components will be illustrated through reference to the discourse on the clothing styles of Muslim women. In this chapter, examples from the international level and the national level, particularly Germany, will be adduced.

This is followed by chapter 4, which outlines the research design. It briefly presents the data corpus and explains the research focus on Spiegel online comments. Additionally, it will discuss the restrictions and limitations of this data. Furthermore, it defines and specifies the research question itself, thereby determining which frames have to be evaluated and how their impact will be measured.

Chapter 5 contains the presentation and evaluation of the actual findings of the empirical analysis.

Firstly, it presents the results of the quantitative analysis of the general Spiegel article corpus, in order to gain a first insight into the general opinion in Germany. Then, it engages with the comments posted in selected comment sections under articles topicalizing the veiling conflict. This is followed by a qualitative analysis of selected comments representing the most common frames in the debate on the comment sections.

Finally, chapter 6 summarizes the thoughts and results of the paper under the socio-cultural background and gives a prospect on further leading research tasks.

## Chapter 2: Representations of Islamic Veiling in Western Media

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the national and international discourse surrounding Islamic headscarves and face veiling in order to sketch the context for the data analysis that is to follow. This overview will include a summary of the dominant ways in which the Canadian, American, German and British media frame the topic, followed by a discussion of Orientalism and Neo-Imperialism as useful frameworks for making sense of such frames.

### 2.1 Introduction

The discourse on Islamic veiling in Western societies is highly controversial and complex because the debate includes the international, national and individual dimensions. On the international level it mainly occurs as part of the war on terrorism agenda. The significance on the national level is a result of recent court rulings in Germany, which forced several federal states to revise their laws regarding the ban of the headscarf. Finally, the impact on the individual level is visible on Facebook pages such as that of the *Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes* (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamification of the West/Occident), or PEGIDA movement for short, which currently has more than 170,000 followers<sup>3</sup>.

The headscarf and the Islamic face veiling in general has received a lot of attention from European countries over the past few years. As mentioned above, Germany has had several court rulings on different judicial and federal levels since 2003. The most recent one is a ruling from the Federal Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht) in March 2015, which declares a ban of the headscarf in governmental institutions as unconstitutional, because it constitutes illegal discrimination against Islam (Bundesverfassungsgericht2015: §1). In addition, in July 2014, the European Court of Human Rights confirmed a French verdict from 2010 which prohibits face veiling in public, as it was aimed at “helping everyone to integrate” (Guardian<sup>1</sup> 2014: §12). In the German ruling the headscarf is recognized as a religious symbol which is protected by the Grundgesetz (the Basic Law which serves as the Constitution in Germany). This ensures religious liberty under GG Art. 3 and Art. 4.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> last update from: 19. October 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Article 3 [Equality before the law]: (1) All persons shall be equal before the law.

Article 4 [Freedom of faith and conscience]: (1) Freedom of faith and of conscience, and freedom to profess a

The French ruling, however, classifies it as a security risk and a cultural tradition which is not compatible with the country's own cultural practices. These practices are defined as social communication habits which heavily rely on facial expression and gesticulation (Guardian<sup>1</sup> 2014: §11). Both communicative tools are reduced, if not completely prevented, through face and body veiling. Of course, headscarves and face veils are two different types of clothing with different implications on communication and perception in society. However, the constant struggle to find a balance between apparently conflicting values in the general veiling debate, such as religious freedom, emancipation and equal rights of men and women, shows the controversy of the debate and the opposing perceptions of the main object. The question arises why a piece of fabric invokes such a heated debate and this has been challenging lawyers, politicians and ordinary citizens for more than a decade now. The German theologian, Schieder (2005: 20), suggests that the headscarf conflict is influenced and shaped through an inter-discursive network of political, judicial, educational, feminist and religious discourses. Consequently, the perception of the headscarf depends strongly on the discursive construction of personal attitudes toward it.

The following paragraphs will form an overview of the existing literature concerning this matter in an attempt to illustrate how the Western mainstream media typically depicts Islamic clothing. This review focuses on academic articles that present data and results over a period of the past twenty years. The time frame is of great importance as it will show the discrepancy in media constructions before and after 9/11. Thus, it can reveal the entanglement and exploitation of different discourses. With the aim of giving a broad overview of the Western media scene, I consulted studies which examined Canadian media representations (Bullock & Gul 2000; Jiwani 2009), US American portrayals (Abu-Lughod 2002; Byng 2010; Rahman 2014; Stabile & Kumar 2005), British reporting (Al-Heijn 2015) as well as German media coverage (Friedrich & Schultes 2013; Klaus & Kassel 2005; Schieder 2005). Due to language constraints, this chapter can only take English and German writings into consideration. Nevertheless, the German studies as well as Al-Heijn's (2015) study represent an Arabic viewpoint, ensuring that it is not merely a summary of Anglophone scholars and that a more diverse perspective is given.

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religious or philosophical creed, shall be inviolable. (2) The undisturbed practice of religion shall be guaranteed. (Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany)

## **2.2 Islamic clothing in Western Media**

The studies that will be discussed in the following sections present media coverage of Muslim women. It will show that these representations always include, if not focus on, the habit of veiling as the main characteristic of Muslim women. Summarizing the results of previous research, this section will show that, despite their “continuing obsession with veiling/unveiling” (Macdonald 2006: 8), mainstream media in many cases neither make use of accurate terminology nor distinguish between the great range of veiling practices, their cultural significance, their historical roots and their practical implications in contemporary societies” (Al-Heijn 2015). The chapter on hand will also use the umbrella term “veil” or “veiling” and not make a further distinction between the range from “the loose head-scarf” to the “all-encompassing burqa” (Macdonald 2006: 8). This is not because it does not acknowledge the diversity, but rather because, in this way, it can show that the view of the mass media is consistently negative and generalizing throughout, while completely ignoring whether they are covering stories about Muslim women in Western societies or women in Islamic countries with their differing clothing styles and different agencies.

### **2.2.1 Canada**

I begin with an insight into the Canadian press. As early as 2000, Bullock and Jafri (2000: 35) identified a clear tendency in the Canadian media that differentiates Muslim women from “so-called first-world women”. This distinction presents Muslim women as “third-world women” whose religion is associated with “backward third-world values”, including “indiscriminate violence and gender oppression”, which clearly oppose modern Canadian values (Bullock & Jafri 2000: 35). This general image is visible in the three main representations that Western media associate with Muslim women: “the harem belly-dancer character, the oppressed Muslim woman and the militant Muslim woman” (Bullock & Jafri 2000: 36). The most widespread portrayal is the passive woman who is overwhelmingly linked to any form of veiling. This image has become the embodiment of oppression and violence (Bullock & Jafri 2000: 37) and thus, leads to a fusion of veiling and anti- West sentiment.

Almost ten years later, Jiwani (2009) confirmed the continuity of this form of reporting in her study of Canadian Media coverage on Afghan women after 2001. The theme of the passive, oppressed woman appears here in the construction of the “innocent victim requiring rescue”

(Jiwani 2009: 729). Again, the veil, in particular the burqa as common female attire in Afghanistan, which Jiwani (2009: 731) calls the “iconic symbol of women’s oppression under Islam”, is identified as the most apparent sign of oppression by the media. Thus, Jiwani’s (2009) study showed that the media constructed Afghan women as victims in urgent need of rescue from their own religion or alternatively, rescue from the men who implement and execute the oppression. It seems like the media endlessly echoes Spivak’s (1988) cynical remark: “white men saving brown women from brown men” (Abu-Lughold 2002: 784).

### **2.2.2 America**

The theme of women in need of rescue can also be found in US American journalism, especially in the aftermath of 9/11, during which various leading American newspapers and magazines have seized upon the idea of the West as “the knight in shining armor” (Rahman 2014: 2) who is appointed to liberate defenseless Muslim women (Stabile & Kumar 2005: 766). This metaphor strongly invokes a division between the superior Western world on the one side and the inferior Islamic world on the other (Rahman 2014: 2). It is obvious that “the Othering” (Rahman 2014: 1) of Islam and Muslim women constructs the modern Western world as “the beacon of civilization” (Stabile & Kumar 2005: 766) in contrast to the supposedly backwards directed or less-developed Eastern societies. The American media qualify this alleged backwardness as incompatible with Western values like “freedom and equality, the separation of religion and politics and Christianity” (Byng, 2014: 116). As is the case in Canada, many American journalists and politicians interpret the veil as the visual sign of the deep divide between these seemingly opposing value systems as “veiling [seems to be] the quintessential sign of women’s unfreedom” (Abu-Lughold 2002: 786). Moreover, the concern was brought up that it actually fosters “division and dislocation” (Byng 2010: 118) and thus, causes “disruption of social harmony” (Byng, 2010: 117) if worn in secularized Western states. In addition, the media environment also perpetuates and reinforces the fear of radicalization and Islamic terrorism (Byng 2010: 120-121) by linking the veil to the image of “the militant Muslim woman”. This phenomenon occurs in reports on Western countries like the USA (Byng, 2010: 121-123) as well as articles regarding Islamic states like Pakistan (Rahman 2014).

It is not surprising that the American media extensively employed all of these narratives in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, justifying the war on terror. However, it is interesting that these representations were already in use before this incisive event and have been prevalent long after 9/11.

Rahman (2014:1) examines *Time* magazine from 1998 to 2002 and finds indications of this illustration of Muslim women as “oppressed and backward [...] who need to be freed” apparent in Islamic veiling practice. She also detects constructions of the veil as signs of radicalization (Byng 2014: 1) in a time period before the attacks on the World Trade Center.

### **2.2.3 Germany**

In Germany, the media also use the construct of a binary dichotomy between Islam and the Christian Western world. Societies in the Middle East are constructed as uncivilized in contrast to Europeans who are seen as “more democratic, more civilized, [and] more industrious” (Klaus & Kassel 2005: 340). Accordingly, Islam is depicted as an underdeveloped and patriarchal religion (Friedrich & Schultes 2013: §33). German reporting in the aftermath of the Afghanistan war narrowly ascribes Muslim women three roles: “the veiled woman” (Klaus & Kassel, 2005: 345), which is synonymous with the oppressed, passive Taliban victim; the political actor, which is interpreted as evidence for the positive result for the Afghanistan war (Klaus & Kassel, 2005: 345); and finally the refugees, which is another construction of the “passive victim [...] [that] begs for our pity and help” (Klaus & Kassel 2005: 346). Once more, the veil is the inherent symbol for “cultural distance, religious fanaticism and a fundamental violation of women’s rights” (Klaus & Kassel 2005: 341). This image is not just propagated by the mainstream media in the international coverage; politicians and religious leaders, like the previous minister of education Annette Schavan and the assembly of protestant bishops classify the headscarf in Germany as a political item that challenges gender equality, Christian Western values and thus represents a threat to national and international peace and security (Klaus & Kassel 2005; Schieder 2005).

### **2.2.4 Great Britain**

The British press is no exception to this seemingly consistent phenomenon. Within its generally negative stereotyping of Islam (Al-Heijn, 2015), the BBC website perpetuates, in many articles, the linkage between hijab and negatively connoted concepts like “backwardness, oppression and [...] terrorism” (Al-Heijn, 2015: 20) thereby emphasizing the apparent oppression and defenselessness of Muslim women, particularly through stressing an “apparent lack of agency” (Al-Heijn, 2015: 40) – in fact, even female suicide bombers are typically depicted as mere tools which are “used, deployed and sent” (Al-Heijn, 2015: 28) in contrast to male suicide bombers who are typically depicted as performing an autonomous act. Consequently, wearing the hijab or any other type of veil is not



depicted as a decision out of self-determination by an empowered Muslim woman – rather, it is constructed as something that is imposed on them (Al-Heijn, 2015: 34). Just like in American media, the veil is seen as “a physical barrier to communication” (Al-Heijn, 2015: 36) and consequently integration. This active and obvious separation can result in radicalization, which could entail a “threat to security” (Al-Heijn, 2015: 36) within Western societies and Islamic states.

### **2.3 Correlation between representations and reality**

The overview of the mainstream media in leading Western countries above was necessary in order to expose their bias in coverage on veiling, Muslim women and Islam in general. The pattern seems to repeat itself over and over again throughout a large number of newspapers, magazines, websites and political speeches in various countries on different continents, and this creates a clear picture of the oppressed and helpless Muslim woman who requires rescue.

The remaining question is whether this picture corresponds with reality or not. As Macdonald (2006: 15) points out, most reporters do not give Muslim women a voice, but rather describe and criticize their assumed plight for them. Once these women get a chance to explain their personal motivations for wearing traditional Islamic clothing, a much more pluralistic and detailed picture emerges which bears little resemblance to the wide-spread “(mis-)representation” (Bullock & Jafri 2000: 35) of the passive, oppressed woman. In fact, many Muslim women choose to wear some form of veil even if there is no structural pressure from outside (Al-Heijn 2015: 34) because there are plenty of social and political reasons “that go beyond religious practice and gender inequality” (Byng 2010: 110). For many Muslim women, covering their head or face means a “fulfillment of their spirituality” (Bullock & Jafri 2000: 37) or a way to express resistance towards “Western cultural pressures for women to be slim and beautiful” (Bullock & Jafri 2000: 37). The burqa in Afghanistan is much more than a violent imposition on women by the Taliban – it has a long tradition in certain Afghan regions as appropriate attire for “good respectable women from strong families who are not forced to make a living selling on the street” (Abu-Lughold 2002: 786). Of course this ideal role of a woman reflects a gendered ideology and a particular view on women, but it does not solely express a way of oppression, as it is often interpreted by the Western media. Even the German Federal Constitutional Court acknowledges that a purely political or misogynistic interpretation of the headscarf does not capture the diverse motivations for veiling comprehensively (Schieder 2005: 12).

Besides the clearly one-sided and negative coverage, Stabile & Kumar (2005: 774) detected and highlighted common media strategies, which completely deny any historical responsibility of the US for women's plight in some Islamic states through their geo-strategic intervention and foreign policies. In particular, it is common practice to demonize the Taliban in Afghanistan. But it is seldom mentioned that the rise of the Taliban was made possible through American support as a result of the fact that the US armed Taliban fighters in order to break the influence of the Soviet Union in this region. Furthermore, the supposedly miserable living conditions of Muslim women did not receive such enormous attention in Western media before the war on terror started (Abu-Lughold 2002; Klaus & Kassel 2005; Stabile & Kumar 2005). "Violation of women's rights had been very low on the agenda of mainstream media before 9/11." (Klaus & Kassel 2005: 340) This is a clear indication for the Western strategy of exploiting the theme of the oppressed Muslim woman in order to justify military interventions (Klaus & Kassel 2005: 340).

Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that Bullock and Jafri (2000) as well as Byng (2014) among others discovered that this generally negative journalism style was already prevalent before the attacks on 9/11. This demonstrates the fact that it did not emerge from the profound shock that the attacks on the World Trade Center have inflicted on the Western world. Therefore, it must have different roots and emerge from another discourse and not just the post 9/11 campaign regarding war on terrorism.

## **2.4 Orientalism as Framework for the Discourse on Islamic Veiling**

Most authors (Bullock & Gul 2000; Jiwani 2009, Abu-Lughold 2002; Byng 2010; Rahman 2014; Stabile & Kumar, 2005; Al-Heijn 2015; Friedrich & Schultes 2013; Klaus & Kassel 2005) invoke Said's Orientalism as the blueprint for this form of media coverage. Therefore, the following section presents and explains the concept, followed by an investigation whether, and how, implications it has for the present discourse on Islamic veiling.

### **2.4.1 The Narrative of the Civilizing Mission**

The word 'Orient' often produces exotic visions of oriental bazaars and belly dancers. It generally refers to the regions of the Middle East. Nevertheless, Said (1979: 1) proposes that the 'Orient' is in fact an invention of European statesmen and intellectuals. However, he points out that it is not just a romantic fantasy from *One Thousand and One Nights*, instead "Orientalism" can be understood as

“a created body of theory and practice [...] suitable for study in the academy, for display in museum, for reconstruction in the colonial office, for theoretical illustration in anthropological, biological, linguistic, racial and historical theses” (Said 1979: 6-7) which was mainly derived from the experience of the colonial powers, Britain and France, with the Orient in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Said 1979: 4). In other words, Orientalism, as it was studied and imagined in Europe, was a European discourse. Discourses do not just reflect reality, instead they shape and create reality (Friedrich & Schultes 2013: §9). Thus, they are powerful tools because they reflect and direct social practices which “have inherently political things like status, solidarity, distribution of social goods and power” (Gee 2004: 33). In accordance with this correlation of discourse and power, Said (1979: 5) proposes that Orientalism is indeed a field of study that describes and prescribes the relationship between the Orient and Occident rather than studying the Orient as an object of interest. The various representations that are created and employed in such a process enable both identity building and demarcation (Friedrich & Schultes 2013: §13) Orientalism, in particular, functioned as a manifestation of “the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European people and cultures” (Said 1979: 7).

The binary structure of this identity concept is saliently expressed through the dichotomy between “‘Us’ and ‘them’ where ‘Us’ is the West and the ‘Other’ is Muslims” (Rahman 2014: 1). On the one side is the developed West or Occident (Stabile & Kumar 2005:770) whose inhabitants are “rational, peaceful, liberal, logical, capable of holding real values [...]” (Said 1979: 49), while the societies in the third world, on the other side, have been characterized as barbaric, primitive and stuck in the “childhood of Mankind” (Hall 1992: 219). This hierarchical construction builds the foundation for another prominent discourse: imperialism. For example, the Orientalist worldview constructed the justification frame for the British occupation of Egypt in the 1880s. “It was the role of the superior Christian race to rescue and liberate Muslim women from Muslim men.” (Stabile & Kumar 2005: 770) This way of thinking makes the so-called “civilizing mission” (Stabile & Kumar 2005: 771) a noble endeavour and covers the exploitative character of imperialism. Moreover, it constructed it as a moral obligation.

#### **2.4.2 Influence on contemporary discourses**

The de-colonization in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the awakening self-confidence of Third

World countries after World War 2 can create the impression that Orientalism is a relic of the bygone epoch of imperialism. Put another way, one could assume that the world has moved “beyond Orientalism” (Rahman 2014: 2). Yet, it is a common phenomenon that discourses do not vanish completely. They often change their shape, integrate new socio-political developments and evolve over time (Hall 1992: 220). Orientalism and imperialism have run through such an evolutionary process. The comparison between the Orientalist/imperialist narrative and the contemporary debate around Islamic veiling immediately exposes the identical features of both discourses. “The deep divide between the West and Islam still exists” (Rahman 2014: 2) and becomes apparent in emblematically overloaded female veiling habits. Muslim women are still considered to be in need of outside rescue (Abu-Lughold 2002: 784). Hence, intervening in internal affairs of other states and violating their sovereignty as well as curtailing constitutional rights like free practice of religion are perceived as ‘just’ acts (Klaus & Kassel 2005: 341). That applies to Muslim societies in Islamic states as well as to Muslim individuals living fully integrated in Western civilizations (Bullock & Jafri 2000). In this context, Western scholars, politicians and other social authorities often forget or ignore the actual needs and wishes of Muslim women over celebrating their own humane merits (Abu-Lughold 2002; Macdonald 2006; Stabile & Kumar 2005).

## **2.5 Limitations of the present literature and research**

The consulted studies predominantly examine mainstream media in the form of newspapers, magazines or websites. All authors chose influential news feeds which have the status of authority in their respective countries. Jiwani (2009) analyses the *Globe and Mail*, which is Canada’s most prominent English-language newspaper; Klaus & Kassel (2005) present Germany’s leading news magazines *Der Spiegel* and *Focus*; Byng (2010) and Rahman (2014) review the major American news providers *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Time* magazine; while Al-Heijn (2015) investigates a well-respected online news feed, the *BBC News* website.

The explicit focus of media coverage as object of their research is what all these studies have in common. Only Al-Heijn (2015) includes survey results of ordinary individuals in his presentation of Western perceptions of Islam. These surveys provide little space for open questions and openly formulated answers. Therefore, the current academic debate lacks a thorough examination of ordinary individuals’ honest opinions. This is of interest as discourses are formed on different discourse levels including education, politics, media, daily life, etc., which influence each other

reciprocally (Friedrich & Schultes 2013: §12). Mainstream media have a salient and very powerful position in our society (Friedrich & Schultes 2013: §12), nevertheless, they also follow the public opinion as they have to meet their audience's requirements in order to survive in the highly competitive news market. It will be interesting to see whether, and how, individuals' opinions reflect the main representations and narratives. One indication here is the programmatic name of PEGIDA. It explicitly uses the term 'Abendland' (Occident) as demarcation to Islam. In doing so, the movement (maybe unintentionally) draws on the historical Orientalism discourse. Thereby, it gets in line with the traditional point of view of "Us" versus "the Other". This serves as evidence for the reciprocal connection of different discourse levels. Accordingly, there is a need for examinations of the individual level.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter illustrated that the controversial discussion about veiling practices of Muslim women is a highly emotional stream in the broader debate about the general compatibility of Islam and Western, democratic values. Furthermore, it was revealed that this debate derives from two other very prominent discourses, namely Orientalism and the so-called civilizing mission. The Western media relies heavily on the well-known and highly emotional constructions in these discourses and deploys them in their (un-)consciously biased coverage on veiling, Muslim women and Islam in general.

This study examines whether, and how ordinary individuals just copy or reflect these representations or if the discourse on the micro-level includes other perspectives as well. A theoretical framework is needed for this analysis. Thus, the following chapter will provide an overview of the techniques and the linguistic devices which are deployed to illustrate veiling.

## Chapter 3: Frame Analysis as Critical Approach to the Discourse on Islamic Veiling

While the previous chapter provided an overview of the content of the discourse on Islamic veiling, this chapter will focus on the theoretical framework for this study. In other words, it presents the linguistic tools for the analysis of online comments and explains why these tools are the most suitable ones for this research. Therefore, the chapter starts with a definition; a look at discourse analysis versus critical discourse analysis, followed by a discussion of frame analysis in general, and finally it applies the theoretical framework to the veiling discourse.

### 3.1 Frame Analysis as Subdivision of (Critical) Discourse Analysis

Gee (2011: 17) points out that the word “discourse” has different meanings in various academic areas even among linguists, different approaches and terminologies are common (Gee 2011: 20). In order to avoid confusion, this paper defines discourse as “language-in-use” (Gee 2011: 19) or as “social practice” (Van Dijk 1995). This definition encompasses every form of language, including random utterances as well as any kind of written or spoken piece of language (Gee 2011: 19). Accordingly, discourse analysts who follow this approach study the use of language in specific contexts. Their focus realm is the reciprocal effect between language and real life situations, meaning that they investigate how language shapes social reality and how social reality shapes language. Discourse analysis, in this sense, can be explained as in the following quote: “context gives meaning to words and words give significance to context” (Gee, 2011: 20). The second part of this definition is of great significance for the present research. It emphasizes that words are not just influenced and interpreted through context because language also builds and constructs reality.

Gee (2011: 32) identifies “seven building tasks” of language, which stand for “seven areas of reality” that are constructed through language, namely *significance*, *practices (activities)*, *identities*, *relationships*, *politics (the distribution of social goods)*, and *connections*. Any example of language-in-use, written or spoken, can thus appoint a certain level of significance to an event, help to categorize social events through culturally recognized practices, build identity roles through particular speaking or writing habits, emphasize and/or create the type of relationship that exists between the language producer and the language receiver, award or deny social goods such as good,

acceptable, inappropriate, normal, questionable, bad, etc. to institutions or persons and finally, connect seemingly unconnected events, ideas or concepts with one another (Gee 2011: 32ff). These seven tasks occur in every piece of language, even though some of them might be more salient than others, depending on the context or the intentions of the sender.

Due to the focus on Western perceptions of Islamic veiling habits, the paper on hand mainly draw upon two of these tasks. As illustrated in the previous chapter, the debate has an inter-discursive nature which encompasses political, judicial, educational, feminist and religious streams (Schieder 2005: 20). These discourses are all centered around the distribution of social goods, such as “what is taken to be normal, right, good, correct, proper, appropriate valuable, the ways thing are, the way things ought to be, high status or low status, like me or not like me” (Gee 2015: 35). The question whether Islamic veiling is acceptable within European societies seizes these points of discussions. Every article or comment regarding this topic conveys its perspective on whether, and how, veiling can be a part of Western civilizations. In particular, it can be viewed as normal and equal to Western clothing styles, which would mean a high status. But it can also be seen as a different and foreign custom, opposing common traditions and values which can, on the one hand lead to a lower rank of status or even a complete rejection of veiling, and on the other hand there will be people who appreciate the diversity and will thus appoint a higher status as well. Considering the definition of critical discourse analysis in the first chapter, the distribution of social goods can be identified as discursive exercise of power and dominance. Accordingly, an analysis of this building task is inherently a critical approach.

The general framing of Islam, as well as the framing of Islamic traditions and customs by Western media, has already been identified as negative in Chapter 2. The attempt to control social goods and subsequently the exercise of power becomes apparent in these media practices. However, the aim of this research is to analyze the perspectives of ordinary individuals regarding their perspective on Islamic veiling, attributing social goods through phrases like “appropriate” versus “inappropriate”, and so forth. Thus, it can be shown whether, and how, those individuals echo and continue this practice of power. In doing so, Van Dijk’s (1995: 22) claim that ordinary individuals can “disregard, reject and disbelieve” conveyed media messages, can be tested.



The other area of interest is what Gee calls connections (201: 35). In order to support the overall judgement or perspective on a discussion topic, speakers or authors construct connections between concepts, ideas or facts that might not inherently be connected. In other words, the language producer uses unconnected aspects and appoints certain meanings to the topic in question. By employing this strategy, speakers and writers “build connections or relevance” (Gee 2011: 35). For example, someone comments on veiling practices and refers to the danger of not knowing who or what is hiding under the veil. Then the author connects two seemingly unrelated topics – veiling and security risks. In this case, the author frames Islamic veils as tools of terrorism. Consequently, he expresses his generally negative perspective through denying positive social goods and insinuating bad motives like disguising terrorist acts. Furthermore, he stresses the high relevance of the matter as he underlines the severe risk to public security. The author achieves this by applying a certain frame, meaning he depicts veils in a particular frame - the terrorist frame.

To sum up, this hypothetical example illustrates that discourses rely heavily on frames in order to present a topic of interest from a distinct perspective. Accordingly, frame analysis seems to be the most expedient and promising theoretical framework for this paper. The following paragraphs briefly present general concepts and definitions, as well as a summary of the current research state of frame analysis.

### **3.2 Frames – General Definitions and Functions**

Scheufele (1999: 105) shows that frame analysis is closely related to the study of impact and effects of mass media. Mass media refers here to print media like books and newspapers, electronic media such as television and, since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the internet. The media’s significance and its role for public opinion building increased tremendously over the last century. Thus, mass media have become more and more important for the construction of social reality since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Scheufele 1999: 105). Considering that there is an enormous amount of information every day in a globalized news system, news producers as well as news recipients need strategies that help them to present and process information in an efficient way. For this purpose, “mass media actively set the frames of reference that readers or viewers use to interpret and discuss public events” (Scheufele 1999: 105). Journalists invoke existing frames in order to provide easily understandable news (Scheufele 1999: 106). Similarly, news producers appoint meaning and significance to certain events and developments by employing specific frames. In this sense, frames serve “to select some aspects of a



perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman in: Vliegenhart 2011: 105). In short, frames help to organize the world and at the same time they are used to construct social reality intentionally or unwittingly, because they are deployed to “turn meaningless and non-recognizable happenings into a discernible event” (Scheufele 1999: 106).

According to Vliegenhart (2011: 105), studies have shown that frames are not exclusively created by journalists, but also “negotiated and contested in people’s discussions and [...] come from other sources than media, i.e. popular wisdom and experiential knowledge”. Thus, Scheufele (1999: 106) distinguishes between media frames and individual frames. On the one hand, there are media frames referring to “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events” (Scheufele 1999: 106), which serves to present these events in a quickly identifiable manner. On the other hand, there are individual frames, which Entman (in: Scheufele 1999: 107) defines as “mentally stored clusters of ideas that guide individuals’ processing of information”. In this case, frames are “schemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large” (Goffman in: Benford & Snow 2000: 614). They serve as guidelines under which any received information will be processed and classified.

The question that arises here is, how strongly and in what way media frames and individual frames are connected. There are several approaches to this subject, depending on whether frames are seen as dependent or independent variables. In short, are media frames dependent on individual frames or vice versa (Scheufele 1999: 107)? Due to the research design, this thesis focuses on individual frames as dependent variables, which leads to the question whether “individual frames are simply replications of media frames” (Scheufele 1999: 108), or, whether “audiences [are in fact] reflecting critically on the frames they are offered” (Vliegenhart & Zoonen 2011: 111). The commentary section underneath an online article presents a highly valuable research object for these questions because of the immediate reactions to the mass media frames.

### **3.3 The Framing Process**

Based on the presumption that media frames are independent variables, the construction and deployment of frames can be understood as an active and intentional process, in which the ‘framer’

actively “promotes a particular version of reality” (Vliegenhart & Zoonen 2011: 107). This framing act takes place in any piece of language because it is impossible to present a highly complex reality comprehensively in one frame. Accordingly, any speaking or writing act reduces and emphasizes reality to a specific aspect. When someone, for example, talks or writes about a student, and introduces the student as Muslim by mentioning that she wears hijab or burqa. This depiction signifies a selection and emphasis of one aspect of reality, because the author emphasizes one part of her story while ignoring others, like for example being a sister or being a straight A student or any other facet of her biography.

This interpretive and active process of “simplifying and condensing aspects of the ‘world out there’” (Benford & Snow 2000: 614) becomes especially apparent in social movement organizations, which aim to activate and mobilize new adherents (Snow et al. 1986: 464) and are driven by missionary goals. The “action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization” (Benford & Snow 2000: 614) are called *collective action frames*. These frames and the framing process are particularly of interest for this study, because the discussion regarding Islamic veiling in the course of the general Islam debate has facilitated the rise of the currently biggest and most prominent social movement organization in Germany – the anti-Islam group PEGIDA. Benford & Snow (2000) have identified three types of frame developments for collective action frames – the discursive process, the strategic process and the contested process.

### **(1) Discursive Process**

This process takes place within the movement communication among activists and supporters. It includes frame articulation and frame amplification of movement values and beliefs (Benford & Snow 2000: 623). In particular, the discursive process refers to the shaping and developing of frames through clarification, augmentation and elevation of movement ideals and aims (Snow et al. 1986: 469). It is mainly conducted by leading movement agents.

### **(2) Strategic Process**

The strategic process aims at mobilization of “potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists” (Snow & Benford in: Benford & Snow 2000: 614). Furthermore, frames serve to “acquire [additional] resources” (Benford & Snow 2000: 624).

Accordingly, frames are developed and deployed for this particular purpose. Here fore , activists employ classic strategies of frame alignment, such as frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension and frame transformation (Benford & Snow 2000: 624).

The term frame bridging describes the process of mobilizing ideologically related groups or individuals, who do not yet have institutional structures. The recruitment happens through “organizational outreach and information diffusion through interpersonal or intergroup networks” (Snow et al. 1986: 468). Contrastingly, frame extension refers to the link between two seemingly unconnected frames, in order to dip into a pool of potential supporters from other activist groups (Benford & Snow 2000: 624; Snow et al. 1986: 467). This happens, for example, when PEGIDA leaders use the oppression frame for veils in order to justify their rejection of Islam (PEGIDA<sup>1</sup>, 2015). By doing this, they try to garner support from feminist movements and create a linkage between Islamophobia and feminism. And finally, frame transformation stands for the adjustment process along the way (Benford & Snow 2000: 625). This adjustment is necessary because movements develop and change over time as well as the situations and the causes of grievances they fight against. Therefore, “new values may have to be planted and nurtured, old meanings or understandings jettisoned, and erroneous beliefs or misframings reframed in order to garner support and secure participants” (Snow et al. 1886: 473). Again, this process can be illustrated through the PEGIDA example. The group adjusted its anti-Islam frames to the very prominent and newsworthy debate about refugees (PEGIDA<sup>3</sup>, 2015). The transformation has secured new participants for the movement and helped it out of its crisis during the European summer months

In summary, the strategic process includes a variety of frame building processes, which are all aimed at recruiting adherents and resources and thus secure the survival of the social movement organization.

### **(3)Contested Process**

Frame researchers agree that the perception of grievances and their proposed solutions are not automatically homogenous. Accordingly, framing is a contested process between diverse movement agents, who are actively participating in the construction of social reality. (Benford & Snow 2000: 625). In addition, these actors are facing several outside challenges, such as “counterframing by movement opponents, bystanders, and the media; frame disputes within movements; and the dialectic

between frames and events” (Benford & Snow 2000: 625). In actual social movement organizations, the internal contentions often happen between rather radical or rather moderate movement wings. Taking PEGIDA as an example, the mentioned contention becomes apparent between moderate supporters and neo-Nazis. The official leaders have recently integrated and emphasized their rejection of violence as a legitimate tool, as an illustration from the official PEGIDA Facebook page shows. The slogan reads:

Nonviolent & united against religious wars & proxy wars on German ground.  
(PEGIDA<sup>2</sup>, 2015)

By doing so, they frame their objectives as rational, sensible and non-radical in order to construct a demarcation between them and radically aligned groups.

### **3.4 Core Framing Tasks**

The abovementioned framing processes are closely and reciprocally connected with a movement’s framing tasks. While those processes refer to the development of frames, framing tasks describe the actual frame design. Therefore, they can be utilized to categorize and classify the frame content. Snow & Benford (1988: 199) identify the following three core tasks: diagnostic task, prognostic task and motivational task.

#### **(1) Diagnostic Task**

The diagnostic task can be employed as part of discursive and contested framing processes. It refers to the diagnosis of a problem or crisis within a society which is considered to be in need of alteration and change (Snow & Benford 1988: 199). This diagnosis “entails problem identification as well as the attribution of blame or causality (Benford 1993: 199). Deploying injustice frames seem to be a common strategy of diagnostic frames (Benford & Snow 2000: 615). These frames highlight the victimization of a certain group. PEGIDA, for example, invokes the injustice frame by talking about the *Islamification* of the Occident. This name-giving frame creates the impression that Europeans are run over and suppressed by Muslims. Beyond that, this frame can also be categorized as a boundary frame and an adversarial frame because it “delineates the boundaries between ‘good’ and ‘evil’” (Benford & Snow 2000: 616). This strategy reminds strongly of the “us versus the rest” frame of the Orientalism narrative, which has been described in the previous chapter.

## **(2) Prognostic Task**

Discursive and contested processes heavily rely on prognostic frames as these frames suggest solutions to the diagnosed problem and propose specific strategies, tactics and targets (Snow & Benford 1988: 201; Benford 1993: 199). In other words, prognostic frames define the techniques which are considered to be the most suitable remedies for the causes of grievance. Most often these ideas correspond with the diagnostic frame. When the roots of a problem are perceived as political roots then the proposed solution is based on political tactics, and, if the causes are considered to be economical or social, then the suggestions aim at economic or social actions and strategies (Snow & Benford 1988: 201). Accordingly, “the prognostic dimension is one of the primary ways in which a movement’s SMO [social movement organization] differ from one another” (Benford & Snow 2000: 617) because the tactics brought forward can vary within a wide range of approaches. Currently, PEGIDA pursues the idea of social protest and resistance through its weekly protest marches, although their protest is missing a clearly formulated goal or vision. From 2003 until 2010 several politicians, parties and provincial governments adopted a legal approach because they identified the headscarf conflict as a political issue, while Muslim women pursued a judicial approach, as they found their civil rights were disregarded by the veiling ban (Hess-Lüttich 2009: 328).

## **(3) Motivational Task**

The previous section about strategic processes explains that there are frames which specifically aim to attract new followers. But sometimes, social movements struggle to find actively engaging supporters. In those cases, diagnostic and prognostic frames might work as consensus mobilization but fail when it comes to action mobilization (Snow & Benford 1988: 202). Thus, movement activists have to develop and deploy “a vocabulary of motive” (Benford 1993: 202), which serves as “a call to arms or rationale for engaging in ameliorative action” (Benford 1993: 199). This vocabulary has to provide audiences with strongly compelling reasons which inspire and mobilize passive bystanders, and convert them into new agents who actively engage on the behalf of the organization. Benford (1993: 201ff) identifies four types of motivational vocabularies: severity, urgency, efficacy, and propriety. A diagnostic frame alone is not necessarily sufficient to mobilize support. The severity and urgency of the problem must be obvious as well. The same applies to the propriety of prognostic frames. Dubious solutions can recoil potential followers. To sum it up, frames have to proffer a “moral imperative” (Snow & Benford 1988: 202) in order to garner new allies for a social movement organization. Furthermore, the efficacy of the task has to be clearly visible. Otherwise the diagnosis

and the severity of a problem can be demotivating and thus lead to resignation instead of mobilization (Benford 1993: 205).

### **3.5 Master Frames**

Most collective action frames are designed for a particular group. They provide the movement “with specific schemes of interpretations that construct the legitimacy and goals” (Swart 1995: 468). However, some frames go beyond this limited scope. They function as “master algorithms” (Benford & Snow 2000: 618), which are inspiring for and deployed by other movements as well. Those frames are called “master frames” (Swart 1995: 468; Benford & Snow 2000: 618). The term serves as a distinction between movement-specific action frames and frames with a scope that is “sufficiently broad in interpretive scope, inclusivity, flexibility, and cultural resonance” (Benford & Snow 2000: 618) to initiate a clustering of social movements. This also applies to central frames of the veiling debate, such as injustice frames, culturally pluralist frames and feminist frames (Benford & Snow 2000: 618). As explained above, the concern for oppressed Muslim women unites left wing activists, feminists and conservative movements.

Swart (1995: 468) criticizes this definition of master frames introduced by Benford & Snow (1992). He illustrates its tautological nature by referring to their explanation that social movement clustering turns a group specific frame into a master frame, while claiming that clustering implies an already existing master frame (Swart 1995: 468). According to Swart, this tautology can be solved through an adjustment of the definition. He suggests that “a master frame is thus defined by its resonance with the cultural, political, or historical milieu in which it emerges rather than its adoption by other social movements” (Swart 1995: 468). This means that a frame evolves into a master frame when it is in accordance with contemporary socio-cultural values. The following discussion of core frames in the veiling debate will apply both approaches, in order to identify the master frames of this discourse.

### **3.6 Master Frames in the International Media**

Chapter 2 has discussed the international discourse about Islamic veiling habits and the news coverage of Western media at length. The reviewed representations or misrepresentations correspond with those linguistic devices that have been defined as frames in this Chapter. The most prominent frames in the media landscape are the frame of women in need of rescue, the oppression frame and

the potential terrorist frame (Bullock & Jafri 2000: 35f). The question that arises now is whether and how those frames resonate with “the cultural, political and historical milieu” (Swart 1995: 468) and if they are deployed by a broader public sphere.

The previous chapter has shown that the depiction of Muslim women wearing any form of veiling often goes hand in hand with the idea that these women need to be rescued from the agents of their oppressive and patriarchic society (Abu-Lughold 2002: 783). This frame has been employed by leftist journalists and magazines in Germany (Hess-Lüttich 2009: 331) as well as conservative, American republicans like George Bush (Abu-Lughold 2002: 784). It clearly resonates with the long-standing ideology of Western supremacy of Western values and culture and its specific stream of Orientalism (Said 1979) deriving from colonialist ideologies. This frame is closely connected to the oppression frame. Covering the female body is perceived as a sign of oppression and discrimination of women which is officially unacceptable and frowned upon in Western societies (Bullock & Jafri 2000: 35). This value originates from the ongoing fight for women’s rights and women’s equality since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Contrastingly, the historical background of the terrorism frame has much more recent roots. The terrorism frame connects Islamic veiling with radicalization and thus with terrorist tendencies (Hess-Lüttich 2009: 332). For instance a wide range of journalists from the left-wing to the right wing of the German media landscape relates to this line of argument (Hess-Lüttich 2009: 331), which emerged after the history changing events of 9/11 (Hess-Lüttich 2009:331). The war on terror became a strong and emotional narrative that has been shaping and affecting foreign policies for more than a decade now.

Unlike Swart (1995), this thesis assumes a reciprocal effect between pre-existing master frames, social movement clustering and socio-cultural context. Based on this assumption, the discussed frames can all be considered master frames.

### **3.7 Master Frames in the German Media**

Hess-Lüttich (2009: 331) identifies the same master frames as well as a few more specific ones in the German media, namely isolation/oppression of women, barrier against integration, Islamic



intolerance/fundamentalism and terrorism. The first frame is one of the most prominent arguments in the German headscarf debate. As mentioned previously, this frame has been used by several social movements and their agents, such as the most prominent German feminist Alice Schwarzer (Hess-Lüttich 2009: 333) or PEGIDA. This broad scope of advocates derives from a historical context. The fight for women's rights and their implementation in Article 3<sup>5</sup> of the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany defines the self-conception and the identity of the German people. As a consequence, the oppression frame can be categorized as a master frame of German media.

The framing of hijab or burqa as barrier against integration arises from the migration debate in Germany (Friedrich & Schultes 2013). The fear of disconnected and detached subcultures is widely spread in the German society (Bade 1997: 16) and finds expression in the rejection of Islamic veiling habits as a visible sign of otherness. Furthermore, Hess-Lüttich (2009) outlines how German media frame the headscarf as a sign of Islamic intolerance. This frame refers to the assumption that Muslims inherently discard democratic values and initiate a suppression process of Christian-Western values within Germany (Hess-Lüttich 2009: 332). The most prominent advocates of this point of view are the PEGIDA followers who express this fear in their name.

### **3.8 Master Frames in Online Comments on the Spiegel Website**

The aim of this thesis is to uncover whether and how the veiling discourse on the individual level continues or reflects these media master frames from the national and international level. For this purpose, the paper examines comments underneath online articles topicalizing the veiling debate. The research focus lies on the identification of what the discourse on the individual level looks like. In order to identify the characteristic features, the following research questions are applied

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<sup>5</sup> Article 3 [Equality before the law]: (2) Men and women shall have equal rights. The state shall promote the actual implementation of equal rights for women and men and take steps to eliminate disadvantages that now exist. (Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany)



- (1) What are the general perceptions of the commenters regarding Islamic veiling habits?
- (2) What frames are prevalent?
- (3) How has the discourse developed?
- (4) How are these frames employed and presented? What are underlying ideologies?

The master frames that have been identified so far are summaries extracted from prominent discourses that have been conducted on editorial pages of news magazines. This means that they are encapsulated definitions written by academic authors. The analyzed comments, however, are much broader and more ambiguous than the precise academic reflections upon the topic. Additionally, the authors sometimes phrase their statements in a way in which their intentions are not clear or these comments can be interpreted as representations of both frames. Therefore, some preliminary considerations are necessary in order to ensure objectivity and reliability in the evaluation and interpretation of the comments. The common master frames, such as terrorism, fundamentalism or oppression, are the subjects of controversial and long standing discourses. The following definitions should be understood as summaries of contemporary stages of these discourses, presenting the quintessence and not the complex discussions.

***Terrorism:*** According to Gerwehr & Hubbard (2007: 87), Laqueur's (1987) definition of terrorism is such a common denominator. The definition refers to "terrorism as the illegitimate or extranormal use of violence against non-combatants to achieve political ends". Accordingly, the term "terrorism" does not describe or explain the dominance or expansion of an ideology, religion or nation. It rather portrays a particular strategy or tactic. In this case, the strategy is not to obtain the immediate execution or implementation of a goal. Acts of terrorism are motivated by the idea to "send a [powerful] message" to an audience, in order to expose grievances (Gerwehr & Hubbard 2007: 87). In short, terrorists seek to spread extreme fear in order to reach long-term goals instead of immediate effects.

***Fundamentalism:*** The general meaning of fundamentalism is "the claim to 'derive political principles from a sacred text'" (Losurdo 2004: 5). In other words "human social norms have to be justified in the eyes of unimpeachable divine law" (Losurdo 2004: 5). In the context of Islamic fundamentalism, it can be concluded that fundamentalists "uphold the sanctity of Sharia" (Losurdo 2004: 5). They demand the right to live according to Sharia, even in countries and regions where it

contradicts the local law and common practices.

***Oppression of women:*** This term is defined broadly and includes any vocabulary expressing any form of degradation of women, such as sexual objectification, deprivation of physical and mental self-determination or words indicating inequality or inferiority of women.

The master frames in German and international media build the basis for the following chapter which gives an overview over the research design. For this purpose, it applies the above discussed master frames in German media in order to explain the classification procedure of frames and master frames in the comments posted underneath veiling articles of the Spiegel website.

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<sup>6</sup> If we sense something in the neighbourhood that suddenly three rather weird looking people moved in, who never show up or who speak arabic or any other language we don't understand. Then you should inform the authorities (Körting in: Friedrich & Schultes 2013).

## Chapter 4: The Research Design

This chapter aims to provide an overview of this study's research design. This will include an overview of the source selected for this study, the Spiegel, an overview of corpus that was constructed from data collected from this source, an overview of the quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis that will be applied to the data collected from the Spiegel, and an overview of the master frames that dominate the data found in the Spiegel's corpus.

### 4.1 The Spiegel Website as Source

Before we go into the details of the corpus structure and its limitations, this paragraph briefly presents the website itself. In October 1994, the Spiegel went online, one day before the American *Time* magazine, and was thus the first online presence of a news magazine worldwide (Bönisch 2006: 53). It has defended and established its dominance in the German speaking media environment as it is the most read and most frequently quoted news producer and thus the leading German news-website on the internet (Bönisch 2006: 52).

The Spiegel has more or less frequently reported on all kinds of events and developments around Islamic veiling over the course of the last twenty years. Since 2008 until August 2015, it has posted more than seventy articles with changing frequency; from one article in 2009 as the lowest number to twenty-two articles in 2010 as the highest quantity of articles. Not every article offers a comment section and can subsequently not be included in the corpus. In total, 28 articles provide such opportunities. The frequency of the responses to those articles varies strongly from the minimum of three comments to the maximum of 780 comments. In total, 5024 comments have been posted in this period. This number goes beyond the quantitative scope of this paper. Thus a selection has been made. In this case it was a quantitative instead of a qualitative decision. In order to gather a representative insight into the most debated discussions, all articles which invoked less than one hundred comments have been excluded from the research. Subsequently, the frequency of comments has been the central selection criteria for this thesis. In accordance with this approach fifteen articles have been chosen. Out of this selection, twenty comments in each comment section have been chosen for a further analysis. This leads to a total amount of 300 comments for the qualitative evaluation. Due to the fact that the Spiegel does not have a 'like' or 're-commenting' option for the individual comments there is no qualitative selection possible, regarding most shared or most provocative items.

In fact, the corpus strictly contains the first twenty comments which appear at the beginning of the comment section underneath each article. This approach produces a random and thus representative data corpus. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that the Spiegel has a censorship policy which represents a challenge for researchers. The so-called Netiquette includes that contents that are considered to be demagoguery, insults or just replications of previous comments will be deleted or will not be released. Verifying the originality of the posted comments as well as tracking the existence of more radical comments becomes very difficult.

#### **4.2 Outline Quantitative Analysis of the Spiegel Corpus**

This section begins with a quantitative analysis of the general Spiegel corpus. Therefore, it counts and compares the reactions to the two differing search words, namely headscarf and burqa. The aim is to identify the stronger stimulus in order to get an impression of which object evokes stronger emotions. Furthermore, it evaluates the relation between reactions and the topicalized incident of the article in order to detect a possible pattern. And finally, the section examines the correlation between the amount of comments and the country focus of the article. All these quantitative approaches aim at finding patterns and relations in order to receive a first insight into the public opinion in Germany.

#### **4.3 Outline Qualitative Frame Analysis of Spiegel Comments**

The quantitative of the overall Spiegel articles and comments is followed by the major objective of this research, the evaluation of ordinary individuals' online comments. Every reaction to the articles will be analyzed in terms of what frames are employed and which framing task is expressed in this way. The analysis of those comments aims at highlighting framing strategies with regards to relations between frames and tasks in terms of quantitative and qualitative observations. It will be interesting to see, if the majority of the readers continue or oppose the identified master frames of international and German mass media.

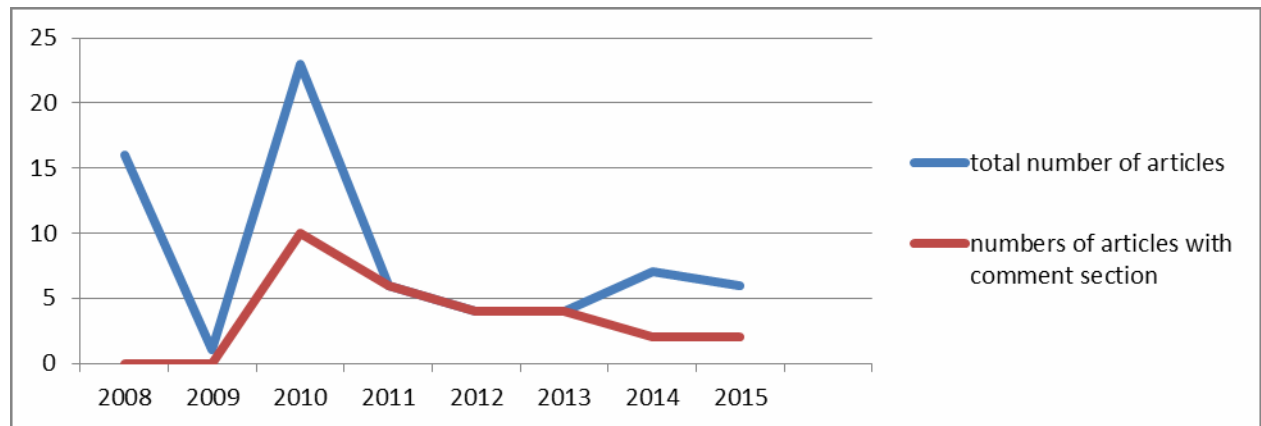
The analysis of the comment section with regards to the above listed frames (see Chapter 3) aims at detecting the most common frames of the veiling conflict on the individual discourse. Furthermore, it will examine the development of these frames from 2010 until 2015. Then it will analyze selected comments representing the most common frames of the veiling discourse among ordinary individuals in Spiegel comment sections with regards to the question how those frames are presented and employed. This qualitative analysis will also illustrate the underlying world views of the commenters.

## Chapter 5: Framing of Islamic Veils in Online Comments

This chapter presents and evaluates the empirical results of the critical discourse analysis regarding the debate on Islamic veiling. Therefore, it starts with the quantitative analysis of the general Spiegel corpus in order to provide a first insight into the public opinion in Germany. Then, it presents the quantitative analysis of the comment section underneath the respective articles. Finally, it concludes with a qualitative analysis of selected comments, representing highly prevalent frames.

### 5.1 Quantitative Analysis of Spiegel Online Articles

Before the chapter resumes with a qualitative frame analysis, it first provides a quantitative overview of the connection between mass media and discourse participation of ordinary individuals. Therefore, it reviews all articles and their comment sections topicalizing Islamic veiling within the selected time period. From 2008 until August 2015, the news website Spiegel published a total of 67 veiling articles, with the frequency varying strongly from year to year. In 2009, the website produced only one veiling article, while in the following year 23 veiling articles have been published. This has remained the highest number since then. In the years 2012 and 2013, the number dropped to four veiling articles per year until it increased in 2014 again. For 2015, data can only be provided until August, although it is likely that the number keeps rising throughout the last months of the year. Even without verification of this assumption, the existing data shows that the interest in the veiling discourse has increased again over the course of the last 18 months. The rise can be traced back to new or far reaching developments in the respective years, like court rulings and their impact on public life. The relative low number of articles should not be misinterpreted as general disappearance of the discourse. Instead it is an indicator for a less emotional and rather rational approach of the Spiegel website. In other words, it seems like Spiegel authors focus on important severe developments instead of tabloids as, for example, the Bild website, which has published 18 articles between February and July 2015. The Spiegel website mostly publishes articles when new court rulings and laws are adopted and implemented. In contrast, the Bild website reports about daily life situations of individual persons.



**Figure 1: Total numbers of veiling articles and comment sections from 2008 until 2015**

It has to be mentioned that not every article provides a comment section, as illustrated in the graph above. The first comment sections have been located in 2010. There is no explanation why there are no comments before that day. Either they have not been archived or the website did not have such a facility. There is also no explanation in the following years why certain articles offer comment sections and others not. With regards to the research, it is necessary to say that only articles with the possibility to comment have been taken into account for any further analysis.

Based on these considerations, the data for the corpus has been gathered through the search terms “Burka” and “Kopftuch” (burqa and headscarf). Both terms have led to the same number of articles. None of them overlapped which means that each article either focused on an incident regarding burqas or represented news topicalizing headscarves. This equal distribution allows a significant and reliable conclusion regarding the question which search term and thus which object triggers a more heated debate in the Spiegel corpus. “Burqa” appears to be the more powerful emotive term because it has an average response volume of 242 comments, which is more than double the reactions the term “headscarf” evokes. Using this term, 117 responses could be found on average. These findings are interesting because they are disproportionate to the actual appearance of burqas in Western European countries - in fact, the burqa is worn by a tiny majority in Europe. Only 2000 Muslim women wear a burqa in France where the biggest Muslim population in Europe lives (Spiegel<sup>12</sup> 2011). According to estimations, the number is even lower in Belgium, where approximately 270 women wear a burqa (Spiegel<sup>15</sup>). This group represents less than 3% of the population.

The next step is a classification of the general framing in each article in order to detect a possible

correlation between the representations of the article and the reaction of the readers. Out of the twenty eight articles with a comment section, 67% have been identified as neutral or contradictory. This is surprising, considering the results of previous studies of media coverage (Al-Heijn 2015; Bullock & Jafri 2000) as, for example, the research by Klaus & Kassel (2005: 344-349). This exposed a generally biased reporting style in the German news magazine *Der Spiegel*, the print version of the website. The contrasting representations could stem from the different structures and qualities. While the print magazine features “more commentaries, in-depth articles and background information” (Klaus & Kassel 2005: 344), the news website provides short but informative news articles. In addition to that, Bönisch (2006: 8) mentions the fast reporting that is always up-to-date. The neutrality of this news coverage on the online website is achieved through two strategies. Either the author purely presents facts, like the outcome of a court ruling (Spiegel<sup>28</sup> 2015); or the author pursues a balanced reporting style which provides a platform for both advocates for veiling and against veiling (Spiegel<sup>17</sup> 2012). The brief summary of the article regarding the burqa ban in Belgium (Appendix B) serves as an example for the latter. The article equally presents the major argument of the veiling ban advocates, which is the oppression of women, and the major argument of the ban opponents, which is the legal discrimination of Islam as a religion (Spiegel<sup>14</sup> 2011).

The balanced reporting style results in an overall contradictory framing because the major arguments for and against a veiling ban are presented equally. Therefore, the contradicting frames of both factions are present and the article does not depict the topic in an entirely neutral/unbiased manner. In contrast, one of the articles regarding France’s burqa ban constructs a strongly negative image of Islamic veiling by solely providing a platform for ban advocates and their arguments (Spiegel<sup>4</sup> 2010). Thus, from now on it will be referred to the neutral/contradictory framing.

21% of the online articles have been categorized as negative, although typically it is not the author himself who takes a clear stand in the debate. Rather, the overall negative impression results from a one-sided reporting style, as is the case in articles in which the author exclusively presents the opinion of veiling opponents that often employ the classical master frames, such as oppression of women, fundamentalist ideology, backwardness and/or terrorism (Spiegel<sup>14</sup> 2011). Finally, 10% of the articles have an overall positive framing pattern, although this classification can be misleading. Only one of these articles presents the veiling habit as a justified and acceptable religious practice, by telling the story of a young Turkish student who wears hijab and is looking forward to the end of the

headscarf ban in Turkey in 2010 (Spiegel<sup>7</sup> 2010). Her reasons for covering her head are accepted as spiritual and non-political and thus a matter of human rights. This framing approach is an exception. The other articles from this category do not address the headscarf or the burqa itself. Instead, they focus on the constitutional implications of a headscarf ban, which are constructed as negative (Spiegel<sup>19</sup> 2012; Spiegel<sup>5</sup> 2010). Despite the covering of positive frames, these journalists neither acknowledge a spiritual value of Islamic veils, nor do they engage in depth with reasons for veiling. In most cases, they rather emphasize the general validity of democratic and constitutional rights which ensure religious liberty. Thus, a headscarf ban would signify a discrimination of Islam (Spiegel<sup>3</sup> 2010).

The question that arises is whether there is a significant difference between articles with an overall positive, neutral/contradictory or negative framing. In other words, is there an observable correlation between general framing and its resonance? This would mean that articles with an overall negative framing evoke a different number of reactions than articles with an overall positive or neutral/contradictory framing. The analysis regarding this relation has shown that neutral/contradictory frames reach an average response volume of 143 comments, which is less than half of the comments the negative articles receive on average (336 comments). The data regarding the positive articles must be observed in more detail again. Due to the small number of articles with an overall positive framing, three in total, the result is slightly distorted. One article, the only one with a strong individual perspective (Spiegel<sup>7</sup> 2010), evoked 630 comments. The other two articles' response volumes fall far behind this sum, with an average of 139 comments. This figure is much closer to the result of the neutral articles than the negative articles. Accordingly, there are strong indicators for the conclusion that negative frames provoke much stronger reactions than other frames.

Another salient observation is that the search term "burqa" evokes a higher number of reactions than the search term "headscarf", particularly more than twice the number of comments compared to the search word "headscarf". One possible explanation for this result is the object itself. The appearance of the burqa is much more striking than a headscarf as it covers the body, the head and the face. An Afghan burqa even conceals the eyes. The headscarf is probably more accepted as it blends in and many young women wear a hijab that is adjusted to Western fashion styles. Furthermore, the headscarf is much more common among Muslim women in Western countries and thus people might be more familiar and used to it. Confusion between the two items is rather unlikely, because the articles



provide pictures at the top of the site. In addition to that, there is an observable correlation between negatively framed articles and the search term. Almost all negative articles topicalize the burqa, which has already been identified as a strong emotive word as it evokes ideas of oppression. The only exception is an article regarding a Saudi Arabian Judoka which focuses on the headscarf conflict (Spiegel<sup>20</sup> 2012). It can be concluded that burqas are often framed notably negative. This reinforces the high number of reactions towards the key word burqa.

In summary, it can be said that news coverage that mainly conveys negative frames and topicalizes more controversial veiling styles, like the burqa, evokes a higher number of reactions. The question that arises now is how do the readers react? Up to this point, the analysis only showed the triggers for an extensive debate. Hereafter, the aim will be to get an insight into the content of the comments.

## 5.2 Quantitative Analysis of Master Frames and Frame Development Over Time in Comments

In order to receive a deeper insight into the comment structure, it is necessary to identify and categorize the most common frames that have been invoked by the commenters. The following paragraphs serve as a definition and explanation of the detected frames in Spiegel online comments.

**Appraisal of Western values:** Some commenters quote democratic values in order to support their argument. They express their pride of major democratic achievements in a great variety. One of the commenters praises the law for equal treatment of religions in the Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany as an important pillar for the German state

Partly correct, but the wrong tendency. Luckily, the terms “Christian“ or “Jewish“ or any other religion do not appear in Our Basic Law. [...] (Spiegel<sup>28</sup> 2015: #4)

Another reader, *pulegon*, refers to the slogan from the French Revolution in order to emphasize the implications of a veiling ban:

And this is how the full-face veil becomes forbidden, and the woman who wears it because of her faith will be moved from her transportable jail into a domestic static prison. What a great act of integration. This is how you keep up the values of a liberal democratic nation. Liberty, Equality, Fraternity. Vive la France! (Spiegel<sup>4</sup> 2010: #4)

It is remarkable that this strategy is employed by readers advocating and opposing a veil ban. For example, *pulegon* criticizes the French burqa ban as a betrayal of liberal values. And therefore, he/she employs the Western values in order to object to the French law (Spiegel<sup>4</sup> 2010: #4); while

*spiegelmaus* speaks in high terms of freedom and maturity and puts this into contrast to authoritarian ideologies like Islam:

On the subject: If someone is young, educated, even has studied, has seen the world, has become acquainted with our Western society and its values, and then feels naked and ashamed in public without a headscarf; then this person has a problem: the problem of internalizing taboos and the authoritarian society which prescribes them. Who thinks it is necessary to tie oneself with chains in order to be free because everybody is wearing chains and because one is on the “right side”, then this person is weak and has never learned to be mature. This piousness, ostentatiously and obtrusively extraverted, serves obviously as a protection from the unknown, which is expecting you when you venture a step towards freedom. It [the piousness] is a prison of immaturity: This is the price which has to be paid for the stabilization of the self-esteem, not through self-confidence but through conformity with the pious majority. And finally, the headscarf signals: I dissociate myself from the bad habits of the West.

(Spiegel<sup>7</sup> 2010: #19)

***Isolation and oppression of Muslim women:*** All comments that classify veiling as a sign of oppression or isolation of Muslim women, as well as all the comments that characterize Islam as an anti-feminist or patriarchic religion have been listed in this category. This perception is sometimes expressed in drastic words like in the comment of *highn00n*.

Finally!! Germany should finally commit to democratic values and follow France’s example. That applies generally to all religious signs, regardless the individual manifestations. I recently saw a Muslim couple. The woman walked at least ten steps behind the man and was completely veiled. This kind of discrimination cannot be approved here. I don’t want to see these people here. Religion is everybody’s private matter. But the habit of neutralizing women with a full-body covering in public is perverted.

(Spiegel<sup>1</sup> 2010: #18)

It should be kept in mind that this is a personal conclusion from a short moment without any verification of the actual relationship. Although *highn00n* does not know if this is just a coincidence or if this is a general rule in the couple’s relationship, he/she classifies the incident as “abartig” (abnormal, perverted, disgusting), which illustrates the drastic feelings and the disposition to generalize Islam as misogynistic. Another common representation of veils, or especially burqas, is the interpretation as moving jails (Spiegel<sup>4</sup> 2010: #4). Oppression and heteronomy become clearly visible in this metaphor. Furthermore, all comments invoking emancipatory frames are included in this list, like the opinion of *arinari* who calls the veiling practice “atrociousness to emancipation”:

Brave and consequent. Finally an explicit word against this unbelievable disguise of humans, which denies any individual personality. An atrociousness with regards to emancipation. I wonder what the veiling advocates (The Greens and Amnesty I.) want to achieve. Are they not fighting for human rights? And defending those jails? I cannot believe it.

(Spiegel<sup>3</sup>

2010: #3)

**Islamic Intolerance and Fundamentalism:** The definition of this argument is based on the explanation of fundamentalism in a previous chapter. It includes all comments that refer to Islam as an intolerant and rigid religion or ideology which seeks to impose its own rules on other societies and institutions. The comment from *huggi* illustrates this phenomenon. He/She comments on an article, discussing the attempt of a Saudi Arabian female judoka to obtain the permission to participate in the Olympic Games with a headscarf:

... one could come up with the idea only to register for a competition, if the person knows and accepts the rules. I would not be surprised, if it will be discussed to implement hijab leagues for all competitions for females, Miss Roth [German politician of the left party die Grünen], please assume this task. (Spiegel<sup>20</sup> 2012: #10)

The reader predicts that this single permission will lead to the launch of hijab leagues in all female competitions. This example depicts Muslims as adamant people who insist on their own rules and are not willing to adapt to other norms. In doing so, it transfers the intolerance/fundamentalism frame to a real life situation and articulates in colloquial language.

**Terrorism:** All comments referring to the terrorism frame have been incorporated in this list. This includes comments which use the word terrorism frankly as well as comments implying it indirectly like *meinefresse*'s post, which warns that an objection to Muslim values can result in assassinations. In doing so, he/she expresses the inherent threat that can be expected from Islam:

It would be nice, if Muslims would finally show a sign of tolerance. But as soon as someone insults Mohamed, one has to expect to be marked for assassination. So, why show excessive tolerance towards religions, which are intolerant themselves? Integration takes more than just a European passport. (Spiegel<sup>12</sup> 2011: #9).

Furthermore, this post illustrates that terrorism and intolerance are perceived as closely connected frames.

**Backwardness:** The backwardness frame is often expressed through words like “backwards”, “ultra-conservative”, or “peasant society”, as the following quotes show:

The lesser evil... She [a Saudi Arabian judoka who had qualified for the Olympic Games] looks like a man! In those cases, it should be allowed to wear headscarves, or in some cases even full-face veils. That would be the lesser evil and everybody would win – the female Muslim athletes, their ultra-conservative and backwards families – and the audience. (Spiegel<sup>20</sup> 2012: #8)

The Turkish government resembles the German government more and more, one

politician dreams of a modern Turkey, with education for everybody, while the president wants to return to a peasant society [...] (Spiegel<sup>6</sup> 2010: #13)

One commenter pursues a very subtle but powerful strategy. Heinoon1300 begins with the acknowledgement of cultural variety expressed through clothing styles. But the examples which are employed imply that Islamic veils are a sign for a primitive culture:

The feather for the Native American, leopards for the blacks and my jeans for me. Delicate issue, what happens when she does it voluntarily? It is respectable that a country enforces this because the ban on wearing face covering is enacted in most EU states. However it should be executed in whole Europe. Otherwise France gets rid of its problem and Germany will sink [...] (Spiegel<sup>1</sup> 2010: #6)

Especially in the first part of the comment, the author uses lively images which evoke associations of uncivilized savages, particularly feathers for Native Americans and leopards for blacks. Probably without even knowing it, he applies Hall's metaphor and implies that Islam, just like other cultures, is still stuck in the "childhood of Mankind" (Hall 1992: 219); while the modern Western citizen, wearing jeans, has progressed to a more civilized stage of Mankind.

**Secularization:** Many commenters demand a stronger secularization in Germany. All comments suggesting the ban of any religious sign in schools, universities and government institutions are included in this category. In many cases, it is combined with a general religion criticism. Thus, they do not particularly demonize Islam, like the following quote illustrates:

From a pedagogic point of view, every teacher should avoid any signs, no matter if Muslim, catholic, Buddhist etcetera. [They should] influence nobody, not even indirectly; especially no minors whose decision capability is not yet mature. I am for a rigid ban of any display of religion by any legal guardian. And this makes me doubt the common sense and the fair democratic mentality of these judges [referring to the judges who declared several German headscarf bans as unconstitutional]. (Spiegel<sup>27</sup> 2015: #20)

**Islamophobia/Xenophobia:** Every comment that interprets the veiling ban as a rejection or fear of foreign cultures invokes the Islamophobia or xenophobia frame. In those cases the author accuses veiling opponents of being intolerant towards foreign religions, cultures and their habits.

Ambivalent action [directed at the project of two French women who walked through Paris wearing burqas and miniskirts]. As political manifestation worthy of discussion, as an art project very successful. Especially because it reduces women to the - assumed - desires of men. Worthy of discussion because the reasons for a burqa ban are various: On the left: the female oppression and on the right – (railing against the "multi-culti lie") the rejection of the foreign. And this is the reason why the project is appropriate. If it was a Western fashion style nobody would object as long as the legs are visible, see above.

(Spiegel<sup>5</sup> 2010: #18)

***Austerity of religion versus equal treatment for all religions:*** These two arguments seem to be very similar. Nevertheless, there is a slight difference. Authors who emphasize that a veiling ban constitutes a restriction to the fundamental right of free practice of religion argue within a religious dimension, like the following comment from *nookiex6*:

All previous comments have one thing in common... They show that the average German has hardly any respect for other cultures. How about free practice of religion? After all, it is one of our fundamental rights. And because we are Germans, we should defend those rights, even when other countries have other rules. Two negative actions will never result in a positive outcome.  
(Spiegel<sup>7</sup>

2010: #9).

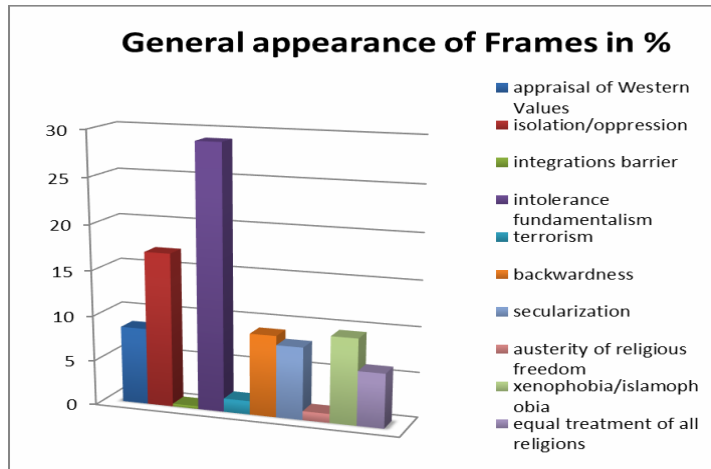
Contrastingly, readers who demand an equal treatment of all religions do not engage with the inherent value of religious practices. Instead, they focus on the “all or nothing argument”:

Who would have thought that! The woman had argued that the headscarf ban contravenes the principle of equal treatment because wearing a [catholic] habit or a Jewish kipa was not considered as religious testimony. I mean, that a court in Germany follows this rationale? Either everybody or nobody! In my humble opinion, religious testimonies have no place in public space. Religion is a private matter. That’s what they have ‘clubs’ for. And who complains about Muslims praying via loudspeakers, has to abolish church bells as well. (Spiegel<sup>27</sup> 2015: #19)

Contrastingly, in the quote from *eskimoser*, it becomes apparent that the commenter insists on the equal exclusion or inclusion of all religious symbols and habits. Accordingly, the concern is not the protection of the fundamental right regarding exercising religion, but rather the non- discrimination of a single religion or ethnical group. Furthermore, *eskimoser* uses this post to postulate his conviction of secularization.

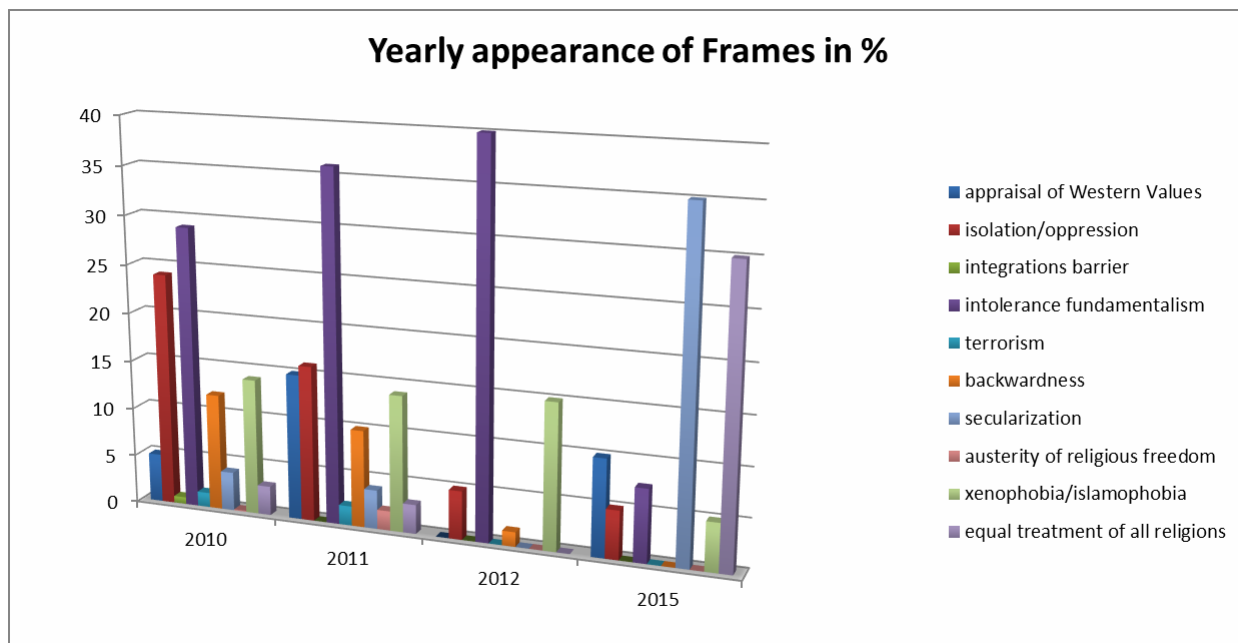
The graph below shows in percentage how often the respective frames have been invoked in the online comments. It illustrates that out of all the prevalent frames and arguments, the intolerance/fundamentalism frame is the most common one. 29% of the commenters frame Islam as an adamant religion that forces its own norms, habits and values upon other cultures and states. The second most common argument follows with a great distance: 17% of all comments refer to the Islamic veil is an indicator for oppression and isolation of Muslim women.

There is another gap to the next prominent frame, which, remarkably, is one of the frames that defend or at least accept veiling practices: 9,5% of the commenters accuse veiling opponents of being xenophobic or particularly Islamophobic. A few other arguments reach a similar frequency, namely backwardness (9%), appraisal of Western values (8,5%), and secularization (8%). It is interesting that arguments for and against veiling in Western societies are equally distributed here. This group is followed by another rather positive framing strategy, namely the demand for equal treatment of all religions (6%). At the bottom of the ranking is a group of frames that have been invoked by only 1% of the commenters or less, namely terrorism (1,5%), austerity of religious freedom (1%) and integration barrier (1%).



of the commenters or less, namely terrorism (1,5%), austerity of religious freedom (1%) and integration barrier (1%). Again, positive and negative arguments appear in similar frequencies. Nevertheless, an overall tendency to negative frames can be detected because the two most prominent arguments in the veiling debate are negative.

**Figure 2: Overall appearance of frames in online comments in percentage**



**Figure 3: Yearly appearance of frames in online comments in percentage**

A look at the frame development in comments on the Spiegel website over the last five years, which

is illustrated in the chart above, contradicts this overall negative tendency. The perception that Islam is an intolerant and rigid religion dominates all comments from 2010 until 2012, but in 2015 there is a shift in the discourse towards more tolerant attitudes. This is surprising considering that the PEGIDA movement was founded during 2014 and received high media coverage ever since, indicating that the general fear of the Islamification of Germany is still prevalent. Recently however, anti-Islam opinions do not appear in Spiegel comments. The fact that the veiling debate has not sparked a heated debate throughout 2013 and 2014 reinforces the impression that the readers of Spiegel online either changed their mind or that a particular group of discourse participants has moved to other websites. An indicator for the latter assumption can be found in some comments. For example, one author uses the expression “Nazikeule” (Nazi-club or Nazi- bat).

[...] I find this extremely striking: in Turkey, there had been a headscarf ban in public institutions for a very long time, which is only now being macerated by the Islamism loyal government (Erdogan etc.). Here in Germany, you immediately get hit by the Nazi-bat, if you demand a headscarf ban. Belgium and France set an example how it is supposed to be done. (Spiegel<sup>6</sup> 2010: #14)

The word “Nazikeule” is invoked by ban advocates and general Islam critics. They use it as a collective term for any accusation brought forward by ban opponents, which classifies the arguments from ban advocates as xenophobic or right-radical thoughts. Accordingly, the term “Nazikeule” is employed as a counterargument to the xenophobia/Islamophobia accusation brought forward by ban opponents. It is often deployed before anybody has even brought up the xenophobia accusation. Thus, it can be classified as a preventive defense strategy that seeks to ensure the rationality and propriety of the argument through exaggeration of the most frequent counterargument, i.e. xenophobia/Islamophobia. This proves that people who are critical of Islam are already highly alert and aware that there are contradictory opinions prevalent. They do not feel understood by opposing commenters which could be a reason for the move to other platforms like the PEGIDA Facebook page, where they can meet like-minded people.

Another indicator for the abovementioned phenomenon of the dividing discourse is the development of the secularization argument. From 2010 until 2012, it appears in less than 5% of the arguments, but by 2015 it is the most prevalent frame, mentioned in more than 30% of the comments. The different development of both frames illustrates that less Islam critics participate in the discussions in the Spiegel comment section, although the topic and anti-Islamic attitudes have not vanished in general, as the PEGIDA Facebook page and the extensive Bild coverage prove.



The oppression frame underwent a similar development. While in 2010 24% of the comments referred to the veils as a symbol or an indicator for the oppression of women; in 2015, the numbers dropped to only 5%. This shows that the frequency has constantly decreased over the years. One reason might be that more people are convinced that Muslim women choose this clothing style voluntarily. Another possible reason is the growing awareness that a legal ban is restrictive and represents a contradiction to the liberal-democratic order, which is expressed in several comments as follows:

It is pretty weird. .... that the exercise of your religion or rather the rituals are forbidden in a liberal democracy. (Spiegel<sup>27</sup> 2015: #5)

Ahead of time? Well, it was clear beforehand, that the law [implementing the headscarf ban] was discriminating. Tough luck! But it will be interesting to see, if the Muslim women who wear headscarves will claim for damage. (Spiegel<sup>27</sup> 2015: #15)

Other explanations are also conceivable. The articles in 2015 report on the veiling ban in German schools and other government institutions. In Germany, this is mainly associated with the headscarf and not with the burqa as in the French court rulings. German media use the terms “headscarf ban” (Spiegel<sup>28</sup> 2015) or “headscarf conflict” (Hess-Lüttich 2009: 331). The quantitative analysis in the previous section has already shown that the term headscarf generally provokes fewer reactions. This data could suggest that the word headscarf also motivates less anti- Islam critics to comment. A comparison with the results from 2012 disproves this conclusion. The object itself cannot be the reason because the article in 2012, featuring a specific headscarf conflict, caused a high number of comments employing the intolerance frame.

Thus, the data suggests that another explanation is more plausible. Discourse participants separate more and more because they rather join websites and platforms where they find like-minded commenters. The PEGIDA Facebook page can be classified as such an “advocacy/activist domain, where discussion is framed by organizations with generally shared perceptions, values and goals” (Dahlgren 2005:153). In contrast, the comment section of news websites falls into the category of “civic forums, where views are exchanged among citizens and deliberation can take place” (Dahlgren 2005:153). Hence, the latter domain is also utilized as a platform for a variety of other discourses. Commenters share their opinion and frustration regarding topics which are only loosely or not at all connected to the debate on veiling, such as posts about general abolition of religion classes,



denigration of politicians or rectification and belittlement of other readers.

Interestingly, 31% of the posts do not contain any of the identified master frames, and analysis shows that the commenters rely on a wide range of other discourses in those cases. This section briefly presents some of the recurrent frames, namely the general question whether religion classes should be taught in school; factual discussions regarding the object topicalized in the article or complaints about politicians who are depicted as inactive and/or useless, which can even lead to insults.

In 2015, the Spiegel readers use the veiling articles as an opportunity to engage in the general debate about the question whether religion should be a school subject or not. The close connection to the dominant secularization frame is apparent in the comment of *astsaft* which states that the strict separation of religion and school is important to him/her:

It would be more important to me that religion and school are kept separate. Especially religion classes leave a nasty taste. Although I have the possibility to release my daughter from this duty, but the given alternatives are a) she keeps herself busy in the side room or b) she stays in the class but she does not participate in the lesson and doesn't get marked either. The content of religion classes is already horrible. It is constructed way too Christian and missionizing. I don't like it at all! Despite of this, it doesn't matter to me what clothing teachers wear. (Spiegel<sup>27</sup> 2015: #7)

The comment section underneath an article from 2012 has become the platform for an objective discussion about the implications of veiling for judo fights. Many commenters explain in detail why a headscarf can be dangerous or disturbing during a fight:

At: wildes Herz: Of course the headscarf harbors danger. After all, it has to be fixed on the head. Clips and needles endanger the opponent as well as the athlete herself. A knot at the neck endangers the athlete. Please bear in mind, in which sport she is competing. In judo, you don't just stand opposite each other and debate. It is all about direct body contact. Unfortunately, I think this stage is abused for something else. (Spiegel<sup>20</sup> 2012: #12)

Long hair must be tied up with soft material (meaning hair bands, no hair clips). During the fight, adjusting the hair once is possible without punishment; any further adjustments are punished with Shido because of procrastination. (After the lady's headscarf has been pulled five times, the fight is over). (Spiegel<sup>20</sup> 2012: #16)

Another frequent observation is the denigration of politicians. Many readers do not engage with the Islamic veil itself. Instead they post comments which illustrate their frustrations with politicians. Several commenters attack politicians personally. They accuse, for example, the German politician Silvana Koch-Mehrin from the Free Democratic Party (FDP) of taking a populist stand in the veiling

debate to gain more prominence and support because she suggests a burqa ban for whole Europe.

Wow Miss Koch-Mehrin does work? Seriously, dear Spiegel-editors, can't you inform us, whether this woman fakes activity of whether she actually works for our money. It was so clear that one of the FDP-politician would quickly jump on the populism-train before the NRW elections [election of the German state parliament in North Rhein Westphalia]. (Spiegel<sup>3</sup> 2010: #5)

A backbencher rises to speak... or when you are capable of nothing else. Miss Koch-Mehrin should remember what the letter L in her party's name stands for [the commenter seems to forget that there is no L in the party name, FDB, this mistake probably derives from the fact that the FDP is often called the liberals]. It should be possible that everybody wears what he (she) wants. But, she is probably forced by her husband to bear a double name. Hence, please prohibit immediately all double names in Europe. (Spiegel<sup>3</sup> 2010: #16)

A large number of comments do not rely on any new frames or discourses. Instead, the authors rectify the article or a previous post. In doing so, they often belittle the author of the other post. *Monsieur Rainer's* comment is a good example for this phenomenon.

For heaven's sake, read my post regarding this topic and please make yourself familiar with the facts before you upload such posts. (Spiegel<sup>2</sup> 2010: #13)

*Arinari* also challenges another commenter. But his/her comment does not provide any arguments regarding the actual topic. He/She only asks for the specification of a previous comment and for suggestions of specific remedies:

????????? [quote from wolf-wolf] How do you want to eliminate the causes?  
What are the causes? Suggestion!!!! (Spiegel<sup>15</sup> 2011: #11)

*peter.nurrum*, on the other hand, rectifies another author in a condescending way. He tells *Kaffee Wien* that quotes should be checked before posted. Furthermore, he claims that the quote posted by *Kaffee Wien* is referenced incorrectly.

First check quotes then hawk them. Quote by *Kaffee Wien*: "tolerance is the last virtue of a dying society" Aristotle. Aristotle has never said something like that no matter how much the old reactionary enjoy claiming this. (Spiegel<sup>28</sup> 2015: #12)

It seems like the motivation in those cases is the desire to show-off their own knowledge, to expose others or to emphasize their own superiority. Due to the research design and focus on frame analysis, the paper on hand cannot examine or explain psychological reasons behind online commentaries. Therefore, it will not engage in further assessments of comments without any frames. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that many posts do not engage on an argumentative level with the topic and the debate in the particular comment section. This explains the high number of comments missing any of the common master frames.

The examination of the framing task can help to further distinguish between negative frames and positive frames. As anticipated, the diagnostic task is the most frequent one with 69% and the prognostic task follows with a frequency of 21% in all comments. While the motivational task lands on a distant third place because only 0,6% comments contain a vocabulary of motive as Benford (1993: 205) proposes.

The obvious lack of “action mobilization” frames (Benford & Snow 1988: 203) and the dominance of diagnostic framing indicates that the main intentions of most authors is expressing their opinion about veils and veiling bans without taking any further steps to remedy the identified problems. This becomes, for example, visible in *arinari*'s comment (cf. section 3.5.3), which criticizes Islamic veiling as unbelievable human mantling and atrociousness to emancipation without suggesting solutions or tactics how to face the problem. (Spiegel<sup>3</sup> 2010: #3). Besides the expression of severity through the drastic words, any further vocabulary of motive such as urgency, efficacy and propriety of action is missing as well. The fact that many names on the news website are anonymous and hardly allow conclusions about identity, gender, age or residence confirm the assumption that commenters on the Spiegel website overwhelmingly want to share their opinion and knowledge of the subject, instead of changing the situation.

### **5.3 Qualitative Frame Analysis of Spiegel Comments**

The aim of this paper is to examine whether ordinary individuals repeat the common master frames of the media discourse or if they reflect them more critically. The quantitative analysis has shown that the discourse in the online comment section contains more diverse arguments and includes frames which do not appear in the media discourse. The qualitative analysis will analyze a selection of comments in detail in order to identify the underlying master frames. Taking the previous results into account, this section will assess comments that contain the most common frames and frame combinations.

#### **5.3.1 The intolerance/fundamentalism frame**

The following quote is an illustration for the intolerance/fundamentalism frame. It is the first comment underneath a Spiegel article discussing the burqa ban in France, or rather, the aftermath of the implementation of the law. The whole article can be identified as neutral/contradictory because

it gives both opposing factions a voice.

Well, I don't care if a Muslim woman wraps herself like a mummy. Problems will only arise, when the veil becomes the standard in certain areas and everybody who doesn't wear one will get insulted as whores. (Spiegel<sup>12</sup> 2011: #1)

The major frame in this comment is the intolerance/fundamentalism frame, which depicts Muslims as intolerant towards other cultures. The author invokes this frame by constructing a contrast. First, he depicts himself as tolerant in the introduction sentence, and then he refers to the intolerant behavior of Muslims towards non-veiled women. The self-portrayal as tolerant person is achieved through lexical items like “Well” and “I don't care” (line 1) which implies nonchalance and a generally rational attitude. This tolerant and open image is counteracted or refuted through the following depiction of burqas as “mummy-like” (line 1), which declassifies burqas as a ridiculous attire, like a Halloween costume. Thus, the author first presents himself as a tolerant person, but then reveals himself as highly intolerant through his offensive burqa description.

Contrastingly, Muslims are constructed as entirely intolerant through the author's prediction that veiling will be the new “standard” (line 2) for clothing habits in public, as well as the drastic insults non-veiled women will have to face, i.e. “whore” (line 3). These predictions emphasize the assumed fundamentalist nature of Islam, because they imply that Muslims enforce and impose their own strict habits onto others (cf. section 3.5.3). The lexical item “whore” represents an extreme insult for a woman whose only ‘crime’ is not wearing a veil. Thus, Muslims appear even more intolerant.

This comment does not explicitly emphasize the female oppression frame because the lexical item “can wrap herself” implies a certain agency. At least in this particular post, the author does not assume that women are forced to wear burqas by their men. Furthermore, it does not specify who will insult non-veiled women -it could be Muslim men or women who will show such intolerant behavior towards other women. Nevertheless, the prediction that only veiled women will be respected in predominantly Muslim regions indicates that the author of the quote has a clear perception regarding an Islamic gender construction, although he does not elaborate it in this example. In this comment, the diagnostic task can be identified as the only framing task. The author mentions the intolerant behavior of Muslims and classifies this as problematic. But he does not suggest remedies for the described problem which would represent a prognostic task (Snow &

Benford 1988: 202). The phrase “problems will only arise when” (line 2) implies that there is not yet a severe or urgent situation and it is not yet necessary to get involved because the prediction is only a possible future scenario. Hence, this quote does not fulfill a motivational task and cannot be considered a “call to arms” (Benford 1993: 202).

### 5.3.2 The oppression frame

The next comment was the first comment under an article topicalizing the veiling debate. The article from 2010 features the story of a Muslim man, the nationality is unknown, that is married to a French citizen. The article constructs a negative image of burqas which is already visible in the heading: “Muslim wird wegen Burkazwang nicht eingebürgert” (Muslim does not receive citizenship because of burqa enforcement) (Spiegel<sup>1</sup> 2010). The comment was chosen as an example of how the frame *oppression of women* is applied.

Finally!! Germany should finally commit to democratic values and follow France’s example. That applies generally to all religious signs, regardless the individual manifestations. I recently saw a Muslim couple. The woman walked at least ten steps behind the man and was completely veiled. This kind of discrimination cannot be approved here. I don’t want to see these people here. Religion is everybody’s private matter. But the habit of neutralizing women with a full-body covering in public is perverted. (highn00n Spiegel<sup>1</sup> 2010: #18)

The exclamation “finally!” (line 1) indicates the author’s agreement with the decision of the French municipality to deny citizenship because of the enforcement of the burqa. In the following sentence, the author demands democratic values without specifying which values he/she exactly refers to (line 1) and completely denies the potential for the opposite interpretation of those values. As seen in other comments, democratic values can also justify the acceptance of Islamic veiling habits (cf. section 5.2). Instead *highn00n* entirely idealizes the legal exclusion and thus the rejection of veiling habits as a natural consequence of democratic values. In doing so, the two concepts ‘democratic values’ versus ‘wearing a burqa’, are constructed as mutually exclusive.

In line 3, the author shares a personal anecdote in order to justify his islamophobic attitude. In this story, the lexical item “discrimination” (line 4) illustrates that the comment follows the common interpretation that burqas are a sign for the oppression of women (Bullock & Jafri 2000: 36; Abu-Lughold 2002: 783). The example of the veiled woman, walking a few steps behind her husband (line 3-4), illustrates this assumed discrimination. As mentioned before, the author does not indicate that s/he is aware that this is her/his interpretation of the situation. It is not verified, for example,

whether the woman walked behind her husband coincidentally. And even if she follows her husband as an expression of the hierarchical structure of the relationship, it does not necessarily equate to discrimination (Schieder 2005: 12). *Highnoon* applies her/his Western understanding of gender roles and presents it as common sense. A hierarchical relationship is considered a discrimination and not compatible with the values held “here” (line 5). This is further elaborated when s/he interprets the burqa as a form of neutralization (line 6). Once again, this phrase implies a Western understanding as common sense and denies and rejects any other interpretation or world view. Furthermore, it denies any agency of women in this matter which is manifested through the lexical item “neutralizing” (line 6). Women are considered to be passive in this act, which culminates in a neutral role. Other interpretations, like expressing spirituality or honor (Abu- Lughod: 2002: 786; Bullock & Jafri 2000: 37), are completely ignored. The lexical item “perverted” (line 7) indicates that this assumed gender ideology is not acceptable. In doing so, the author appoints a very low status rank to Muslims (Gee 2011: 32) because of their veiling habits, which contradict Western values. Thus, the comment invokes the well-known, hierarchical dichotomy between the Western and the Islamic world (Said 1979) and constructs them as incompatible, implying that Islamic practices are undesirable and unacceptable.

This assessment of the author can be considered an individual diagnosis of the problematic implications of veiling, and therefore the comment fulfills a diagnostic task (Snow & Benford 1988: 199). Besides this, it also contains prognostic frames because it proposes solutions to the identified grievance (Snow & Benford 1988: 201). The first suggested solution is the denial of citizenship which the first sentence implies through its agreement to the French decision (line 1). The sentence “I don’t want to see these people here” (line 5) elaborates this thought further. The author states his personal opinion which implies that Muslims are not welcome and must leave. *Highnoon* constructs these demands as ethical through the attempted self-portrayal as fair “That applies generally to all religious signs, regardless the individual manifestations” (line 3-4), as well as generally tolerant and open “Religion is everybody’s private matter” (line 5-6) . In doing so, he/she emphasizes the efficacy of his/her claims and characterizes Muslim veiling habits as unacceptable, even if liberal values are taken into account. Nevertheless, the comment does not seem to aim at action mobilization (Snow & Benford 1988: 202), because it does not contain any further vocabulary of motive regarding how urgent the problem is, how the described solution should be achieved, or how efficacious this could be (Benford 1993: 202). Besides the definition of the problem, the comment is rather vague

regarding potential remedies.

### 5.3.3 The backwardness frame

The backwardness frame has been identified as the third most prevalent frame in online comments. It is visible in the following comment, which was posted as a reply to a Spiegel article topicalizing the end of the headscarf ban in Turkey in 2010. This is one of the few articles which frames Islamic veiling in a rather positive way as it gives a young Turkish student a platform to explain the personal implications of the burqa ban and its end (Spiegel<sup>7</sup> 2010).

The question arises what the headscarf is supposed to express, as it is hardly worn because of cold ears. The most frequent response is “respect for Allah”. That’s surely nice, but it is not in accordance with the spirit of Enlightenment or the logic of science. These young women have either not thought through their religious confession or their study choice, or both. Anyhow, I would not employ a scientist with headscarf because a principal contradiction is not resolved.

(*brux* Spiegel<sup>7</sup> 2010: #3)

The comment starts with the phrase “The question arises what the headscarf is supposed to express” (line 1), which creates the impression that a serious examination of reasons for Islamic veiling habits will follow. But the second part “as it is hardly worn because of cold ears” (line 1-2) shows that this interest is just pretended and that the author does not take the headscarf seriously. This attitude becomes more and more apparent in the following sentences. Again, it seems like *brux* integrates arguments brought forward by Muslims through mentioning the most frequent one (line 2). But then he/she reprimands this argument through the following sentence where the contrastive lexical items “surely” and “but” (line 2) are used. The author’s trivializations give evidence to his/her general rejection of arguments invoking a religious dimension. This represents the first indication for the backwardness frame. Further phrases, utilized to express the perception of the headscarf as a symbol of backwardness, are “not in accordance with the spirit of Enlightenment or the logic of science” (line 3), “scientist with a headscarf” (line 6), “principal contradiction” (line 6).

The commenter pairs values of Western modernity which stand for progress and development, in this case science and Enlightenment, with the headscarf as a representation of Islam, in order to construct an irreconcilable contrast. The dichotomy between Islamic and Western societies exposed by Said (1979) can be identified as the underlying presumption once more. The comment articulates the dichotomy with the progressive West as the “beacon of civilization” (Stabile & Kumar 2005: 766) on the one side, and Islam as unscientific and thus under-developed ideology on the other side.



The author even uses this Eurocentric world view as a justification for discrimination. His proposition not to employ women as scientists just because they are wearing a headscarf equates actual discrimination based on a person's religion.

#### 5.3.4 The secularization frame

With regards to the framing tasks, the quote can be classified as diagnostic and prognostic, because the author categorizes the contradiction between the Islamic headscarf and modern science as so profound that it is resulting in the conclusion that headscarves are not acceptable within a scientific work environment. In other words, the headscarf as religious symbol receives a low status rank (Gee 2011: 32), which represents *brux*' diagnosis of the problem. This ideological alignment is so pervasive that the author even denies scientists, who are wearing headscarves, the qualification to work (line 5). This sentence fulfills a prognostic task, because the author explains his/her strategy to resolve the previously evoked contradiction, which is refraining from employing a scientist with headscarf.

Among those frames, which do not particularly demonize Islam and Islamic veils, the secularization frame is the one which invoked the highest frequency. The following comment was posted in 2015, the year when the secularization frame was generally the most salient one. It is a response to one of the two articles that inform about the verdict from the Federal Constitutional Court in March which judged the various headscarf bans in Germany as unconstitutional. The article is considered to be neutral in its overall framing due to its focus on facts.

Religion has principally no place in schools, this nonsense has to stop. Who wants to worship his Gods in private at home is welcome to do this, whatever this might be good for. (Spiegel<sup>28</sup> 2015: #14)

This post has been assigned to the group of comments which invoke the secularization frame because of its request to abolish any religious signs in schools (line 1). The comment discloses a generally critical attitude towards religion through the employment of lexical items, like “nonsense” (line 1) and “whatever this might be good for” (line 2-3). In doing so, the commenter frames religion as a preposterous and questionable practice. This representation also implies that people who choose to follow a religion (line 1-2) cannot be taken serious. However, lexical items, such as “religion” (line 1), “principally” (line 1) or “Gods” (line 2) indicate that this mindset is not directed at one specific religion. Islam is not mentioned in particular and thus, it can be concluded that the comment does not demonize Islam or sets it apart from other religions or ideologies. Consequently, this comment



does not convey the often familiar Us-versus-Islam dichotomy, which is so prevalent in other comments (line 1).

The diagnostic framing task only appears marginally. The expression “this nonsense” presupposes that other readers know what the post refers to and why it is considered to be unacceptable. Instead, the main framing task is the prognostic task as the author introduces his vision of what society should look like without any preceding introduction. Vocabulary of motive only exists to a minor degree. Urgency, for example, is represented through the words “has to stop”. Therefore, the motivational task is hardly detectable. Generally speaking, this comment and many other comments invoking the secularization frame do not continue the usual media discourse. Firstly, in the veiling debate, the secularization frame is not considered important by the mass media (cf. section 3.5.3); and secondly, it does not promote the otherwise frequently utilized hierarchy between Islamic and Western civilizations.

### 5.5 The Islamophobia/xenophobia frame

The next selected comment criticizes other commenters who assess the abolition of the Turkish veiling ban as negative. It is a reaction to the article, which gives the Turkish student with headscarf a voice (Spiegel <sup>7</sup> 2010). As it is critiquing the intolerance of other posts, it can be categorized with the group of comments that invoke the Islamophobia/xenophobia frame.

All previous comments have one thing in common... They show that the ordinary<sup>7</sup> German has hardly any respect for other cultures. How about free practice of religion? After all, it is one of our fundamental rights. And because we are Germans, we should defend those rights. Even when other countries have other rules. *Two negative actions will never result in a positive outcome.*  
*(Original also in English)* *(nookiex6 Spiegel<sup>7</sup> 2010: #9)*

The second sentence “They show that the average German has hardly any respect for other cultures” (line 1-2) represents the main critique. This is followed by explanations how *nookiex6* justifies his/her criticism. For this purpose, the quote firstly invokes the Western core value of free practice of religion (line 2), and secondly implies a moral imperative by reminding the recipients of their nationality. There is no unequivocal evidence for the meaning or the intention behind this reminder. But, it is conceivable that it refers to the special German responsibility due to the role in the largest genocide in the history of Mankind. However, the emphasis of the nationality and the repetition of “we” (line 3) create a feeling of togetherness. This is reinforced through the demarcation to other countries (line 4). Furthermore, *nookiex6*'s post contains one of the strongest vocabularies of motive,

including severity through the lexical items “fundamental rights” (line 3) and propriety of the claim through the idiom in the last sentence (line 5). This sentence represents a moral suasion, asking the recipients to do the right thing, even though others do not do the right thing. Thus, it constructs a moral imperative (Snow and Benford 1988: 202) about what should be done. The identification with those values and the agreement with the comment claims are inherently awarded with social goods like good or extraordinary (Gee 2011: 32), because the author emphasizes in the beginning of the quote that it is “the ordinary German” (line 1) who does not respect other cultures. This characterization supports the author’s request because it reduces any opponent in rank.

Nevertheless, the comment lacks a specification of how to conduct the demanded defense of fundamental rights and thus it cannot provide persuading arguments for the efficacy of such strategies. That is why the motivational task as a call to arms (Benford 1993: 202) is once again not very salient. In addition, the lexical item “should” (line 3) selected by the author contributes to this impression. The deployment of the “subjunctive mood” in this sentence weakens the inherent imperative. In contrast, the author could have chosen phrases like “we must” or “we have to” if he/she wanted to create a stronger imperative and actually motivate other people to become active.

Overall, just like the secularization frame, the xenophobia/Islamophobia frame does not continue the common master frames of the media discourse. Instead, it critically opposes and deems them disrespectful. Furthermore, the commenter appoints a low social rank to those authors (and any other person), who follow the negative line of argument by calling them ordinary.

### **5.3.6 The equal treatment of religion frame**

The last comment is an example of the frame referring to the equal treatment of all religions. It was posted in 2015 as a reaction to an article discussing the verdict of the Federal Constitutional Court regarding German headscarf bans (Spiegel<sup>27</sup> 2015).

It goes without saying that the various religions and Weltanschauungs are treated absolutely equally with regards to the clothing matter. It is really embarrassing that a court sentence was needed to clarify this. (syracus Spiegel<sup>27</sup> 2015: #4)

The liberal alignment of the author becomes apparent in his/her central claim that “various religions and Weltanschauungs [must be] treated equally” (line 1-2). Selected items like “it goes without saying” (line 1), “absolutely” (line 2), and “really embarrassing” (line 2) imply the severity of the

postulation. Through the collective summary of “various religions and Weltanschauungs” (line 1) a distinction is excluded and Islam receives the same rights as any other religion or ideology. In doing so, the media master frames such as oppression, intolerance/fundamentalism or terrorism are completely disregarded. The author ignores any negative frame previously applied to Islam. This also implies that he/she does not critically reflect them, at least in this piece of writing. Instead he/she criticizes the systematic betrayal of Western values through the unequal treatment of Muslim women initiated through the headscarf ban.

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<sup>7</sup> The German word “gewöhnlich”, which is used in the original version, can be translated as ordinary, plain, normal, usual, commonplace, undistinguished, coarse etc. It is likely that the commentator deploys this term in order to express his low opinion of those people he accuses of being disrespectful. [?]

Due to its critical character, the comment can be categorized as a diagnostic frame. Prognostic framing is not necessary because the requested treatment, namely the stop of the headscarf ban, has already been implemented before the comment was posted. Accordingly, a motivational task is not necessary either.

In summary, it can be said that commenters, who are in favor of veiling bans, heavily rely on the common media master frames which have been discussed in chapter 2 and chapter 3. Moreover, many comments convey the old narrative of “Orientalism” (Said 1979) which frames the West as highly developed in contrast to the underdeveloped East, including Islam (Klaus & Kassel 2005: 345). As opposed to this, commenters who criticize any ban regarding Islamic veiling practices ignore these master frames. Despite this, they do not critically engage with the master frames of the veiling debate. They rather bring their own arguments forward, such as secularization or equal treatment of religions. But they do not automatically question the perceptions and assumptions of the “neo-colonialist discourse” (cf. section 2.4.1) articulated in the veiling debate. The only frame that somehow critically reflects those frames is the xenophobia frame which refers to the bias in the comments of Islam critics.

## Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to research whether, and how the veiling discourse on the micro-level (re)constructs or challenges the discourse on the macro-level. Therefore, it is necessary to compare the media discourse with the results of the analyses of online comment sections. Chapter 2 has summarized a variety of studies topicalizing media representations of the Islamic veiling practices. All of these studies result in the same conclusion: a vast majority of Western media coverage employs frames which convey an underlying dichotomy of “‘Us’ as the West and the ‘Other’ as Muslims” (Rahman 2014: 1). This dichotomy is inherently hierarchical depicting the West as the superior civilization and Islamic societies as inferior, backwards and primitive (Said 1979: 49; Hall 1992: 219). Journalists and politicians often use the assumed inferiority as justification for the neo-imperialist ambitions (cf. section 2.5). In these cases, they emphasize the necessity to bring human rights and democratic structures to Islamic countries. In the veiling debate, this self-conception is highlighted through the frequently repeated image of a European man rescuing an oppressed Muslim woman (Stabile & Kumar 2005:770), which is expressed in the often invoked quote from Spivak (1988) that speaks of “white men saving brown women from brown men” (Abu-Lughold 2002: 784). The Islamic veil is perceived as the visible sign for this oppression and is thus framed in a very negative way (Bullock & Jafri 2000: 35).

### 6.1 Quantitative Overview

The quantitative analysis of comments on the online news website, Spiegel, has shown that the veiling discourse in the individual comments section encompasses a broader range of frames than those found in the online articles because it includes the common master frames of the veiling debate as well as a number of other frames. There are frames which serve as critique of veiling and Islam in general, frames that oppose veiling bans, and frames that are only loosely or not at all connected with the veiling discourse itself (cf. section 5.3). Nevertheless, the frames that are invoked with the highest frequency in the comments are two frames depicting Islam and veiling habits in a negative way, namely the intolerance/fundamentalism frame and the oppression of Muslim women. This indicates that the general perception of veils is rather negative. Besides this, it is interesting to note that the high utilization of the oppression frame in individual comment sections indeed correlates with those found in the online articles, while the most frequently implemented frame in the comment sections,

the Islamic intolerance/fundamentalism frame does not play such a prominent role in the online articles. This seems to indicate that ordinary netizens do not engage with the civilizing mission (Stabile & Kumar 2005: 771) that was so prevalent in the media in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 (cf. section 2.5). Instead, the comments focus on concerns about their immediate environment, which are fueled by their perception of Islam as an adamant and fundamentalist ideology which expands uncontrollably and thus suppresses the occidental culture in Europe (cf. section 3.5.3). This representation, for example, becomes apparent in the name of the biggest anti-Islam movement PEGIDA, Patriotic Europeans against the Islamification of the Occident, which explicitly emphasizes lowering the Islamification of Western societies (cf. section 2.1; cf. section 3.4).

The analysis of the framing tasks in section 5.3 and section 5.4 provided an insight into the motivations of commenters. Based on these framing tasks it seems as if the majority of the authors do not intend to facilitate action mobilization, as only a low number of comments (0,6%) carry out a motivational task. Instead, it is apparent in a large number of comments that they are employed to express anger and frustration regarding a situation or phenomenon that is perceived as a grievance, illustrating the diagnostic character of comments (Snow & Benford 1988: 199). Furthermore, content of certain comments seems to indicate that the commenters wish to show off their knowledge about the subject and they want to share their favored remedies to the identified problem. In doing so, these comments exercise a prognostic task (Snow & Benford 1933: 201) These observations show that comments are often utilized as valve for discontent and anger, instead of a forum for political activism. Accordingly, it can be concluded that commenters want to complain and expose, but they do not want to take responsibility or become active, which is confirmed by their efforts to stay anonymous (cf. section 5.3).

## **6.2 Qualitative overview**

The qualitative analysis has shown that the negative comments rely heavily on common master frames that are found in the online articles, for example, the oppression or the backwardness frame play a prominent role in comments on the Spiegel website. In all comments framing Islam in a negative way (cf. section 5.4), the underlying frame is the well-known ‘us versus the rest’ dichotomy, appointing a higher status to ‘us’ and a lower status to everything and everyone representing Islamic values and traditions through the deployment of attributes like unacceptable, perverted or backwards. The discursive perpetuation of this dichotomy seems to indicate that the Eurocentric worldview is

still prevalent in ordinary German individuals' minds, and appears to be deployed as justification for the rejection and discrimination of Islam. This discursive (re)construction of Islamophobia has a strong impact on the Islamic veiling discourse, which in turn shapes the perception of Islam (and most probably other cultures and civilizations as well).

The qualitative analysis, further, showed that positive comments mostly ignore the master frames that are found in the online articles (cf. section 5.4). While this lack of counter-framing avoids the perpetuation of intolerant frames, it also means that such frames are not discussed critically by opponents of Islamophobia. Comments that were based on the secularization frame or the demand for equal treatment of religions, for example, typically did not explicitly convey the hierarchical dichotomy of the Orientalism narrative. Nevertheless, this is not automatically an indicator for a more tolerant attitude towards Islam. Rather, it can be classified as reluctant tolerance because it is not motivated by the appreciation for pluralism, the conviction that Islam represents enrichment for European societies and their cultures, nor the recognition of Islam as a valuable philosophy that one can learn from. Instead, the acceptance or tolerance towards the Islamic veil is derived from liberal-democratic principles, according to which commenters oppose veiling bans because they have to, if they want to live up to the German or Western values they invoke as guiding principles for the social coexistence in Europe. Comments representing the xenophobia/Islamophobia frame are the only exceptions to this common pattern. These comments are the only ones which critically reflect the master frames promoted by the media, at least partly. The authors identify the negative attitudes towards Islamic practices as xenophobic. This acknowledgement indicates that they understand the conveyed master frames as what they actually are; socially and linguistically constructed frames and not common sense or objective truths. The low amount of comments (9,5%) uncovering this phenomenon illustrates that a vast majority of commenters still view the world from a Eurocentric perspective.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

Comparing the development of positive and negative frames over the past five years has led this study to the conclusion that the veiling discourse is undergoing a process of division (cf. section 5.3) which veil critics (and thus general Islam critics as well) move from civic forums, like the Spiegel website, to activist domains, such as the PEGIDA Facebook page (Dahlgren 2005: 153). This process has far-reaching implications for the entire discourse because it can lead to further radicalization of

the debate on the respective domains instead of a moderate deliberation ensured through the plurality of opinions and arguments. The radicalization phenomenon in Germany is already observable by the high numbers of likes and posts that followers contribute to the PEGIDA Facebook page. Although the analysis of framing tasks illustrated that most authors do not aim at immediate action mobilization (cf. section 5.3; cf. section 5.4), a rising number of xenophobic attacks on German refugee camps in 2015 is observable which seems to indicate that the verbal radicalization on activist domains can eventually lead to radicalized activities. This development shows that there is a need for further exploration of the dynamics and framing strategies on advocate/activist domains in order to understand that the motivations, the fears and the needs of those groups who perceive Islam as a threat. Another research focus should be the question how to face those perceptions and create awareness for the Orientalist frame in order to facilitate a less biased and more pluralist world view. In other words, the identification of framing strategies that could lead to an ideological adjustment or ban advocates in the veiling discourse. Thus, a more balanced and reflective veiling discourse in Western societies can help to face major challenges in Western societies, respectively xenophobia in general and Islamophobia in particular.

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**Appendix A (Quantitative Data of Bild Emotion Buttons on [www.bild.de](http://www.bild.de))**

Date	Title	laughing	crying	anger	gaping	wow
08.07.2015	<a href="#">Kopftuchverbot für Berliner Lehrer</a>	4	0	46	0	2
25.06.2015	<a href="#">Kopftuch-Hasser muss 2600 Euro zahlen</a>	22	3	35	1	2
17.06.2015	<a href="#">Ein Kopftuch ist kein Heilbringer</a>	5	1	97	2	13
16.06.2015	<a href="#">Karriereende wegen Kopftuchstreit</a>	37	0	21	0	1
15.06.2015	<a href="#">Nächste Runde im Kopftuchstreit</a>	46	7	411	2	8
14.06.2015	<a href="#">Kopftuchstreit nur ein PR-Gag?</a>	186	13	2024	15	26
11.06.2015	<a href="#">Kommentar von Kurt Buschkoewer</a>	21	10	720	8	59
09.06.2015	<a href="#">Muslima gewinnt gegen Amt in Berlin- Neukölln</a>	23	7	421	8	9
05.06.2015	<a href="#">Muslima gegen Amt in Berlin- Neukölln</a>	735	5	124	10	89
25.03.2015	<a href="#">Kopftuchverbot gekippt</a>					
	<a href="#">Ich fühl mich richtig geil mit Kopftuch</a>	91	44	597	18	69
15.03.2015	<a href="#">Kopftuch-Urteil: Es geht um die Frauen dahinter</a>	20	23	226	4	29
14.03.2015	<a href="#">Kein Kopftuch am Lebensmutter</a>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
13.03.2015	<a href="#">Karlsruhe kippt pauschales</a>	31	12	874	13	22
13.03.2015	<a href="#">NRW will jetzt Schulbesuch</a>	11	2	130	2	5
12.03.2015	<a href="#">Verfassunsurteil: Karlsruhe kippt pauschales</a>	32	11	904	12	31
26.02.2015	<a href="#">Sila Sahin trägt Kopftuch</a>	6	0	9	1	1

## Appendix B (Spiegel<sup>15</sup> 2011)

“Vollverschleierung: Belgien verbietet die Burka

Frauen in Belgien dürfen ab sofort keinen Vollscheier mehr tragen - bei Verstößen drohen 140 Euro Strafe. Nach Frankreich hat das zweite europäische Land die Burka aus der Öffentlichkeit verbannt. Auch in Deutschland geht die Debatte weiter.

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DPA

Muslimische Frau in Brüssel: Belgien verbietet Burka

Brüssel - Befürworter sagen, der Schleier sei ein Symbol für die Unterdrückung muslimischer Frauen. Gegner kritisieren die Diskriminierung des Islam. In Belgien ist am Samstag ein Gesetz gegen Vollverschleierung in der Öffentlichkeit in Kraft getreten. Ob im Bus, beim Spaziergang oder im Kino - Frauen dürfen ab sofort keine Burka mehr tragen.

Bricht eine Frau das Gesetz, droht ihr belgischen Medienberichten zufolge eine Strafe von 137,50 Euro. Schätzungen zufolge tragen 270 Frauen in Belgien eine Burka. Muslime machen in dem überwiegend katholischen Land rund fünf Prozent der Bevölkerung aus.

Zwei muslimische Frauen haben bereits angekündigt, vor das Verfassungsgericht zu ziehen. Sie verlangen, das Gesetz zurückzunehmen. "Es ist ein Frontalangriff auf die muslimische Welt", sagte



ihre Anwältin Ines Wouters. Das Gesetz sei diskriminierend. Wouters Mandantinnen trügen die Burka aus freien Stücken.

### **Zwei Frauen wehren sich**

Eine von ihnen - eine Belgierin, die zum Islam übergetreten ist - verhüllt sich demnach seit 13 Jahren. Einmal wehrte sie sich bereits erfolgreich gegen ein Bußgeld, das man aufgrund eines lokalen Burka-Verbots von ihr gefordert hatte. Die zweite Frau kommt aus Marokko und lebt seit einigen Jahren in Belgien.

Das Vollschleier-Verbot gilt für jeden, der sein Gesicht in der Öffentlichkeit so verhüllt, dass er nicht mehr zu identifizieren ist. Ausgenommen sind Motorradfahrer und Feuerwehrleute. Der Gesetzentwurf war Ende April nahezu einstimmig im Unterhaus des Parlaments angenommen worden - mit 129 Ja-Stimmen quer durch alle Parteien, einer Nein-Stimme und zwei Enthaltungen.

In Frankreich gilt das Burkaverbot seit April. Das Innenministerium sammelte seither rund hundert Verstöße in seinen Akten. Die Polizei habe die Frauen auf der Straße angehalten, sie gebeten, den Schleier zwecks Identifizierung zu lüften, und sie darauf hingewiesen, ein Richter könne eine Geldstrafe von bis zu 150 Euro oder aber einen Kurs in Staatsbürgerkunde verhängen. Unklar ist, ob oder wie oft die Strafen tatsächlich verhängt wurden.

Spanien und die Niederlande planen ähnliche Gesetze, auch in Deutschland melden sich immer wieder Gegner einer öffentlichen Vollverschleierung zu Wort. Ende April machte sich [SPD-Fraktionsvize Axel Schäfer für ein Verbot](#) stark. "Die Burka ist kein religiöses Symbol, sondern ein Symbol der Unterdrückung der Frauen", sagte der 59-Jährige.

Rachid Nekkaz, ein Menschenrechtsaktivist aus Frankreich, gehört zu den Gegnern des Burkaverbots. Im vergangenen Jahr gründete er die Organisation "Touche pas à ma Constitution" (deutsch: "Rühr meine Verfassung nicht an"), die Frauen in Frankreich anbietet, für ihre Bußgelder aufzukommen. Nun richtet Nekkaz das Angebot auch an Musliminnen in Belgien. Das Verbot sei ein klarer Verstoß gegen europäische Prinzipien, zitierte ihn eine belgische Nachrichtenagentur.“  
*klu/dpa/AFP*

***Summarized Translation:***

The first paragraph summarizes the main argument of the advocates for a burqa ban and the main argument of opponents of a burqa ban, respectively the oppression of women and the discrimination of Islam (Spiegel<sup>14</sup> 2011: §1). This introduction is followed by some facts about the ban, the fees and the Muslim population in Belgium (Spiegel<sup>14</sup> 2011: §2). The next paragraphs present the opinions of two burqa wearing women and their intentions to fight this law (Spiegel<sup>14</sup> 2011: §3 & §4). The article continues with a more detailed description of the passed law (Spiegel<sup>14</sup> 2011: §5) and a comparison to the French veiling ban (Spiegel<sup>14</sup> 2011: §6). In the following paragraph, the ban advocates receive a platform through the mentioning of Spanish and Dutch efforts to implement a similar law and the reasons behind these efforts (Spiegel<sup>14</sup> 2011: §6). The article concludes with the portrayal of a French organization opposing the veiling ban and their arguments (Spiegel<sup>14</sup> 2011: §7).

Appendix C (illustration of Muslim veils):



Available: <http://cijcl.org.uk/2014/07/21/echr-chamber-judgment-case-s-s-v-france-banning-burqas-niqabs-legal/>