

**Wearing a *hijab* as a political issue;
Political views
and
Muslim women's reasons and motivations
in the Netherlands.**

Aysegül Yavuz

Supervisors:

Prof. dr. H. Dekker

Dr. D. Stockmann

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1. Introduction

The *hijab* or headscarf - a veil that covers the hair, neck and often the bosom – has become an important political issue in the USA and Western Europe since the terrorist attacks of ‘9/11’ and the attacks in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005. ‘No other symbol than the veil reconstructs with such force the ‘otherness’ of Islam to the West’ (Göle, 1996: 1).

There is a need to include a politically informed analysis of the *hijab* (Shadeed, 2008). Only a few studies in Western countries have focused on the ‘politication’ of the *hijab*. (Mernissi, 1992; Delaney, 1994; Moruzzi, 1994; Timmerman, 2000; Lyon and Spini, 2004; Terray, 2004; Sauer, 2009). The *hijab* became a symbol not only of women oppression but also a symbol of the political Islam. Wearing a *hijab* is than associated with Islamism; women who wear a *hijab* want to show that they are in favor of Islamization of the country. ‘Muslim headscarves touch on three contested policies of European democracies: first policies of integration, second the governance of religious difference and the role of religion in public life and third gender equality and antidiscrimination policies’, writes Sauer, professor of Political Science, in *Comparative European Politics* (2009: 76). More research has focused on mass media reports about the *hijab*. Western media portrayed the Islam and Muslims generally in a negative way (Ter Wal, 2002; Ameli et al., 2007) and the Islam as a threat to the Western world (Shahid and Van Koningsveld, 2002: 174; Roggeband and Vliegenthart, 2007: 539). The *hijab* became a symbol of this threat, a symbol of oppression (Duits and Van Zoonen, 2006: 109) and threat of the achievements of the enlightenment in non-Muslim societies (Koyuncu Lorasdagi, 2009: 453). Muslim women are believed to be forced to wear a *hijab* by their family and community (Saharso and Lettinga, 2008). Other publications focus on the legality of a *hijab* ban (McGoldrick, 2006; Kahn, 2008; Scott, 2010; Allen, 2010). A fourth strain of research focused on beliefs and attitudes towards the Islam and Muslims among non-Muslims, including their beliefs and attitudes towards wearing a *hijab*. A growing Islamophobia has been observed among non-Muslims (Runnymede Trust, 1997; Allen and Nielsen, 2004; Pew Research Center, 2006, 2007; Strabac and Listhaug, 2008; Kalkan, Layman and Uslaner, 2009; Sayyid and Vakil, 2010; Van der Noll, 2010, 2012; Dekker and Van der Noll, 2012).

What is missing is research among the group that is the object of political and civic discourse, that are Muslim women who wear a *hijab*. Although the *hijab* is high on the political agenda empirical studies on reasons and motivations for wearing a *hijab* are

missing.¹ To date, no study has verified whether the key assumption of politicians regarding the wearing of a *hijab* in non-Islamic countries- that Muslim women who wear a *hijab* are forced to do so by their relatives and communities - correspond with ‘reality’.²

As a pioneer in this field (at least in the Netherlands), I interviewed Muslim women living within the Netherlands about their wearing or not wearing of a *hijab*. It is the first study, as far as I know, among Muslim women aiming to hear from themselves their reasons and motivations to wear a *hijab* or not. Key questions are the following: Are Muslim women forced to wear a *hijab* – as some politicians and political parties assume - or are they free to do so? If they are free to do so, why do some Muslim women wear a *hijab* and others not?

The next chapter of this thesis describes the political context of the study; a summary of the political debate concerning the *hijab* is given together with an overview of the policy preferences regarding wearing a *hijab* in the 2010 election programs of the main political parties in the Netherlands. The third chapter presents the theoretical framework of the study, indicating theoretically possible reasons and motivations for wearing a *hijab*, derived from previous theoretical publications and from dominant general behavior explanatory theories. The fourth chapter describes the interview methodology that was applied for this study. The fifth chapter presents the interview findings. In the final chapter I present the answer to the research question, reflect on the theoretical framework and methodological approach, and make suggestions for future research.

¹ The only exceptions are the study of Bouw et al. (2003) of the lifecourse of sixty Moroccan girls and young women with only marginal attention to their wearing a *hijab*, and Höglinger’s ethnological study of four women in Austria (2002).

² For research about wearing a *hijab* in Islamic countries, see, among others, Heath (2008) and Lazreg (2009). Heath writes in the epilogue ‘The veil is merely a distracting and detracting banner under which insufferable conditions are permitted to continue. This, finally, is the truth behind the veil’ (2008: 320).

2. The *hijab* as a political issue

2.1 Introduction

A taboo existed in Dutch politics to discuss immigrant related problems till the early 1990's (Fennema and Van der Brug, 2006; Brendel, 2007). Since then these problems became hot political topics. At the same time the 'immigration-problem' became an 'Islam-problem', with the *hijab* as the symbol of this problem (Göle, 1996: 1). The protagonists in the political debate on the *hijab* were leaders of the main parties on the right side of the political spectrum.

2.2 The debate on the *hijab* in Dutch politics

Until the mid-1970's politicians assumed that the immigration of labor workers was temporary (Rijkschroeff, et al., 2003; Van Meeteren, 2005; Essed and Nimako, 2006) and that these workers would return to their homeland soon (WRR, 2005: 15). As a consequence of this assumption, there were no efforts made to integrate immigrants in Dutch society. On the contrary, the migrants were encouraged to retain their own cultural identity. The idea was that this would help them reintegrate upon their return in their countries of origin (Entzinger, 2006: 123).

In the early 1980's the Dutch government acknowledged that most of the immigrants stay in the Netherlands and that integration should be encouraged. The policy shifted from immigrants remaining their own cultural identity towards integration within the Dutch society without threatening the preservation of immigrants' own identities (Entzinger, 2006:123; Van Meeteren, 2005: 13).

The first criticisms of the integration policy and the ideology of multiculturalism date from the early 1990's. The leader of the conservative liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), Frits Bolkestein, triggered the debate in 1991 by a newspaper article in which he declared that Islamic and Western values are incompatible, the most problematic issue in this regard being gender inequality (Sleegers, 2007: 9). Bolkestein's statements caused a shock among centre and leftist parties because until then, these views had been exclusively associated with the extreme right. Also, it was the first time a leader of a major political party criticized what was widely regarded as a successful policy approach (Roggeband and Vliegthart, 2007: 524). Bolkestein's party won a great victory in the 1994 parliamentary elections and the number of seats in the Second Chamber for his party

increased from 22 to 31. Apparently his statements appealed to the electorate. He continued to speak and write about the Islam in a critical way. In one of his books, he wrote: 'It is obvious that Muslim migrants carry with them the prejudices that are common in their countries of origin, such as the subordination of women. They will have to adapt themselves to the emancipating Dutch society' (Bolkestein, 1997: 16). In 1998, Bolkestein transferred the leadership of the VVD to Dijkstal who expressed a more moderate view on the Islam.

Pim Fortuyn became the leader of a new party Liveable Netherlands in October 2001. He was known among others from his book *Tegen de islamisering van onze cultuur; Nederlandse identiteit als fundament* [*Against the Islamisation of our culture; Dutch identity as a foundation*]. It is due to the Qur'an that Muslim women wear a *hijab*, according to him; 'the oppressive regulations' oblige women to wear a *hijab* (Fortuyn, 2001: 72). In an interview in the newspaper *de Volkskrant* on 9 February 2002 he stated that if he could get around the law not one Muslim more would be able to enter the country, and that he wanted to abolish article 1 of the Constitution because under the guise of antidiscrimination the freedom of expression was curtailed in an unacceptable way. The interview led to a crisis in the party and Fortuyn was ousted as party leader. Fortuyn decided just to go and in the public opinion polls his Pim Fortuyn List became as popular as the VVD. The local elections on 21 March 2002 gave him a great victory; in Rotterdam Liveable Rotterdam received 35 percent of the votes. His popularity grew leading up to the parliamentary elections on 15 May 2002. Some candidates on the VVD list were afraid of an electoral loss of the VVD and to lose their seats in parliament (Fennema, 2010: 63). One of these candidates was Geert Wilders. The day after the local elections 22 March 2002 he fiercely criticized the VVD leader for his weak campaign and underestimation of the immigration and integration issues.

Pim Fortuyn was assassinated on 6 May 2002. Yet the results of the parliamentary elections on May 15 was a major victory for the List Pim Fortuyn; almost one out of five voters had voted on the dead candidate. Although the VVD lost 14 seats, Geert Wilders retained his parliamentary seat thanks to the fact that other candidates became minister in the new CDA-VVD-LPF government coalition. The coalition did not last long due to, among others, internal problems in one of the coalition partners the LPF.

Geert Wilders received a higher place on the VVD candidates' list for the next parliamentary elections on 22 January 2003 (place 14). A new candidate on the VVD list was Ayaan Hirsi Ali (place 16), who escaped from Somalia to the Netherlands when she was twenty-one, abandoned Islam, and became a critic of Muslim treatment of women. Muslim extremists threatened her with death immediately after a television appearance. She had to

hide but continued to criticize the Islam. The results of the elections on 22 January 2003 were positive for the VVD (four seats more) and a loss for the LPF (18 seats less), although the CDA became the winner. On the day of her entrance into the Second Chamber the newspaper *Trouw* published an interview with Ayaan Hirsi Ali in which she calls the prophet ‘measured by our Western standards a perverse man’ because he had sexual intercourse with a nine year old girl. The VVD parliamentary group criticized her for ‘indiscriminate’ statements. Also Geert Wilders lost support in the VVD parliamentary group because of his fiercely criticizing of Islam and his criticisms on the moderate policy of his leader. In an interview in the weekly *HP De Tijd* on 6 February 2004 he demanded a *headscarf* ban for officials; ‘Why don’t we dare to say that Muslims should adapt themselves to us, because our values are higher, better, nicer and of a more humane civilization level? No integration, assimilation! And let the *hijabs* fly in the wind on the Malieveld. I’ll have them for breakfast’. In the same interview he called his VVD colleagues grey mice.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali’s movie *Submission* was showed by Dutch television on 29 August 2004. The movie portrays violence against women in Islamic societies. Hirsi Ali made this movie together with Theo van Gogh, who also fiercely criticized Islam and Muslims, labeling them, among others, as ‘goat fuckers’. Van Gogh was threatened with death immediately after the release of the movie. Wilders decided to separate himself from the VVD parliamentary group, to keep his parliamentary seat, and to continue his parliamentary work as ‘Group Wilders’ in September 2004. Public opinion polls showed great support for him among the population. He was also threatened with death and since October 2004 he needs permanent personal security protection. Theo van Gogh, the *Submission* filmmaker, was murdered by a Muslim man on 2 November 2004. The national security service brought Ayaan Hirsi Ali to the United States in order to protect her.

Geert Wilders established a new party, the Party for the Freedom (PVV) on 22 February 2006. In June 2006 the government fell because of the way minister Verdonk had treated Ayaan Hirsi Ali (both member of the VVD). In campaign time in October 2006 Geert Wilders stated in an interview in a newspaper: ‘Everyone adapts to our dominant culture. Who does not, will not be here in twenty years, will be deported.... We must stop the tsunami of Islamization. That touches us in our hearts, in our identity, our culture’.³ On 22 November 2006 the parliamentary elections took place and the PVV received nine of the hundred and

³ Interview with Geert Wilders in *de Volkskrant* on 6 October 2006. [In Dutch: ‘Iedereen past zich aan onze dominante cultuur aan. Wie dat niet doet, is hier over twintig jaar niet meer. Die wordt het land uitgezet. ... We moeten de tsunami van de islamisering stoppen. Die raakt ons in ons hart, in onze identiteit, in onze cultuur’.]

fifty seats in the Second Chamber. Popular support for the PVV anti-*hijab* views was not a surprise for the readers of the Pew Global Attitudes Project reports: a survey in the Netherlands in 2005 found that 51% of the Dutch public favored banning head scarves in public (Pew Research Center, 2005).⁴

Geert Wilders radicalized in 2007 (Fennema, 2010: 132).⁵ In a newspaper article in August 2007 he wrote: ‘A moderate Islam does not exist. It does not exist, because there is no difference between Good and Bad Islam. There is Islam, and that’s it. And Islam is the Quran, and nothing but the Quran, and the Quran is the *Mein Kampf* of a religion that seeks to eliminate others, and calls those others - non-Muslims - infidel dogs, inferior beings’.⁶ In the public opinion polls his party - the PVV - grew in supporters to eighteen parliamentary seats.

Geert Wilders presented his film *Fitna* on 27 March 2008⁷ and became an internationally well-known person and received various invitations from abroad. In a speech on 25 September 2008 in New York on invitation from the Hudson Institute he said ‘Europe is changing. ... in every city now hosts a different world ... That is the parallel society originated by the mass immigration of Muslims. Across Europe a new reality is created; entire Muslim neighborhoods where very few natives live ... It is a world of *hijabs*, where women walk in shapeless tents ... Their husbands, or slaveholders if you prefer, walk three steps ahead ... An Islamic Europe is a Europe without freedom and democracy, an economic wasteland, an intellectual nightmare ...’.⁸

⁴ In France a solid majority (78%) and in Germany a majority (54%) also supported a ban, while in Great Britain a majority (62%) thought the banning of scarves was a bad idea. In Spain, the public opinion was more evenly divided where 43% said the ban is a good idea and 48% opposed it (Pew Research Center, 2005; see also <http://www.pewglobal.org/2006/11/20/europeans-debate-the-scarf-and-the-veil/>).

⁵ Radicalization is clear if the 2007 statements are compared with statements from 2001. In a tv program two weeks after 9/11 on 24 September 2001 he said ‘I have already made clear from the outset that I have nothing that the VVD has nothing against Islam. ... Islam there is nothing wrong with that, it’s a respectable religion. Also, most Muslims in the world, but also in the Netherlands, are good citizens and nothing is wrong with them. It’s that little piece of Muslim extremism’ [In Dutch: ‘Ik heb al van begin af aan duidelijk gemaakt dat ik niets heb, dat de VVD niets heeft tegen de Islam. ... de islam daar is niets mis mee, het is een te respecteren godsdienst. Ook de meeste moslims ter wereld, maar ook in Nederland, zijn goede burgers waar niets mis mee is. Het gaat om dat kleine stukje moslimextremisme’] (Fennema, 2010: 55).

⁶ Article written by Geert Wilders in *de Volkskrant* of 8 August 2007. [In Dutch: ‘Een gematigde Islam bestaat niet. Het bestaat niet, omdat er geen onderscheid is tussen Goede en Slechte Islam. Er is Islam, en daar houdt het mee op. En Islam is de Koran, en niets dan de Koran, En de Koran is het *Mein Kampf* van een religie, die beoogt anderen te elimineren, die die anderen - niet moslims - ongelovige honden noemt, inferieure wezens’.]

⁷ For an overview of the film’s contents, see Garton-Ash, T., Intimidation and censorship are no answer tot his inflammatory film, in *The Guardian* 10 April 2008.

⁸ Retrieved from http://www.pvv.nl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1310&Itemid=1. [In Dutch: ‘Europa verandert. ... in alle steden vind je nu een heel andere wereld ... Dat is de parallele samenleving die door de massa-immigratie van moslims ontstaan is. In heel Europa ontstaat een nieuwe werkelijkheid; volledige moslimbuurten waar nog maar weinig autochtonen wonen of zelfs maar gezien worden. ... Het is een wereld van hoofddoekjes, waar vrouwen in vormloze tenten lopen ... Hun echtgenoten, of slavenhouders zo u wilt, lopen drie stappen vooruit ... Een islamitisch Europa is een Europa zonder vrijheid en democratie, een economische woestenij, een intellectuele nachtmerrie ...’.]

Many Dutch voters supported the PVV at the elections for the European Parliament in 2009 and gave this party 5 out of the 26 seats for the Netherlands. In the annual debate between the whole government and the Second Chamber in September 2009, Geert Wilders, talking about wearing a *hijab*, stated that it was time for a ‘spring cleaning of our streets’, ‘A better environment starts with you’, ‘This is pollution of public space’, ‘Our streets in some places are more and more like the streets of Mecca’, ‘Let's take back our streets’, and the *hijab* is the symbol of ‘an ideology that wants to colonize us’ and ‘Let's do something against this symbol of oppression’.⁹ He proposed to tax women who wear a *hijab* with a yearly license of 1000 euro’s.¹⁰ ‘This country has duties on petrol and diesel, parking-permits and a dog-tax, used to have a flight-tax and has a packaging-tax, so why not a ‘headrag’-tax? [in Dutch: kopvoddentaks] (...) So we can finally get some payback for what has cost us so much. I would say: the polluter pays’.¹¹ A majority in parliament rejected the proposal.

In the local elections in March 2010 the PVV participated in two cities. In Almere the PVV received most votes and in The Hague most but one. However, in none of these cities the PVV became member of the executive board [College van Burgemeester en Wethouders]. The other parties did not want to accept the PVV’s demand of a ban on wearing a *hijab* in official functions. The cabinet-Balkenende4 fell on 20 February 2010 (because of a conflict about continuation of the Dutch contribution to the UN-ISAF mission in Afghanistan) and new parliamentary elections were scheduled for 9 June 2010. During the campaign the new leader of the VVD, Rutte, expressed more and more Wilders-like statements, including a plea for an absolute stop of disadvantaged immigrants. The PVV received 24 seats (+15) and the VVD 31 seats (+9) in the Second Chamber. Based on these elections, the cabinet-Rutte1 was formed, consisting of VVD and CDA ministers with a minority position in the Second Chamber. Wilders’ party did not become part of the coalition but tolerated [in Dutch: gedoogde] the cabinet and got an influential position because the cabinet was dependent of the support of this party in parliament.

⁹ [In Dutch: ‘Ons straatbeeld gaat op sommige plekken steeds meer lijken op het straatbeeld van Mekka. Laten we onze straten terugoververen. De hoofddoek is het symbool van een ideologie die erop uit is ons te kolonialiseren’.]

¹⁰ *Wilders want headscarf-tax* accessed by: <http://www.rnw.nl/english/article/wilders-wants-headscarf-tax> on 4 September 2010.

¹¹ Geert Wilders *Algemene politieke beschouwingen 2009*, retrieved 6 September 2010 from <http://www.pvv.nl/index.php/component/content/article/12-spreekteksten/2360-algemene-politieke-beschouwingen-2009-inbreng.html>

2.3 Political parties' views on the *hijab*

In order to get a complete picture of the main political parties' views on wearing a *hijab*, I analyzed their 2010 election programs. If nothing was written in the program I searched for additional information on the parties' official websites. In case of missing information, I contacted the parties by email asking them for an official statement about the *hijab*. The question was whether or not the political parties agreed with:

- . A general ban of the *hijab*; citizens are prohibited to wear a *hijab* in public,
- . A ban of the *hijab* in government institutions; citizens and officials aren't allowed to wear a *hijab* in government institutions,
- . A ban of the *hijab* for government officials in uniform; officials, working for the government, aren't allowed to wear a *hijab* when they are in duty,
- . A ban of the *hijab* for government officials in general: government officials aren't allowed to wear a *hijab* at work.
- . A ban of the *hijab* in schools: students as well as teachers aren't allowed to wear a *hijab* in school.

The PVV programme clearly states: 'No *hijabs* in health care, education, the city hall or anywhere related to neither government nor any organization which receives money from the government'.¹² The *hijab* is seen as a symbol of the oppression of women. The party wants to tax women who wear a *hijab* with an annual tax of € 1.000,-.¹³ The party also wants women who wear a *burqa* to be expelled from welfare.¹⁴ Members of Parliament enthusiastically expressed these views in parliamentary debates.¹⁵

The VVD programme does not mention any viewpoint on religious garment. However, the party website states: 'Officials who represent the neutrality of the state (police, department of defense and the judiciary) should not show any religious expression such as crosses,

¹² PVV (2010) *De agenda van hoop en optimisme. Een tijd om te kiezen: PVV 2010-2015. p.15*

¹³ (ibid) p.15

¹⁴ (ibid) p.15 and p. 23

¹⁵ For example, when a 14-year-old Muslim girl was told that she wasn't allowed to attend school with her *hijab* on, her father referred this dispute to the Equal Treatment Commission. On the 7th of January 2011, the commission argued that the ban was a form of religious discrimination. However, the school enforces the *hijab*-ban and relies on its Catholic identity and states that 'expressions, in any form whatsoever, other than one of the Catholic faith' remains prohibited. Not only in the media, but also in politics this statement was discussed. A couple of days after the decision of the Equal Treatment Commission, members of parliament for the PVV - Van Klaveren and Beertema - asked the Minister of Interior and Kingdom Relations and the Minister of Education, Culture and Science about this dispute whether they agreed with their point of view, that (1) a school should be able to prohibit the *hijab* if the *hijab* is in conflict with the identity of the school and that (2) a *hijab* is a symbol of the Islamic inequality between man and women and therefore should be prohibited from schools. The ministers replied a couple of weeks later by stating that they didn't share the same point of view.

yarmulkes and headscarves. The VVD does not want a general ban on headscarves for public officials. The government however has, like any other employer, the right to demand certain requirements with respect to representation and safety. In the context of safety the VVD wants to ban all kinds of face-covering clothing in public spaces. Also every conduct which excludes oneself from the labor market (for example wearing a burqa or refusing to shake hands) will no longer be rewarded with a welfare benefit'.¹⁶

The SGP programme states that face covering clothing hinders communication and should therefore not be allowed in schools. The program also states that the wearing of face-covering clothing should not hinder fulfilling one's legal and social obligations.¹⁷ In an e-mail the party it is said that the party is not in favor of a general ban but that officials in uniform should not wear a *hijab* and that schools have the right to prescribe particular clothing.¹⁸

The Christian Union (CU) programme does not explicitly mention the *hijab* but wants a ban on clothing that covers the face: 'The space for religion – also for the Islam – in the public space remains. Everyone in the public domain is free to let their heart speak. Because we all show our faces, covering clothing does hinder the social interaction'.¹⁹

The Christian Democratic Appel (CDA) programme does not include a statement about religious garment. However, the party website states: 'The Netherlands is a country where in the public space people can express their faith, such as wearing a *hijab* or a yarmulke. And that is something we all should be proud of. The Dutch democracy guarantees freedom rights, beginning with Article 1 of the Constitution, the freedom of speech. This includes the right to bear your religious or ideological beliefs'. The CDA doesn't mention whether this party wants to ban the *hijab* in government institutions, a ban for government officials who aren't in uniform or a *hijab*-ban at schools.²⁰

The D66 programme states 'People are free in their choice of clothing. However, when it comes to work, requirements may apply. Certain clothing could be prescribed because of hygiene or safety rules or for the neutrality of a certain function. Persons who by wearing a uniform symbolize the neutrality of the state (such as judges, police and military) should not wear religious symbols. If someone, for example by wearing certain clothes wants to express

¹⁶ VVD *Religieuze kleding* Retrieved September 06, 2010 from <http://www.vvd.nl/standpunten/137/religieuze-kleding>

¹⁷ SGP *Boerkaverbod*. Retrieved 6 September 2010 from http://www.sgp.nl/Direct_naar/Standpunten?letter=B&standid=41

¹⁸ Email received 16 November 2011 from Gijsbert Leertouwer, SGP Beleidsmedewerker.

¹⁹ CU (2010), *Christelijk-sociaal perspectief, Verkiezingsprogrammema ChristenUnie 2010-2014*, page 18.

²⁰ Retrieved 6 September 2010 from <http://verkiezingen.cda.nl/programmema/standpunten/hoofddoekjes>

his religious beliefs and for that reason this person cannot find suitable work, the person himself is responsible'.²¹

The Labour Party (PvdA) programme does not include any statement about religious garments nor does the party website mention any point of view. My e-mail asking for information was not answered.²²

The GreenLeft (GL) programme states: 'In a liberal society you can shape your own life, not hindered by prejudice or group pressure. No one is forced to wear a headscarf or to go sailing in the Gay Pride. No one is obliged to take off the headscarf or to hide his pink triangle'.²³

The Socialist Party (SP) programme nor website says anything about a *hijab*-ban. In an email the SP states: 'The SP isn't supportive of a general ban. Everyone should have the freedom to make their own choice what one wants to wear on his head. Everyone should also have the freedom to express his/her faith or culture. Certain expressions should only be limited at the moment that it would hurt, threaten or endanger others or when public security is threatened. From this point of view we see no reason for prohibiting the *hijab* for civil servants, officials, teachers and students'.²⁴

Summarizing, an analysis of the election programs of the national parties in 2010 show that only the PVV is in favor of a general ban of the *hijab*. The PVV does also promote a *hijab*-ban in governmental institutions; the other parties reject this idea or do not have a clear opinion about it. The PVV, VVD, CDA, D66, and SGP support the idea that public officers in uniform should not wear a religious garment like the *hijab* in order to represent the neutrality of the state; GreenLeft and the Socialist Party reject this idea while the PvdA and CU do not have an official opinion about this. Only the PVV is in favor of a general ban of government officials. When it comes to wearing a *hijab* in schools, the PVV and SGP do support the idea of a *hijab* ban for teachers whereas GreenLeft and the Socialist Party reject this idea and the other parties do not have an official opinion about it.

²¹ D66 (2010), *We willen het anders; Verkiezingsprogramma Tweede Kamer 2010*. Page 75.

²² There is however a statement from a member of parliament for the PvdA, Martijn van Dam, in 2011: 'dress codes and particularly the requirement for women to cover a part of themselves goes against everything I stand for: self-determination, sex-equality and freedom. I wish that women and girls find the strength and conviction to make the choice not to wear a *hijab*'. Source: Martijn van Dam, 'School Volendam mag hoofddoek verbieden', accessed by: http://www.martijnvandam.com/home/School_Volendam_mag_hoofddoek_verbieden.html?id=171 on 5 April 2011.

²³ *Groen Links*. Retrieved 6 September 2010, from <http://standpunten.groenlinks.nl/integratie>. However, a year before the elections, the leader of the party, Femke Halsema, declared in a newspaper interview 'I prefer to see every women in the Netherlands without a *hijab*. And totally free. I do not believe that any God demands clothing requirements. This is done by the men who explain the religion' (in *DePers* 8 September 2009).

²⁴ E-mail received on 23 May 2011 from Arnout Hoekstra, member of the SP Second Chamber group.

Table 1: Political Parties and their views¹ about a *hijab* ban

	Ban in general	Ban in government institutions	Ban for government officials in uniform	Ban for government officials	Ban for teachers
PVV	+ ²	+	+	+	+
VVD	-	-	+	-	?
SGP	-	-	+	-	+
CU	-	?	?	?	?
CDA	-	?	+	?	?
D66	-	?	+	?	?
PvdA	?	?	?	?	?
GL	-	-	-	-	-
SP	-	-	-	-	-

¹ + = the party is in favor, - = the party is not in favor, ? = it is unclear whether the party is in favor or not.
² The PVV does not explicitly promote a general ban but wants to tax the wearing of a *hijab*.

2.4 Conclusion

Critical views on integration and multiculturalism, expressed in the early 1990s by the leader of the conservative liberal party VVD, have become mainstream in the first decade of 2000 (Roggeband and Vliegthart, 2007: 526). Many politicians have publicly declared that Dutch integration policy has failed and have urged for a policy change (Entzinger 2006: 136). At the same time the ‘immigration-problem’ became an ‘Islam-problem’ (Verkuyten and Zaremba, 2005: 382). Leading politicians of right wing parties in the Netherlands, including Pim Fortuyn (first LN, later LPF), Ayaan Hirsi Ali (VVD), and Geert Wilders (first VVD, later PVV), expressed very negative views on the Islam. The *hijab* was presented as a symbol of Muslim oppression of women. The right-wing parties LPF and PVV placed the ‘Islam-problem’, symbolized by the *hijab*, central in their electoral campaigns. The 2010 election party programs show that the PVV is in favor of a general ban of the *hijab*. The VVD, CDA, D66, and SGP support a ban of the *hijab* for public officers in uniform. The SGP supports a *hijab* ban for teachers. Wearing a *hijab* is rejected in order to stop ‘the Islamization’ (PVV) or to maintain the religious neutrality of the state (other parties). An important argument against wearing a *hijab* is the assumption that wearing a *hijab* is not a voluntary but a forced choice.

3. Theory

3.1 Introduction

Is it true that Muslim women who wear a *hijab* are forced to wear a *hijab* or do Muslim women have other reasons and motivations for wearing a *hijab*? These are the questions that I will try to answer in the following chapters. In the first part of this chapter an overview is given of previous publications about the reasons and motivations of Muslim women to wear a *hijab*. In the second part of this chapter possible reasons and motivations will be derived from dominant general behavior explanatory theories.

3.2 Previous publications

In the theoretical literature I have found five theoretically possible reasons and motivations.

The first possible reason/motivation is force or the fear of physical punishment. Van Kuijeren (2000) states that Muslim girls are forced by their parents to wear a *hijab* because these parents fear a westernization of their daughter. In the media it are often male relatives - the father, brother, and/or husband - who are said they force women to wear a *hijab*. In several European countries many non-Muslims perceive that Muslim women are dominated by men and regard the *hijab* as a symbol of male oppression of women (Teitelbaum, 2011: 90; Verhofstadt, 2006: 7-22). Some media report that Muslim women are threatened with punishments and are forced to wear a *hijab* by their (male) relative (Saharso and Lettinga, 2008). Verhofstadt (2006) argues that not only in Muslim countries women are oppressed by men, but that this also occurs in Western European countries. These women are not only forced to wear a *hijab* but are also not allowed to have contact with other Muslim men and non-Muslims, and they have to marry someone they have not chosen themselves.

The second possible reason/motivation is religion. Van Kuijeren (2000) observed a group of elderly Muslim women who wear a *hijab* because of their religion. For these women wearing a *hijab* is a religious custom that is passed from one generation to the following. In 2006, in a study conducted by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research, about 60% of the *hijab* wearing women answered that the *hijab* was a part of their religion (Keuzenkamp and Merens, 2007). In this light, the *hijab* could be seen as an expression of a conscientious Muslim identity (Shahid and Koningsveld, 2005: 38). For some Muslim women, the *hijab* is the symbol of a religious way of life that excludes a whole range of behaviors such as

participation in mixed-gender activities (Killian 2003: 571). For some scholars, like Mernissi (1991) the divine commandment that a woman should wear a *hijab*, rests on wrong interpretations of the Qur'anic verses. These interpretations have made a *hijab* a symbol of inequality of the sexes and oppression of Muslim women (Mernissi, 1991: 101).

The third possible reason/motivation is socialization pressure. Several Moroccan women participating in a Belgian study claimed 'that they have been forced to wear a *hijab* in order to avoid conflicts with their family members' (Saaf, et al., 2009: 127). These women mentioned that they are not physically forced by their relatives, but that they felt a social pressure to wear a *hijab*. Okin (1999) discusses the view that multicultural ideals and feministic ideals are in conflict with each other. Even though both multiculturalism and feminism could be considered progressive movements who strive for equal rights for the members of their group, minorities and women respectively, the two cannot coexist. Multiculturalism gives minority-groups group rights and with that the women rights are threatened to be lost. She argues that feminism has achieved equal rights for women, and by giving patriarchal minority cultures group rights the rights of the women and girls who belong to these minority groups are threatened (Okin, 1999: 10-11).

The fourth possible reason/motivation is the wish to social participation. Muslim girls wear a *hijab* to be able to participate in society and at the same time to ensure their parents that they still follow the rules of Islam instead of 'worrying their parents' (Van Kuijeren, 2000). A girl or woman who wears a *hijab* is seen as modest. Going out wearing a *hijab* frees the Muslim women from the objections of their family members, who might otherwise limit their mobility (Ruby, 2007: 30). The *hijab* gives a certain way of freedom to Muslim women to participate in society. By wearing a *hijab* Muslim women also protect themselves from the attention of men, from being judged primarily by their appearance, and gives them a feeling of safety (Van Kuijeren, 2000). Besides the freedom that a *hijab* offers to Muslim women, it also provides a feeling of security. By wearing a *hijab* a Muslim woman can show her chastity to the outside world and in particular to Muslim men. Many Muslim women find that men have more respect for them and bother them less when they wear a *hijab* (Hessini, 1994: 53). A *hijab* creates a sexual distance between men and women which provides a feeling of security and safety. 'Many women choose a headscarf to increase their space to move' writes Halleh Ghorashi, professor of management of diversity and inclusion at the University of Amsterdam in 2010. 'Many women from traditional families use religious arguments for their equality with men to demand. By studying the religion and consciously choosing to wear a *hijab* these women receive more trust within their families and therefore more space to move.

For them, the headscarf is not emancipation inhibitory but stimulating. This is also one of the reasons that so many women in the colleges and universities choose a headscarf'.²⁵

The fifth possible reason/motivation to wear a *hijab* is political protest. 'Because of Wilders there are more *hijabs*. It is almost like bravery: you are against the *hijab*? So we are going to wear one. Wilders is contributing to the Islamisation of the Netherlands, definitely' says Berger.²⁶

Concluding, the existing literature presents five theoretically possible reasons / motivations for wearing a *hijab*: fear of physical force, complying to a religious command, complying to socialization pressures, wishing social participation, and political protest.²⁷

3.3 Behavior theories

Another source for possible reasons/motivations for wearing a *hijab* are theories that try to explain behavior in general. The four dominant, partly overlapping theories from which I derived possible reasons/motivations are the Reasoned Action theory, Socialization theory, Direct Contact theory and Social Identity theory.

Reasoned Action theory (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980) proclaims that a person's behavior - in this case wearing a *hijab* - is strongly influenced by a person's intention to perform that behavior. This behavioral intention is in turn the result of two other orientations: one's attitude towards that behavior and the 'subjective norm'. Whether a Muslim woman wears a *hijab* or not (behavior) depends on her intention to wear a *hijab* or not and this intention depends on her attitude towards wearing a *hijab* and her subjective norm concerning wearing a *hijab*. The attitude towards wearing a *hijab* is in turn influenced by beliefs about consequences of wearing a *hijab*. If a Muslim woman for example believes that wearing a *hijab* will enhance her chances on finding a good Muslim husband, she will evaluate wearing a *hijab* positively and her attitude towards wearing a *hijab* will be

²⁵ [In Dutch: 'Veel vrouwen kiezen voor een hoofddoek om hun bewegingsruimte te vergroten, weet Halleh Ghorashi, hoogleraar management van diversiteit en integratie. 'Veel vrouwen uit traditionele gezinnen gebruiken religieuze argumenten om hun gelijkheid ten opzichte van mannen op te eisen. Door zich inhoudelijk te verdiepen in de religie en bewust te kiezen voor een hoofddoek krijgen deze vrouwen binnen hun familie meer vertrouwen en dus bewegingsruimte om zich verder te ontwikkelen. Voor hen is de hoofddoek niet emancipatieremmend maar stimulerend. Dit is ook een van de verklaringen dat zoveel vrouwen op de hogescholen en universiteiten voor een hoofddoek kiezen'.] Ghorashi, H. (2010), Soms verschaft de hoofddoek ook vrijheid, *De Volkskrant* 6 July 2010.

²⁶ Interview in the newspaper *BN DE STEM* of 29 March 2011. [In Dutch: 'Door Wilders kwamen er juist meer hoofddoekjes. Het is bijna geuzengedrag: jij bent tegen de hoofddoek? Dan gaan wij die dragen. Wilders draagt bij aan de islamisering van Nederland, absoluut'.] Retrieved on 4 December 2011 from: <http://www.bndestem.nl/algemeen/brabant/article8407252.ece>

²⁷ The existing literature also includes many philosophical, normative publications, for example Bilsky (2009).

positive. She may however also believe that wearing a *hijab* results in bad treatment by non-Muslims, not getting a job, and discrimination in general by non-Muslims which will probably be evaluated negatively resulting in a negative attitude towards wearing a *hijab*. The subjective norm concerning wearing a *hijab* involves how she thinks that others will view and react to her when she is wearing a *hijab* and how important this is for her. If she expects approval of wearing a *hijab* and if she thinks this approval is important for her the attitude and intention to wear a *hijab* will be positive. If she ‘doesn’t care’ what others think, or if these others have different views, the subjective norm will not influence her attitude and intention; in that case only the beliefs about the consequences of wearing a *hijab* will influence the attitude and intention. Based on the reasoned action theory we may hypothesize that wearing a *hijab* or not is ultimately the result of a rational calculation of the expected positive and/or negative consequences of wearing a *hijab* in combination with perceptions of what relevant others might think of wearing a *hijab* and a strong or weak wish to adapt to these relevant others. The main reason/motivation for wearing a *hijab* is, following the reasoned action theory, the expectation of only positive, or more positive than negative, consequences of wearing a *hijab* in combination with an expected and desired approval by relevant others.

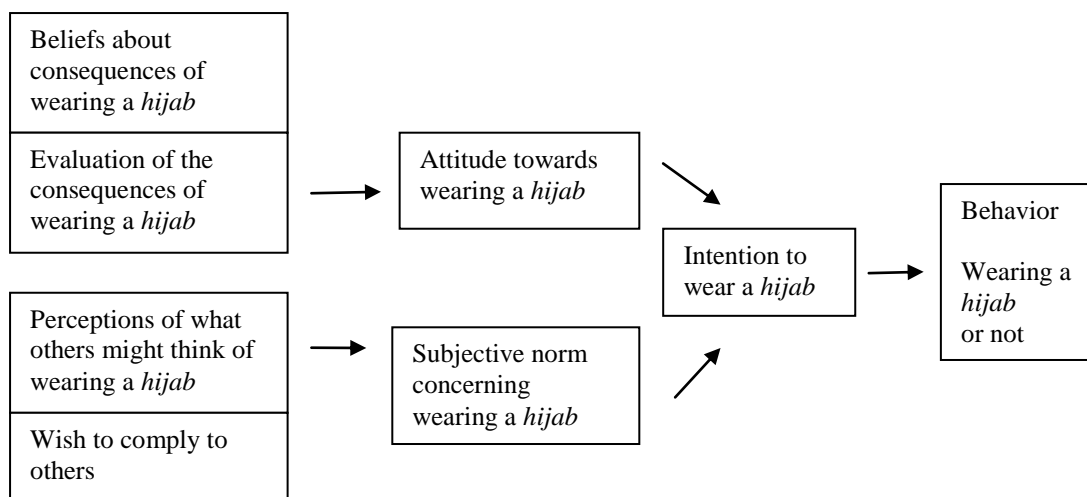


Figure 1: Reasoned Action theoretical model to explain wearing a *hijab*

Socialization theory is the second general behavior explanatory theory. At the core of this theory is that behavior and their underlying orientations such as attitudes and beliefs are mainly the effect of the informative and emotional messages that one receives from relevant others. Women wear a *hijab* because they received more positive than negative messages about wearing a *hijab* from these relevant others. Research has shown that fundamental

attitude development begins early in life. The socialization agents include family, church/mosque, school, mass media, peers, work, social networks, and politics (Davies, 1965; Dawson and Prewitt, 1969; Sears, 2003). The most influential socializers are theoretically they who first exert influence on the receiver (the parents), who have influence for the longest period of time (parents, best friends, partner), whose credibility is believed to be the highest (parents, teachers, mass media, church), who have the most 'power' over the receiver (parents, partner, teachers, employers, the state, church), and who have the most recourses and skills to influence and manipulate the perceptions and emotions of the receiver (mass media, politicians) (Dekker and Van der Noll, 2009: 5). An important motivation to accept messages is the wish to be accepted by the relevant others because of the fundamental human need of belonging. Based on this theory we may hypothesize that the main reason for wearing a *hijab* is having frequently received only positive, or more positive than negative, messages about wearing a *hijab* from one's socializers including parents, grandparents, siblings, priest/imam, one's best friend, and partner. Many socialization researchers claim that parents are the most influential socializer when it comes to fundamental political beliefs, attitudes and emotions. 'The family provides the major means for transforming the mentally naked infant organism into the adult, fully clothed in its own personality' writes Davies (1965: 11).

Direct Contact theory is the third source of theoretically possible reasons/motivations. Allport's (1954) hypothesis states that direct contact with members of an out-group generally improves the perceptions and evaluations of that out-group. Based on this theory we may hypothesize that a Muslim woman who has direct contact with non-Muslim women (the out-group), will develop a positive attitude towards non-Muslim women and will not have the wish to distinguish herself from them by wearing a *hijab*. If a Muslim woman has no direct contact with non-Muslim women or has had negatively evaluated contact with non-Muslim women, it is more likely that she will develop a negative attitude towards non-Muslim women and the wish to distinguish herself from them for example by wearing a *hijab*. Therefore, I expect that a reason for wearing a *hijab* is absence of direct contact or negatively evaluated direct contact with non-Muslim women. The explanatory variable is no or negatively evaluated direct contact with non-Muslim women.

Social Identity Theory is the fourth theory. This theory includes three assumptions. The first assumption is categorization: individuals tend to use social categorizations to order society into meaningful elements. By placing oneself and others in categories, for example Muslims and non-Muslims, and Muslim women who wear a *hijab* and Muslim women who do not wear a *hijab*, the society becomes more understandable and easier to deal with. The

second assumption is social comparison: individuals compare their own in-group with one or more out-groups in order to define the value of the in-group to which they belong. When the in-group compares itself with 'worse' out-groups, the value of the in-group will become higher. When the in-group compares itself with 'better' out-groups, the in-group's value will become lower. The third assumption is that people strive for a positive identity. Identity is for an important part social identity, introduced by Tajfel as 'the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership' (Tajfel, 1997: 292, cited by Terry and Hogg, 2000). If a person suffers from a weak positive identity the theory predicts that this person will strive for a more positive social identity. One can improve one's identity by viewing one's in-group more positively, by becoming member of another positively evaluated group, or by viewing one or more out-groups more negative. The *hijab* allows Muslim women to distinguish themselves from non-Muslims (Killian, 2003); by wearing a *hijab*, a Muslim woman can clearly show that she belongs to the Muslim group. For this woman the group of *hijab* wearing women is the 'in-group' and the group of non-*hijab* wearing Muslim women and non-Muslims are the 'out-groups'. When the *hijab* wearing woman compares her own group with the group of women who do not wear a *hijab*, she will evaluate herself and the other women who wear a *hijab* as the 'better' group and the non-*hijab* wearing women as the 'worse' group. This positive evaluation of her own group (and the negative evaluation of the other group) will develop a positive identity for the group she belongs to and herself. For a non-*hijab* wearing Muslim woman the in-group consists of other women who don't wear a *hijab*, and the out-group consists of women who do wear a *hijab*. The woman without a *hijab* might consider herself and other Muslim women who don't wear a *hijab* modern and emancipated. She evaluates belonging to this group of non-*hijab* wearing women positively. In the perspective of this non-*hijab* wearing woman, the group she belongs to is the better in-group, and women who do wear the *hijab* belong to the worse out-group. The group of *hijab* wearing women, the 'out-group', will be evaluated less positive (or even negatively) by the non-*hijab* wearing woman. This non-*hijab* wearing woman will also evaluate herself and the other non-*hijab* wearing women, as the 'better' group, and the women who wear the *hijab* as the 'worse' group This positive evaluation of her own group (and the negative evaluation of the other group) will develop a positive identity for herself and the group she belongs to. If a Muslim woman suffers from a weak positive identity she can improve her identity by viewing her in-group more positively and one or more out-groups more negatively or by becoming a member of another more positively evaluated group. A Muslim woman who does not wear a *hijab*,

who suffers from a weak positive identity and who believes that Muslim women who wear a *hijab* are positively evaluated, may start to wear a *hijab* in order to improve her identity. Based on this theory, we may expect that the main reason/motivation for wearing a *hijab* is the wish to strengthen one's positive identity by becoming member of the positively evaluated group of *hijab* wearing Muslim women. The explanatory variables are a low positive identity or self-esteem, and a positive attitude towards the *hijab* wearing group.

The four theories partly overlap but also complement each other. Socialization theory predicts that Muslim women wear a *hijab* because they are surrounded by women who wear a *hijab* and have received only or mainly positive messages about wearing a *hijab* from people who are important to them and accepted this information because they want to belong to the group of these relevant others. The same Muslim woman may also have had contact with non-Muslims during her life. Negative contacts with non-Muslims may result in a wish to distinguish herself from the non-Muslims by wearing a *hijab*. If the Muslim woman has had positive contact with other Muslim women who wear a *hijab*, she would like to belong to this group. By joining the group of *hijab* wearing women, she can show to others that she belongs to that particular group. It is also possible that the same woman thinks that the only way of getting approval from this group, and to belong to this group of women, is wearing a *hijab*.

3.4 Conclusion

A possible reason/motivation to wear a *hijab*, suggested in the political discourse as presented in the previous chapter, is force. Previous publications, presented in this chapter, mention five possible reasons/motivations: physical force or fear thereof, complying to a religious command, socialization pressures, wish of social participation, and political protest. From the dominant theories, described also in this chapter, the following five reasons/motivations can be derived: the expectation of positive consequences of wearing a *hijab*, having frequently received positive messages about wearing a *hijab* from one's socializers, a positive attitude towards the *hijab* wearing group, no or negatively evaluated direct contact with non-Muslims, and a low positive identity or self-esteem. In combination the list includes eight theoretically possible reasons/motivations: force, religion, socialization, wish of social participation, positive attitude towards the *hijab* wearing group, no or negatively evaluated direct contact with non-Muslims, a low positive identity or self-esteem, and protest against anti-*hijab* politics and Islamophobia.

4. Methodology

4.1 Interviews

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used to collect the data needed to answer the research question. Interviews are generally considered an adequate method to study individuals' reasons and motivations for behavior if these are not extensively studied previously. 'The semi structured interview gives the researcher the opportunity to explore new paths which were not initially considered' (Gray, 2004: 217). Advantages are that the informants can tell their reasons and motivations in their own words and that the interviewer can study these reasons and motivations in depth and can ask all kinds of sub-questions to find the 'truth'. Disadvantages are that this method consumes much time, and that because of time constrains only a small sample can be studied.

The theoretically possible reasons and motivations for wearing a *hijab* provided by the political discourse (chapter 2), mentioned in previous publications (chapter 3.1), and derived from the various behavior explanatory theories (chapter 3.2) were recast in interview questions. To explore the first possible reason - physical force or the fear thereof - the *hijab* wearing informants were asked how people in their surroundings (father, brother, mother, sister, best friend, partner) would react if they would decide not to wear a *hijab* anymore. To understand the second possible reason/motivation - complying to a religious command - the informants were asked about how often they visit religious meetings. To get to know more about the third possible reason - socialization pressures - the informants were asked about the frequency of talking about wearing a *hijab* with parents, siblings, and one's best friend, what these socializers told them about *hijab* wearing women, and whether the female socializers wear a *hijab* or not themselves. To find out more about the fourth possible reason/motivation - wish of social participation - the informants were asked about their expectations with respect to the consequences of wearing a *hijab* with respect to a job, a partner or friends. For the fifth possible reason/motivation - a positive attitude towards the *hijab* wearing group - the informants were asked about with whom they have the best contact, with *hijab* or non-*hijab* wearing women. To check the sixth possible reason/motivation - no or negatively evaluated direct contact with non-Muslims - the informants were asked questions about their contact with *hijab* and non-*hijab* wearing women. For the seventh possible reason/motivation - a low positive identity or self-esteem - the Rosenberg's (1965) 'self-esteem scale' items were used.

The informants received these statements on a separate form and were asked to read the statements and to react to them by circling the answer number corresponding with their opinion. The items were: ‘On the whole, I am satisfied with myself’, ‘At times I think I am no good at all’, ‘I feel that I have a number of good qualities’, ‘I am able to do things as well as most other people’, ‘I feel I do not have much to be proud of’, ‘I certainly feel useless at times’, ‘I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others’, ‘I wish I could have more respect for myself’, ‘All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure’, and ‘I take a positive attitude toward myself’. Possible answers were: ‘fully agree’, ‘agree’, ‘do not agree, but also do not disagree’, ‘disagree’, and ‘fully disagree’. To explore the eighth possible reason/motivation - protest against anti-*hijab* politics and Islamophobia – the informants were asked how they would feel if the *hijab* would be banned? Finally, questions were asked about age, education level, monthly income, and marital status.

In total, the interview schema contained 54 questions. The full lists of questions for *hijab* wearing and non-*hijab* wearing informants are reproduced in the Appendix of this thesis. The questionnaire for the *hijab* wearing informants included, among others, the following questions: Does your mother/sisters/best friend wear a *hijab*?, What did your mother/father/brother/sister/best friend told you about the *hijab*?, How did you feel when you wore a *hijab* for the first time?, How did people in your surrounding react when you start wearing a *hijab*?, Have you ever thought of taking off your *hijab*?, What would your father/brother/mother/sister/best friend do if you would decide not to wear a *hijab* anymore?, Are there women in your surroundings who wear a *hijab*?, Are there women in your surroundings who do not wear a *hijab*? The same questions were asked to the non-*hijab* wearing informants but the direction was changed. For example, in stead of ‘Have you ever thought of taking off your *hijab*?’ the informants were asked ‘Have you ever thought of wearing a *hijab*?’. The list of questions guided each interview and created uniformity in the interviews. When an answer was not clear or not answered, the question was repeated in another form using other though similar words or the informants were asked to tell more about that particular topic.

Each interview started with the same introduction: ‘First, I thank you that you have time freed up to participate in the interview. Your input as a Muslim woman is very much appreciated. Much is written and said in recent years about Muslim women but there are few who ask Muslim women what they think of certain things. This study aims to gain more insight into the choices Muslim women make in their lives and on the choice of whether or not to wear a *hijab* in particular. Your answers during this interview will be treated

confidentially and anonymously. If you have any question during the interview or if something is not clear, you can say so during the interview. The interview will be as I have indicated about 45 minutes. Depending on your answers it may be slightly longer or shorter. If there are no questions from your side, I would like to start with my questions. There are Muslim women who choose to wear a *hijab* and there are Muslim women who choose not to wear *hijab*. There are also Muslim women who occasionally wear a *hijab*, for example when they go to a religious meeting in the mosque or when they are on vacation in the country of origin. There are also Muslim women who wear the *hijab* because their parents or parents in law want so, their husband wants this, or because they grew up in an environment where everyone around them was wearing a *hijab*. There are also Muslim women who wear a *hijab* in their spare time, but do not wear a *hijab* when they go to school or to work’.

Each interview with a *hijab* wearing woman started with the same first question: ‘I see that you wear a *hijab*. Could you tell me about the first time you start wearing your *hijab*’. The answer given by the informant determined which question or topic I asked second. For example, when an informant answered that she started to wear a *hijab* after she experienced discrimination the second question was about this discrimination experience. When an informant told me that she started to wear a *hijab* because this was what her mother wished, the second question asked about her mother’s role in this process. Although not in the same order, I asked all informants all questions.

The interviews were mainly held at public places such as community centers and restaurants. One interview was held at the hairdresser salon where the informant was working. The interviews were recorded with an audio-recorder. Prior to the interview I talked with each informant for about 5-10 minutes. During this small talk I introduced myself, told more about the study and tried to calm down nervous informants and to ensure them that they could trust me. I also told informants that the interview was strictly confidential and that the information given by them would only be used for this study. I asked all of the informants if they agreed with recording the conversation. None of the informants refused. The length of the recorded interviews varied between 40 and 90 minutes. Almost all interviews were held in the Dutch language; three interviews were held in the Turkish language.

In practice the interviews were more like a conversation; I asked an open question and the informants gave long answers. During the interview, I made notes about the informant’s behavior; was the informant getting emotional, was she distracted, bored, looking angry and so forth. This non-verbal given information helps to interpret the verbal information. For example, if someone is giving a sarcastic answer or is raising her voice because she is getting

emotional or angry we cannot read this from the text only. Therefore this non-verbal information is important for understanding the true meaning of the transcript.

After the answer to the last question I told the informants that the interview was completed and stopped the audio-recorder, but I stayed for about half an hour talking with the informants. In some cases this resulted in remarkable conversations where informants told me other things than they did during the interview about them wearing a *hijab*. Immediately after leaving the informant I made notes of all the new given information so that it could be included in the interview transcript.

4.2 Informants

From the beginning I expected difficulties in finding Muslim women willing to become informant because of the sensitivity of the topic. I assumed that women who knew me would be more willing to participate in my study. Therefore, my search for informants started in my own social circle. I asked friends and family by e-mail whether they wanted to participate in my study and whether they knew any other Muslim women who might want to participate. By using the snowball-method I hoped to recruit the informants I needed for this study. However, the snowball-method did not work as I hoped it would. Women who agreed to participate cancelled their appointment, sometimes just an hour prior to the appointment. When I noticed that the snowball-approach was not working as I hoped, I have sent an e-mail to several secondary schools in The Hague asking the director permission to interview Muslim female students at their schools about their decision of (not) wearing a *hijab*. Only one school replied by saying that ‘the *hijab* and other head-garments’ were prohibited and therefore they couldn’t help me finding informants. The other schools I emailed didn’t respond at all. I also asked women on the street, at community centers and around schools to participate in the study. Four women agreed to participate, but two of them did not show up for the appointment. When I noticed that these approaches also did not work sufficiently enough I decided to reward informants to this study with a gift certificate valued € 7,50. Originally I thought that a financial reward would not be necessary, although I knew that rewarding could be an effective way of recruiting informants and at the same time a way to thank them for their effort (De Leeuw and Hox 1998: 44). I made flyers which were placed at central places in Leiden University, stating that I was looking for Muslim women aged 15-65 who are willing to participate in a study about the reasons and motivations of Muslim women to wear

or not to wear a *hijab*, and that participants would be rewarded with a gift certificate valued € 7,50. Two students sent me an email saying that they knew someone who might be willing to participate in my study. At the same time I continued asking women at community centers, at schools, and on the street to participate in my study. After I offered informants the gift certificate, the participation level considerably improved. In November and December of 2010, I interviewed 27 Muslim women (22 of them received a gift certificate). Among them 12 women wore a *hijab* and 15 were non-*hijab* wearing women. Knowing that Muslim women who do not wear a *hijab* may have worn a *hijab* in the past, I interviewed both *hijab* and non-*hijab* wearing Muslim women. The informants' countries of origin included Algeria, Azerbaijan, Iran, Iraq, Morocco, Pakistan, Turkey and Surinam. The ages of the informants ranged from 16 to 63 years.

Table 2: Informants' countries of origin and *hijab* behavior

Countries of origin	<i>Hijab</i> wearing	Occasionally <i>hijab</i> wearing	Not <i>hijab</i> wearing	Total
Algeria	1		-	1
Azerbaijan	-		1	1
Iran	1		1	2
Iraq	-		1	1
Morocco	3		4	7
Pakistan	1		1	2
Netherlands*	1		-	1
Turkey	4	1	5	10
Surinam	1		1	2
Total	12	1	14	27

* "Aisha", married to Tunesian man. She's from the Netherlands but has converted to Islam.

4.3 Data analysis

The interviews were immediately transcribed after each interview. Everything the informant has told was written in the transcript. Also the non-verbal information such as pauses, laughter's, changes in pitch and gestures was included in the transcripts, written in parentheses such as <laughter> and <silence>. All transcripts (in Dutch) are available from the author.

Atlas.ti was used to analyze the transcripts. Atlas.ti makes it possible to see all answers to the same question or all information belonging to the same issue from all informants at a

glance. There to all transcribed interviews were individually placed in Atlas.ti in separate so-called hermeneutic units (separate files in Atlas.ti), and all relevant text segments received a code.

In order to code the transcripts, each of them was read thoroughly and to each relevant text segment I linked a keyword or description. With the 'labeling' of these text segments the coding process started. An answer to one question from the informant could include more than one code. The code-list resulting from the analysis of the first interview was used for the analysis and labeling of the second interview, and so on. After coding each interview transcript, I checked whether the code-list needed to be adjusted. Some codes needed to be added or formulated in another way in order to understand it better. This coding process continued until the last transcript. After having coded all 27 transcripts, I made a final code-list by combining codes with the same meanings, removing codes that were only mentioned once, and by removing codes that had no relevance for this research. By doing this, I ended up with a final code list that consisted of a total of 16 codes.

Next I categorized these codes by looking at the connection between two or more codes. For example, the codes 'Qur'an and other Islamic books' and 'Clothing-requirements in Islam' belong to the same category which I called 'religion' whereas 'It is a part of the national or regional clothing' and 'Requirement by the women's own ethnic group' belong to another category which is called one's ethnic society or 'in-group'. This resulted in the following six categories of reasons/motivations: physical force or fear therefor, religion, family, in-group, society, and politics. These categories are also used for the report about the main findings from the interviews in the next chapter.

5. Reasons and motivations

In this chapter the Muslim women who were interviewed speak about their wearing or not wearing a *hijab*. Their answers to the interview questions are presented in six categories of reasons/motivations: physical force, religion, family pressures, in-group pressures, society, and politics. The informants' names are fictitious because anonymity has been promised.

5.1 Physical force or fear of it

Two Muslim women mentioned physical enforcement or fear of it.

“Laila”, a 25-year-old woman of Moroccan descent, was afraid of being punished if she was to take off her *hijab* when she was younger. When she was attending high school she had a friend who was beaten by her father because she took off her *hijab*. This event caused so much fear that Laila was afraid to take off her *hijab* in case she too would also be physically punished. Laila: *‘I was afraid my parents would find out. My friends left the house with a hijab but wouldn’t wear one at school. When they went home, they’d put their hijab back on... in the toilet or in the bus. (Silence) I wanted to do that as well, but was afraid my parents would’ve been very angry. My father, in particular, wouldn’t have been able to accept that. Not then. You know, one of my friends was seen in the city by an uncle. That uncle called her father and said ‘your daughter is a whore because she no longer wears a hijab’ and her father then waited for her in front of the school and hit her. She couldn’t come home anymore and went to a shelter. I was afraid my father would react the same way and that I, too, wouldn’t be allowed to come home anymore. In hindsight I think my fear was unfounded; my father would never have done that. My sisters did not want to wear a hijab and that was fine. They all still live at home and my father hasn’t expelled any of them. But because I was the oldest and my father was accustomed to women wearing a hijab, I had to. If I’d have known what I know now, I don’t know if I’d have worn a hijab then’*. Her younger sisters don’t wear a *hijab* and have never worn one on a daily base. They only wear a *hijab* at religious festivities or when they enter a mosque. *‘When my mother told my sisters how they should wear a hijab, they thanked her for the information but told her that they did not feel ready to wear a hijab. And nobody made a problem of it’*. Laila said that she was astonished; she thought that her parents would be furious if one of their daughters would not wear a *hijab*. Her parents found it important to show to the Muslim, but in particular Moroccan, community

that they have raised ‘good Muslim women’ and wearing a *hijab* contributed to that image (Laila, Moroccan, 25 years old).

“Sepideh”, a 31-year-old *hijab* wearing informant of Iranian descent told me during the interview that ‘*the holy Qur’an says that women need to cover their head, dress modestly. As a good Muslim I’m living by the rules of the Islam. My family had told me to do so. We are all true believers*’. However after the interview, when I stopped taping, Sepideh told me that she couldn’t be completely honest during the interview while I was taping due to political reasons. She told me that one of her relatives is a known person in Iran and due to political reasons she needed to be careful with her answers. The real reason why she was wearing a *hijab* was the Iranian politics and the Iranian secret police, who according to her is also active in Western European countries.²⁸ Wearing a *hijab* was a way to ensure that she and her family in Iran would not become target of the Iranian secret police. Sepideh also told that her mother started to wear a *hijab* after the Iranian revolution. Every women in Iran needed to wear a *hijab* after the revolution. Even if they didn’t want to wear a *hijab*, they were forced to wear one. She told me that many women started to wear a *hijab*, because they were afraid of getting punished or even killed. ‘*My parents opposed the governments ideas. They were intellectuals and they opposed the idea that one should wear a hijab. They saw the hijab as a political symbol of fear, used by the Iranian government. But soon we all realized that it was too dangerous for us not to wear a hijab. So we started to wear one in order to protect our lives*’. Even though the family left Iran many years ago and live in the Netherlands now, they still fear. Because of this, Sepideh, her sisters and their mother wear a *hijab* (Sepideh, Iranian, 31 years old).

Table 3: Wearing a *hijab* and physical force or fear of it

	<i>Hijab</i> wearing informants	Occasionally <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Non- <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Total
Physical force or fear of it	2 Laila, Sepideh	0	0	2
No Physical force or fear of it	10	1	14	25
<i>Total</i>	12	1	14	27

²⁸ In 2010 the newspaper *Trouw* reported that Iranian secret police is active in the Netherlands in order to keep a grip on Iranians who are seen as a threat to the Iranian regime. Retrieved 13 January 2011 from: <http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/4324/Nieuws/article/detail/1098468/2010/04/21/AIVD-Meer-buitenlandse-spionnen-actief.dhtml>

5.2 Religion: belief that wearing a *hijab* is required by the Qur'an

There is no consensus among the informants, who told me that they are all Muslim, about whether the *hijab* is required in the Islam or not. Prior to the interviews I assumed that there would be two main groups: a first group consisting of women who wear a *hijab* and who believe that the Qur'an requires them to wear a *hijab* and a second group consisting of women who do not wear a *hijab* and who don't believe that the Qur'an requires them to wear a *hijab*. During the interviews I noticed that I needed to adjust my prior thought.

Most of the twelve *hijab* wearing Muslim women believe that a *hijab* is obligatory for Muslim women but three women told during this interview that according to them, there was no requirement within the Islam and that women are free in their choice of wearing a *hijab* or not.

One of these women was "Latifa", a 24-year-old woman who is studying at Leiden University. *'No, of course there is no obligation in the Qur'an. It is only recommended for women to cover their head and private parts. But this is also recommended for men. When the Qur'an is read in a good way everybody will see that the Qur'an isn't saying that you should do such and such. You are free in your choice, but some of the things you do will be rewarded in paradise'*. Latifa believes that her deeds in this life will be rewarded or punished after her death. She believes that she will gain credits for her actions and deeds and wearing a *hijab* is for her in this sense important. She will be rewarded for it in paradise. (Latifa, Moroccan, 24 years old).

"Emine", a 58-year-old divorced Turkish woman, who started to wear the *hijab* after her divorce told me that for her wearing a *hijab* there were no religious motives. *'You see my daughter, when you are divorced people will say that the woman is bad. That it is her fault. She must have done something wrong. Let me be honest with you, you asked me why I wear a hijab. I could tell you that it is because of my religion. But then I would lie to you. The true reason is that when you are covered our [Turkish] people immediately assume that you are modest, decent. So it was for me easy to cover my head and not be the subject of gossiping'* (Emine, Turkish, 58 years old).

"Sepideh", a 31-year-old informant of Iranian descent, also believes that there is no requirement within the Islam to wear a *hijab*. Her reason for wearing a *hijab* was, as mentioned, to ensure that she and her family in Iran would not become target of the Iranian secret police (Sepideh, Iranian, 31 years old).

Most of the fourteen Muslim informants who do not wear a *hijab* believe that wearing a *hijab* is not required by the Qur'an but three informants said that they knew that Islam requires wearing a *hijab*. Their motivations not to wear a *hijab* varied, although the main reason given by these women was that they found a *hijab* incompatible with their lifestyle at that moment and they felt that in society for them to wear a *hijab* would not be accepted. They feared that if they were to wear a *hijab*, they would have difficulties with, for example, finding a job.

“Khadija”, an 18-year-old ambitious young woman, studying economics and working 12 hours a week on a voluntary basis at a community center, told me that Islam requires women to wear a *hijab*, and that she would like to wear a *hijab*, but she believed that wearing a *hijab* would influence her future career in a negative way. She said: *‘I know that a hijab is obligatory for Muslim women. And I am planning to wear one in the future. But for now it does not fit in my lifestyle. I would like to wear a hijab, but it is impossible in the Netherlands if you want to make a career. I mean, people think that you are stupid when you wear a hijab, that your Dutch is insufficient and they make fun about your religion. No, it is better not to wear a hijab if you want to become someone in society. You need to blend in with society, not stand out’* (Khadija, Moroccan, 18 years old).

Another young woman I have spoken with was “Zeliha”, a 17-year-old Turkish woman who dropped out of secondary school when she turned 16 and who is now working at a hair salon in The Hague. Dressed in the latest fashion of skinny jeans and a t-shirt she welcomed me at the hair salon where we had our appointment. The salon she was working was only for women and had only female hairdressers working; male customers weren't allowed in the salon. Women with and without *hijab* were welcome in the salon. The *hijab* wearing women felt free to take off their *hijab* in the hair salon, because it was female only. The hair salon was divided in two compartments, a small compartment with a desk where a *hijab* wearing employee welcomed all the customers and the large compartment where the women had their hair done. The *hijab* wearing women took their *hijab* off during their appointment but covered their heads when they went outside the salon. Because of the customers and other hairdressers working in the salon it was sometimes difficult to notice whether Zeliha was giving socially desirable answers or her own, true opinions. When I asked Zeliha about what she thought about wearing a *hijab* she told me that she planned to wear a *hijab* when she will be older: *‘When I'm married and have children I will wear a hijab. A Muslim should wear one, but if you are young you don't do it, it makes you look so old. But I think that when I'm about 30 years old and when I have children, I will do it’*. One of the *hijab* wearing customers who

was sitting nearby felt insulted. She replied to Zeliha in Turkish ‘Do you think I’m ugly because of my *hijab*? For the record, my *hijab* is my pride, and it is obligatory for you as well!’ Before it started to become a discussion I asked Zeliha if there was another room where we could have the interview. That was not a problem and I noticed that Zeliha was being more honest and open when she realized that there wasn’t anyone listening to the answers given by her. When we went to another room I asked Zeliha about what she meant when she replied that a *hijab* would make you look old. She told me that some of her friends were wearing a *hijab*, but that they did not wear it as one should. According to Zeliha, the correct way to wear a *hijab* is not only dependent on one’s clothing but very particularly on the behavior of that woman. ‘*Look, you cannot wear a hijab and look like this [pointing at her clothing], you know. When you wear a short skirt or even jeans and wear a hijab you only do it to show that you are Muslim, not because you really want to wear it. You know, I do understand the girls who want to look modern and wear a hijab. But it is not as it should be done. You should not wear make-up nor go out or flirt with boys. [laughs] Imagine that I want to wear a hijab, I cannot wear H&M clothing. It is too modern. I should buy clothing in Islamic shops and how can I say that, that kind of shapeless clothing. I don’t like those kind of cloths. They are ugly. Imagine me with a long cloak, a black hijab, no make-up. You would think that I’m sixty-years-old. Can you imagine me working like that? They would fire me here immediately. And I cannot find another job looking like that, looking like an old lady. Not even at a Turkish hair salon, let alone a Dutch one. For me it is better that I don’t wear a hijab until I’m married’*. Just like it is for Khadija, a *hijab* is also not compatible within the lifestyle of Zeliha because she believes that one should wear a *hijab* and behave in a modest way. For Zeliha that is a long cloak, a *hijab* and no make-up. She does not believe that one could wear a *hijab* and at the same time dress in fashionable clothing. Zeliha believes that when she would wear a *hijab* – and in her case that would also mean changing her appearance including clothing and make-up – she would be fired at her current job and that finding another job would be difficult (Zeliha, Turkish, 17 years old).

The third informant who was not wearing a *hijab* although she told me that according to her beliefs in the Islam it is required that women wear a *hijab*, was “Fatiha”, a twenty-four-year old woman of Moroccan descent. She told me that she had worn a *hijab* from her fourteenth birthday until she was twenty-two years old. She took off her *hijab* two years ago due to societal reasons; she was bored of justifying her choice of wearing a *hijab* to strangers over and over again. ‘*I wore my hijab since I was fourteen years old. I thought that I would wear a hijab forever, but suddenly there was this moment two years ago that I could not wear*

a hijab anymore. That I lost the struggle with society. I was twenty-two years old and there was this man in the bus. For about fifteen minutes he kept telling me that in The Netherlands I should not be afraid of taking off my hijab, that my father could not harm me and that if I wanted there were these shelters where I could go if I feared for my life. The next day I decided that I was sick and tired of justifying my choice of wearing a hijab, so I took it off (Fatiha, Moroccan, 26 years old).

Table 4: Wearing a *hijab* and the belief that wearing a *hijab* is required by the Qur'an

	<i>Hijab</i> wearing informants	Occasionally <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Non- <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Total
<i>Hijab</i> is required by the Qur'an	9	1 Kübra	3 Khadija, Zeliha, Fatiha.	13
<i>Hijab</i> is not required by the Qur'an	3 Latifah, Emine, Sepideh	0	11	14
Total	12	1	14	27

5.3 Family socialization pressures

The majority of the informants in this study grew up in a family based on traditional role-patterns for males and females. In the male dominated culture which the informants belong to, it is the father's responsibility that his daughters are decent Muslim women. It is not accepted that the daughters take any action that would harm the family name. The father is the head of the family; he works and ensures that his wife and children are well-fed and well-mannered. However, the father's role is limited when it comes to the education of the young Muslim women. It is the mother's role to educate daughters, to tell them about the way they should behave. Even though the mother is responsible for the upbringing, the influence of the father on the choice of wearing a *hijab* is present as well, but in a different way. While mothers are the one who tell their daughters that they have to wear a *hijab*, the influence of the father is more implicit.

Five of the twelve *hijab* wearing informants believe that their father wants them to wear a *hijab* - even when this is not said by the fathers explicitly. They consider the father's opinion important and wear a *hijab* in order to receive the approval of him. Laila, one of the *hijab* wearing informants, believed that it was important for her father that she would wear a *hijab*. 'When my mother told me that I should wear a *hijab*, I thought that my father asked her

to tell me that. Because I thought that he wanted me to wear one, I started to wear one' (Laila, Moroccan, 25 years old). Five of the twelve *hijab* wearing informants believe that their father is neutral or has no clear opinion about wearing a *hijab*. Nasreen's father found it is her own choice; he was not pro or con *hijab*, even though his wife wore a *hijab*. Melike's father had also no strong views about wearing a *hijab*. She started to wear after the death of her husband 'to prevent gossip over her 'being a widow''. Two of the twelve *hijab* wearing informants believe that their father does not want them to wear a *hijab*. Sepideh's father does not want that women wear a *hijab*, but for 'security' reasons she wears a *hijab*.

Table 5: Wearing a *hijab* and believing that the father wants women to wear a *hijab*

	<i>Hijab</i> wearing informants	Occasionally <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Non- <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Total
Father wants women wearing a <i>hijab</i>	5 Laila, Fahra, Latifa, Jasmine, Mariam	1 Kübra	3 Fatiha, Khadija, Zeliha	9
Father does not want women wearing a <i>hijab</i>	2 Aisha, Sepideh	0	8 Begüm, Aliye, and others	10
Father is neutral/no opinion about women wearing a <i>hijab</i> .	5 Nasreen, Hulya, Hasibe, Emine and Melike.	0	3	8
Total	12	1	14	27

All but one of the twelve *hijab* wearing informants had a mother who wears/wore a *hijab* during her life. The informant who is the exception converted to Islam at a later age after she married a Muslim man, took a Muslim name, and started to pray five times a day. "Aisha" tells me about this: 'No, my mother didn't wear a *hijab*. She would not even have considered wearing one. She was not, how can I say it on a decent way, amused, with the fact that I was converted to Islam. But she tolerated it. It was not visible at that moment you see. But when I started to wear a *hijab*, it became visible. The neighbors started to ask questions, other relatives started to ask questions about me becoming a Muslim (...)' (Aisha, Tunisian/Dutch, 41years old).

Table 6: Wearing a *hijab* and having a mother who wears or wore a *hijab*

	<i>Hijab</i> wearing informants	Occasionally <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Non- <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	<i>Total</i>
Mother wears/wore a <i>hijab</i>	11 Sepideh, Laila, Nasreen, Fahra and others	1 Kübra	6 Khadija, Fatiha Zeliha and others	18
Mother does not wear/wore a <i>hijab</i>	1 Aisha	0	8 Begüm, Aliye and others	9
<i>Total</i>	12	1	14	27

Seven out of the twelve *hijab* wearing informants had a mother who asked them to wear a *hijab*. One of these women was “Fahra”, a 52-year-old Algerian woman who studied biology in Algeria. She came to the Netherlands after her marriage and she now has difficulties with coping, even with her degree in biology and her language skills (she speaks French and Arabic fluently). She told me that she finds it difficult to find a job that’s suitable for her level of education. Since her arrival in the Netherlands she has worked as a cleaning lady. She believes that this is due to her insufficient knowledge of Dutch combined with her wearing a *hijab*. Her mother told her to wear a *hijab* at the age of 5/6. Fahra was not informed by her mother of the reason why she should wear a *hijab*. Fahra: ‘(...) *This hijab is for you. You should wear it. And I got a hijab. (...) My mother always wore a hijab. Even when she was taking a shower or sleeping. Someone told her, that she should always wear a hijab and she did wear her hijab always. My mother told me also that I should always wear a hijab. But when I was married I found out that you aren’t obliged to wear a hijab inside the house. My mother never told me*’ (Fahra, Algerian, 52 years old). “Laila”, a 25-year-old Moroccan woman told me: ‘*When I was twelve years old, my mother told me that I should wear a hijab. She gave me a hijab and showed me how to wear my hijab in a proper way. Since that day, I wore a hijab outside of the house*’ (Laila, Moroccan, 25 years old).

Not only do mothers have influence on their daughters, also daughters seem to have influence on their mothers. “Nasreen”, a 58-year-old Surinamese woman, started to wear the *hijab* after her daughter went on a pilgrimage to Mecca. She says: ‘*When my daughter came back from Mecca she was wearing the hijab. I realized that if she was wearing a hijab at such a young age, I should wear a hijab as well*’. She claims that it is not possible that a Muslim mother does not wear a *hijab* while her daughter does wear a *hijab*. Nasreen argues that this would not be accepted within the Muslim community. The members of the Muslim group

would praise the daughter for veiling, but talk negatively about the mother for not doing so (Nasreen, Surinamese, 58 years old). “Hasibe”, a 17-year-old Turkish girl, reported about her influence on her mother. She was 15 when she started wearing her *hijab* after she read in the Qur’an that it was ‘recommended’ for Muslim women to cover themselves. Her mother who didn’t wear a *hijab* at that time started to wear the *hijab* as well. Hasibe: *‘I started to wear a hijab after I have read in the Qur’an that it was recommended for women to wear one. I was not sure if that decision would be accepted by my family. Even though we are Muslim, I am raised in a liberal way. I wasn’t forced to wear a hijab, I didn’t go to Qur’an classes in the Mosque, my mother did not wear a hijab at that time. Now she does wear one. (...) the influence of the other Muslims made her wear a hijab. She was confronted with the fact that her daughter was wearing a hijab, her sisters were wearing a hijab, but she wasn’t. She told me once that she was bored of explaining why she didn’t wear a hijab whereas her daughter was wearing one. That’s why she started to wear one herself’* (Hasibe, Turkish, 17 years old).

Table 7: Wearing a *hijab* and having a mother who asked to wear a *hijab*

	<i>Hijab</i> wearing informants	Occasionally <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Non- <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Total
Mother asked to wear a <i>hijab</i>	7 Fahra, Laila, Nasreen, Mariam and others	1 Kübra	3 Zeliha, Fatiha, Khadija	11
Mother has not asked to wear a <i>hijab</i>	5 Hasibe, Aisha, Latifa, Emine, Sepideh	0	11 Begum, Aliye and others	16
Total	12	1	14	27

Besides that mothers influenced their daughters’ behavior by wearing a *hijab* and by asking their daughters to wear a *hijab*, mothers (and fathers) also influenced their daughters by giving positive or negative messages about the *hijab*. Parents influence their daughters by saying, for example, that wearing a *hijab* is a good thing, that women who wear a *hijab* are better Muslims than women who do not wear a *hijab*. By receiving positive messages about *hijab* wearing women, the Muslim woman will evaluate wearing a *hijab* positively. But the parents could also influence their daughters by giving negative messages, for example by saying that wearing a *hijab* is a bad thing and that women who wear a *hijab* are being oppressed. By receiving negative messages about *hijab* wearing women, the Muslim woman

will evaluate wearing a *hijab* negatively. The positive or negative messages about the *hijab* received from their socializers influence the Muslim women's decisions on wearing a *hijab*.

Seven of the *hijab* wearing informants received positive messages about wearing a *hijab*, while eight informants who do not wear a *hijab* received negative messages about wearing a *hijab*.

Positive messages were received by "Mariam". She was born in a traditional Pakistani family and her father was a respected Imam within the Pakistani community. *'Not only did my parents told me that I made them proud by wearing a hijab, also other relatives and even strangers praised me for wearing a hijab. When I started to wear the hijab, I was about seven years old and the compliments I received made me happy. But, they were not proud of me, but about the fact that I wore a hijab. Actually, people around me often talked on a positive way about hijab wearing women, about how good it was for a Muslim to wear a hijab. It was one of the duties of a Muslim woman to cover her head. But they also mentioned how beautiful the hijab looked on someone'* (Mariam, Pakistani, 21 years old).

"Jasmine", a 23-year-old woman of Moroccan descent, also told me about the positive messages she had received about wearing a *hijab*. Her mother and her eldest sister wore a *hijab* and they have told Jasmine about why a Muslim woman should wear a *hijab*: *'My mother told me that a hijab was to protect your beauty. She told me a story, that a woman is like a diamond and that it therefore should be protected. She never pushed me to wear a hijab, but talked on such a beautiful way about the Islam that I wanted to wear a hijab myself'*. Not only Jasmine's mother talked on a positive way about the *hijab*, she also received positive messages from others. When Jasmine's sister was getting engaged a lot of women visited their house to celebrate this engagement. Jasmine noticed then that these women frequently talked about *hijab* wearing girls in a positive way. *'A Moroccan engagement or wedding is always a good occasion for mothers to find a good match for their sons. At the engagement of my sister, I was about 8 years old at that time, I saw a lot of women who were actually seeking for a daughter-in-law. The girls who were wearing a hijab, were the most popular girls. The women talked about these girls in a positive way and praised them because they were devoted Muslims'* (Jasmine, Moroccan, 23 years old).

Negative messages were received by, among others, "Begüm", a 29-year-old Turkish Muslim woman. She was born and raised in the Netherlands and works as communication-advisor. She does not wear a *hijab* and would not even think of wearing one. The messages about the *hijab* she received from her parents were negative. When I asked her what her parents would do if she started to wear a *hijab* she started to laugh and told me that her

parents would have difficulties with her wearing a *hijab*. Her parents strongly oppose the *hijab*. They believe that women who wear a *hijab* are backwards and not so smart. She and her two sisters were raised by her parents to become independent Turkish women. She calls herself Muslim, but emphasized that religion is not a part of her daily life. She does not pray or fast for example but she does feel that there is a connection with her and Allah: *'If I would wear a hijab, my parents would think that I became insane. Nobody in my family is wearing a hijab, not my mother, not my aunts, not my sisters. The only one who wears a hijab is my 86-year-old grandmother who lives in Turkey. For her [grandmother] wearing a hijab is partly religious, but the main reason is probably culture. She lived in a small village in Turkey where all the women wore a hijab'*. Not only is nobody in her family wearing a *hijab*, her parents have a strong opinion about women who wear a *hijab*. The negative messages given by Begüm's parents regarding women wearing the *hijab* have contributed to the development of a negative attitude towards women wearing a *hijab*. *'(...) a hijab is not a thing that a smart woman would wear. Why would you put an ugly rag on your head? My dad once told me that if he saw me or one of my sisters wearing a hijab, he would disown us. (...) He should not have to worry, I would not even think of wearing a hijab'* (Begüm, Turkish, 29 years old).

"Aliye", a Turkish informant of 21-years-old, also received negative messages about wearing a *hijab* from her parents. I spoke with her at a community center in Amsterdam, where we had our appointment. She came to the appointment dressed in a way that you would say that she is 20 years older than her actual age. Whereas other women of similar age were wearing tight jeans and sportive clothing, she was wearing a loose long skirt and a blouse. When I asked her about her opinion on the *hijab*, she told me that she had not made up her mind. During the interview she hinted often that she is the only member of her family who is interested in religion. *'At the moment I don't wear a hijab. I live at home and everyone is negative about wearing a hijab. My parents claim to be Muslim but they are not interested in their religion. They do not pray, they do not fast, they drink alcoholic beverages. One could even discuss if they are truly Muslim. In fact, I'm the only one who is somehow interested in the Islam in our house. But wearing a hijab? No, definitely not. My parents would not accept it'* (Aliye, Turkish, 21 years old).

Table 8: Wearing a *hijab* and having received positive or negative messages about wearing a *hijab* from parents

	<i>Hijab</i> wearing informants	Occasionally <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Non- <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	<i>Total</i>
Positive messages from parents about wearing a <i>hijab</i>	7 Mariam, Laila, Fahra, Latifa, Melike, Nasreen, Jasmine	1 Kübra	4 Fatiha, Khadija, Zeliha and Rachida.	12
Negative messages from parents about wearing a <i>hijab</i>	2 Sepideh, Aisha	0	8 Begüm, Aliye and others	10
Neutral/no messages from parents about wearing a <i>hijab</i>	3	0	2	5
<i>Total</i>	12	1	14	27

5.4 In-group socialization pressures

The parents' behaviors and messages with respect to wearing a *hijab* are influenced by the social environment. Many parents want their daughter to wear a *hijab* to protect their dignity and pride. The opinions of 'others' in the Muslim community are important in the decision-making process of wearing a *hijab* or not. The same applies directly to my informants. When a girl or woman wears a *hijab* she is accepted within the Muslim community as a respectable Muslim woman.

Ten out of the twelve informants who wear a *hijab* fear not to be accepted or to be excommunicated by members of the own ethnic group if they do not wear a *hijab*. For them this fear is an important reason to wear a *hijab*.

"Laila", a Moroccan informant of 25-years-old told me about her starting to wear a *hijab* that *'It didn't have anything to do with my religion then, I had to wear [a hijab] because otherwise 'others' wouldn't accept it. (...) In our street there are a lot of Moroccans and everybody knows each other... They call themselves Muslims, the men wear long beards and the women all wear a hijab. But when you really get to know them you see it is just a show that they gossip a lot and they lie about all kinds of things. They pretend to be very religious but in the meantime... and those people, they ruin it for the 'real' Muslims: the Muslims that do live by the rules of the Islam and don't interfere with others. My parents were afraid, I think, to be excommunicated by the Moroccans in the street and in the neighborhood and*

desperately tried to fit in. And, well, that includes your daughters wearing a hijab. So I, too, had to wear a hijab' (Laila, Moroccan, 25 years old).

“Fahra”, a 52-year-old Algerian informant, told me that after the death of her father, her mother became even more anxious of what family members, neighbors and acquaintances might say about her raising her children, in particular her daughters. Her mother was afraid that people might start a rumour, a rumour that would harm the family’s good name. Fahra: *‘I did not have a father anymore. My dad was dead, she [her mother] was afraid that people would think that my mother could not raise her daughters. I was the youngest at home. She needed to raise me with dignity, like she did with my sisters. My sisters are good Muslims. I needed to become a good Muslim. So I should wear a hijab. I wasn’t allowed to wear short clothing, it was forbidden by Allah. I needed to wear a hijab. [...] Yes, she was afraid that people might say that I was a bad girl. I mean not a decent girl. You do understand it, right? Turkish people are also like that. They also say that when their daughter is not decent then, how do you call that in Dutch, their dignity is broken. If the daughter is not a good girl, no one would marry her. A bad girl gives the family a bad name. A girl needs to be decent’* (Fahra, Algerian, 52 years old).

For “Melike”, a 63-year-old Turkish informant, who started to wear a *hijab* at the age of seven it was also important not to break with the way of living, or in this case the way of dressing. Women were expected to wear the regional trousers and blouse, combined with a *hijab*. She emphasised that it was not due to religion that the women were dressed that way, but that wearing a *hijab* was something cultural. Melike stated: *‘...everyone wore a hijab. It is not that you wanted or not wanted to wear one, you did it without thinking about it. It was a part of our clothing. You wore a long blouse with a salvar [Turkish traditional trouser] and a hijab was a part of it. The elderly women had a different style of wearing a hijab, than the young girls. The young girls wore the hijab to the back showing more hair, the elderly women draped it around their faces. [...] It was told that going outside without wearing your hijab was ayeb, inappropriate. It did have a religious reason of course, but who talked about that? No-one! Everyone was mentioning what people would say if you wouldn’t wear a hijab. Nobody mentioned religion; it wasn’t religious it was merely cultural. Our society, our people - they expect you to wear a hijab so you wear a hijab. It is still like that by the way. People use the word religion as a reason for why they should wear a hijab, but they don’t do anything about their religion. They don’t pray, they swear whenever they can and young girls wear a thick layer of make-up on their faces. I see it daily here in the neighborhood. Young*

girls who wear a hijab combined with a tight jeans and a top where you can see their breasts' (Melike, Turkish, 63 years old).

“Mariam”, a 21-years-old Pakistani woman, told me that she finds it really difficult to wear her *hijab*. She started to wear a *hijab* at the age of 7. Her father is a respected Imam and her parents frequently told her that she had a role model function and that she was aware of her role during her youth. However, for the past couple of years she has felt that her *hijab* has become a daily struggle for her: *‘I wore my hijab with pride for many years and nobody made a problem of it. People were even curious and asked me often about my religion and ethnicity. But after the attacks at the twin towers and the assassination of Theo van Gogh, I don’t know, it all changed slowly. In their eyes I am not one of them, I am outsider, they see me as a terrorist. It is hard to see that the country I love so much has changed so dramatically. And it is so difficult for me. Each day I struggle with whether I should wear my hijab. It would be so easy to take it off and not be stared at anymore’*. When I asked what kept her of taking off her *hijab*, Mariam told me that she felt that she could not do that because she is the daughter of a respected Imam. If Mariam would decide that she would not wear a *hijab* anymore, this would be dishonorable towards her father. Also people would start gossiping and the respect her father receives from his community would disappear. *‘If I take off my hijab, people will ask me a lot of questions. It is easier to keep wearing the hijab. If I take it off I need to explain my father why the daughter of the Imam doesn’t wear a hijab anymore. I cannot do that to him’* (Mariam, Pakistani, 21 years old).

Table 9: Wearing a *hijab* and perceived socialization pressure from one’s ethnic in-group

	<i>Hijab</i> wearing informants	Occasionally <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Non- <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Total
Perceived socialization pressure from one’s ethnic in-group	10 Laila, Fahra, Melike, Mariam, Jasmine, Nasreen, and others	0	3 Khadija, Zeliha, Fatiha	13
No perceived socialization pressure from one’s ethnic in-group	2 Aisha, Sepideh	1 Kübra	11 Begüm, Aliye and others	14
Total	12	1	14	27

One might expect that complying to the socialization pressures is influenced by the striving for a positive identity. This striving is needed if one suffers from a low self-esteem. To measure self-esteem the informants reacted to a list of statements on a separate form. The

answers were processed using SPSS in such a way that a higher score represented a higher self-esteem. The answers to the statements formed a reliable scale (Cronbach's alpha = .83). There was however no remarkable difference in the self-esteem of *hijab* wearing and non-*hijab* wearing Muslim women.

Table 10: Wearing a *hijab* and self-esteem

	<i>Hijab</i> wearing informants	Occasionally <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Non- <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Total
Low self-esteem (score 1.0-2.4)	0	0	0	0
Medium self-esteem (score 2.5-3.4)	3 Latifa, Emine, Mariam	1 Kübra	5 Khadija, Fatiha, Zeliha and others	9
High self-esteem (score 3.5-5.0)	9 Laila, Fahra, Sepideh, Aisha, Hulya, Jasmine, Nasreen, Melike and Hasibe.	0	9 Begüm, Aliye and others	18
Total	12	1	14	27

5.5 Society

Five of the twelve *hijab* wearing informants told me that they have noticed an important change within Dutch society regarding wearing a *hijab* in the last couple of years. They considered this change as negative. According to these informants, people have started to call them bad names, didn't sit next to them in the bus, ignored or refused to help them in shops or treated them in a childish way. These negative experiences were for them reasons to think about taking off their *hijab*, but in the end they chose not to take it off. Also seven of the fourteen non-*hijab* wearing informants mentioned that they have noticed this change in Dutch society. They also consider this change as negative. Two of them (Fatiha, Kübra) told me that the negativity about Muslims in Dutch society caused that they took off their *hijab*. One of them started to wear the *hijab* occasionally; she wears a *hijab* at work but not in free time. Two other non-*hijab* wearing informants (Zeliha, Khadija) told me that they would like to wear a *hijab*, but that they fear that wearing a *hijab* would hinder their participation in society in the Netherlands. .

For the elder Muslim women wearing a *hijab* is perhaps easier as they are not participating in Dutch society as such. They do not have a job, they don't have Dutch friends, do not participate in social activities in Dutch organizations. Therefore they do not have the

pressure to blend in with society and they can do what they want. When I interviewed these women I became aware of this phenomenon and how much it has in common with the *pillarization* in the Netherlands in the previous century. Instead of dividing people in groups by their religion, these Muslim women are more often divided by their ethnicity: you have the Turkish group, the Moroccan group, the Surinamese group, etc. The social contacts these women have are also mainly based on their own (ethnic) group. For these women it is not important what someone who doesn't belong to their own ethnic group will say about them. On the other hand, the opinion of members of their own group is very important.

For the younger generation Muslim women it is more difficult to deal with the negative experiences within the Dutch society. They are trying to participate within two groups at the same time that have different standards. They want to be a part of their own ethnic group, but they also want to be a member of Dutch society. On the one hand, they have their own (ethnic) group that requires a certain way of living. Women are expected to live by the rules of the Qur'an and on the other hand there is the Dutch society to which they also want to belong. They want to work, but feel discriminated against when they wear a *hijab* when they show up at job interviews.

Perceived negativity in Dutch society with respect to wearing a *hijab* is a reason to wear a *hijab* and a reason not to wear a *hijab*. Five out of the twelve informants who wear a *hijab* and seven out of the fourteen informants who do not wear a *hijab* perceive negativity with respect to wearing a *hijab* in Dutch society. For one informant this negativity is a reason to wear a *hijab* occasionally.

Three of the *hijab* wearing informants and two of the non-*hijab* wearing informants told me that they believe that Muslim women are starting to wear a *hijab* because of the negativity in Dutch society. According to them, these women wear a *hijab* as a sign of protest. By wearing a *hijab* they can show that not all Muslim women are illiterate, have poor Dutch language skills or unemployed. Fatiha: *'If you hear continuously that Muslim women are being forced by their husbands, that they are ignorant of societal problems, that they don't participate within society, that they are stupid and are living in their own limited world, you would like to show that not all the Muslim women are like that. (...) Just because they want to forbid the hijab, because they see us as inferior you would like to show off with your hijab'* (Fatiha, Moroccan, 26 years old).

Two informants who believed that it was obligatory for Muslim women to wear a *hijab*, told me that they have chosen not to wear a *hijab* because of this negativity. One was afraid that her wearing a *hijab* would influence a potential career and decided not to wear a *hijab*.

The other did experienced the difficulties of getting a job due to her wearing a *hijab* and took her *hijab* off in order to find a job, but after she took her *hijab* off she felt really bad so she started to wear a *hijab* again.

Perceived negativity in Dutch society with respect to wearing a *hijab* was a reason not to wear a *hijab* for “Khadija”, a 18-year-old Moroccan girl. She told me: *‘I thought I lived in an ideal society, that it would be possible for me as a Muslim woman to make a career. But it is not. If I was to wear my hijab, I would not be accepted in Dutch society. I do not feel accepted in Dutch society when people can see that I’m Muslim. That’s why I try not to look like a Muslim, even though I am’* (Khadija, Moroccan, 18 years old).

Perceived negativity in Dutch society with respect to wearing a *hijab* is a reason to wear a *hijab* occasionally for “Kübra”. When I met this 16-years-old Turkish girl, I was surprised. She was a friend of one of the other informants and I was told that she didn’t wear a *hijab*. Prior to the interview I talked with her on the phone and we made an appointment in Amsterdam at a restaurant near her work. Kübra told me on the phone that she started to work in a store a couple of weeks prior to the interview and that she was more than willing to tell me her story. Because she was working in a store until 6 o’clock we scheduled the interview in the evening. I expected to see a 16-year-old girl who wasn’t wearing a *hijab*, but in the restaurant in Amsterdam where we had our appointment I saw a young girl, dressed on a modern way – jeans, sweater and UGG boots with make-up on her face, but she was wearing a *hijab*. After I had introduced myself it became clear that this young woman couldn’t wait to tell me her story. She immediately started to tell about the difficulties she had experienced by finding a job, according to her because of the *hijab* she was wearing: *‘I graduated last year and I started to apply for jobs. When I went to job interviews, people turned me down. They told me that they had already found someone for the job. After six-months of job hunting I decided that with a hijab I couldn’t find a job, so I took it off’*. After Kübra had taken off her *hijab*, it was much easier for her to get a job. The negative experience she had while searching for a job was for her the reason why she took off her *hijab*. However, she felt really bad when she took off her *hijab* the first time, that she had pain in her stomach for days, that she couldn’t sleep and that she had a headache until she realized that her symptoms were caused by her not wearing a *hijab*. She felt such remorse that she even thought of quitting her job. After a long talk with her parents she decided to wear a *hijab* before and after she went to work, but she still feels that she is failing as a Muslim (Kübra, Turkish, 16 years old).

Table 11: Wearing a *hijab* and perceived negativity in Dutch society

	<i>Hijab</i> wearing informants	Occasionally <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Non- <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	<i>Total</i>
Perceived negativity in Dutch society	5 Mariam, Melike, Jasmine, Latifa, Fahra	1 Kübra	7 Khadija, Kübra, Fatiha, Zeliha and others	13
No perceived negativity in Dutch society	7 Nasreen, Laila, Emine, Sepideh, Aisha, Hasibe and Hulya.	0	7 Begüm, Aliye and others	14
<i>Total</i>	12	1	14	27

5.6 Politics

Six of the twelve *hijab* wearing informants, and seven of the fourteen non-*hijab* wearing informants mentioned that they have noticed negativity in Dutch politics about Islam and Islam related subjects. Four *hijab* wearing informants and three non-*hijab* wearing informants have not noticed such a change in Dutch politics and two *hijab* wearing informants and four non-*hijab* wearing informants told me that they were not interested in Dutch politics or that they didn't follow the news about Dutch politics.

Three of the *hijab* wearing informants and two of the non-*hijab* wearing informants told me that they believed that women are starting to wear a *hijab* because of the negativity in Dutch politics. According to these women, some *hijab* wearing women wear their *hijab* so that they can show that not all Muslim women are illiterate, have poor Dutch language skills or are unemployed.

Negative messages given by politicians about women wearing a *hijab* gave different effects on older informants than on younger informants.

“Melike”, a 63-year-old Turkish informant, who started to wear a *hijab* at the age of seven, told me ‘*I do not read the newspaper but I heard it from my friend. Muslim women need to pay 1000 euro if they want to wear a hijab. That is ridiculous. Why should we pay money to wear a hijab? What have we done wrong? Geert Wilders is saying that my religion is causing hate, but actually he is the one who is causing that ... I am not interested what politicians have to say in the Netherlands. What do they expect? That I will take off my hijab?*

I'm almost 70 years old! You do not ask a woman of my age to take off her hijab (...) They [the other Turkish people] have never spoken badly about me and I'm not planning to give them a reason to do so' (Melike, Turkish, 63 years old).

“Khadija”, a 18-year-old Turkish girl told me: *‘Politicians like Wilders are telling us that Islam is a retarded religion, the Qur’an is a book that encourages violence, that Muslim men force their women to wear a hijab and that is a symbol of oppression that should be forbidden in the Netherlands. The bad thing is that people in the Netherlands believe these stories because they hear and see these messages continuously on television, read about it in the newspaper. Even if they have lived for more than 20 years in peace with their Muslim neighbors, their colleagues or their friends, now they see them as a threat and they start acting like that. Because of the fear that is caused by politicians like Wilders, I have difficulties in participating in Dutch society if people can see that I’m Muslim’.* Her decision of not wearing a *hijab* was based on the assumption that she would not be accepted within society if she would wear a *hijab* and this assumption was in turn based on the negative experiences her *hijab* wearing friends and relatives have had (Khadija, Moroccan, 18 years old).

“Jasmine”, a young Moroccan informant, told me that she hoped that more women would wear a *hijab* in the future *‘to show Wilders, that you can be Muslim, wear your hijab with pride and still participate in society’* (Jasmine, Moroccan, 23 years old).

Table 12: Wearing a *hijab* and perceived negativity in Dutch politics

	<i>Hijab</i> wearing informants	Occasionally <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Non- <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Total
Perceived negativity in Dutch politics	6 Fahra, Melike, Mariam, Jasmine, Latifa and Aisha	1 Kübra	7 Khadija, Kübra, Fatiha, Zeliha, and others	13
No perceived negativity in Dutch politics	6 Nasreen, Hulya, Laila, Emine, Sepideh and Hasibe	0	7 Begüm, Aliye, and others	14
Total	12	1	14	27

5.7 Summary

None of the *hijab* wearing women said they were physically forced to wear a *hijab*; there was no enforcement by the fathers, brothers or other male relatives. However, one of the informants told me that when she was younger she was afraid of being punished by her father if she did not wear the *hijab*, and one informant told that she was wearing a *hijab* because of fear of the sanctions of the secret police of her family's home country.

Nine out of the twelve *hijab* wearing informants believe that a *hijab* is required in Islam. These women wear a *hijab* as an expression of their Muslim identity; by wearing a *hijab* they can show to everyone, Muslim and non Muslim, that they are Muslim. Three out of the twelve *hijab* wearing women proclaimed that they didn't see the *hijab* as something that is religiously obligatory and wear a *hijab* for other reasons.

Five of the twelve *hijab* wearing informants believe that their father wants them to wear a *hijab*. All but one of the twelve *hijab* wearing informants had a mother who wears/wore a *hijab* during her life. Seven out of the twelve *hijab* wearing informants had a mother who asked them to wear a *hijab*. Seven of the twelve *hijab* wearing informants received positive messages about wearing a *hijab*, while eight of the fourteen informants who do not wear a *hijab* received negative messages about wearing a *hijab*.

Ten out of the twelve informants who wear a *hijab* said they felt the pressure of their ethnic group. The fear of not being accepted or even excommunicated by members of their own ethnic group is for many informants a motivation to wear a *hijab*. I do believe that this is one of the main reasons why Muslim women in the Netherlands wear a *hijab* and others do not; they feel a pressure of their social environment (their relatives, friends, acquaintances, colleagues) to wear a *hijab*. For them it is important to belong to and stay in that community and therefore they have to adjust to the group's regulations. In this context wearing a *hijab* could perhaps be seen as denoting membership to join and stay in that particular group.

Five out of the twelve informants who wear a *hijab* and seven out of the fourteen informants who do not wear a *hijab* perceive negativity with respect to wearing a *hijab* in Dutch society. For one informant this negativity is a reason to wear a *hijab* only occasionally.

Negative messages given by politicians about women wearing a *hijab* have different effects on older informants than on younger informants.

Reasons and motivations for wearing a *hijab* over time. For some informants this choice was made in their younger years. These *hijab* wearing informants told me that it was easier for them to wear a *hijab*. By wearing a *hijab* they pleased their parents. For the parents their

hijab wearing daughters symbolize that they have fulfilled their duty as a parent; their daughters are decent, fulfilling their obligatory duties and stay away from *haram* (sinful) things. Other informants started to wear the *hijab* when they were much older. Reasons and motivations for not wearing a *hijab* also change over time. Three non-*hijab* wearing women decided not to wear a *hijab* because they found a *hijab* incompatible with their lifestyle at that moment and they felt that they would not be accepted in Dutch society if they would wear a *hijab*. Two of them feared that wearing a *hijab* would cause difficulties with, for example, finding a job. For that reason these women decided not to wear a *hijab* (anymore). Another informant had had enough of continuously telling non-Muslims that the *hijab* was her own choice and that she wasn't forced to wear on, and she took off her *hijab* due to that reason.

6. Conclusion, theoretical reflection, and perspectives

6.1 Reasons and motivations

The interviews with the 27 Muslim female informants showed that wearing a *hijab* is a continuously evolving process in a Muslim woman's life. Why a woman is wearing a *hijab*, or why she doesn't wear a *hijab*, depends on several considerations which are in turn influenced by different actors and events during her life.

Five categories of reasons/motivations for their actual wearing of a *hijab* stand out: religion, family pressures, in-group pressures, wish of social participation, and political protest. The *hijab* wearing women who were interviewed had one major thing in common; they proclaimed that they were not physically forced to wear a *hijab*. A large majority of the twelve *hijab* wearing informants believe that a *hijab* is required in Islam. Wearing a *hijab* is an expression of their Muslim identity. Although the informants proclaim that they are not physically forced, they do feel a strong pressure from the family and the social group they belong to. From the interviews held with the informants I concluded that this pressure is a very important factor in the 'choice' of wearing a *hijab* or not. The family the Muslim woman is raised in, the neighborhood she lives in, and the ethnic group she belongs to, influence the woman's decision-making process. For a Muslim woman who was born and raised in a family where the mother and sisters wore a *hijab*, who lived among other *hijab* wearing women in the neighborhood, who went to a school where Muslim women wore a *hijab*, it is not that easy to decide not to wear a *hijab*. By not wearing a *hijab*, she does not comply the clothing code of the group she belongs to and she may become an outsider of the group. The informants told me that it is important for them that they do not do anything that would harm their position in the group. By not wearing a *hijab* they would not only harm themselves but also their family members and other relatives. For these Muslim women it is important not to become an outsider, and they will wear the *hijab* – even though sometimes they would like to take it off. This also applies to some of the non-*hijab* wearing Muslim women; just as the *hijab* wearing women struggled with taking their *hijab* off due to group pressure, these non-*hijab* wearing women struggle with wearing a *hijab* for the same reason. I also noticed during the interviews that many of the informants feel not accepted by society in large when they wear a *hijab* and this is a reason for not wearing a *hijab* (anymore). An important reason/motivation for not

wearing a *hijab* is not getting and keeping a job in particular. The negativity about the Islam, Muslims and the *hijab* in the political arena strengthens this feeling of not being accepted by Dutch society among Muslim women. Some of the informants even proclaimed that these negative statements of politicians were the reason they started to wear a *hijab*.

Most informants who wear a *hijab* have more than one reason/motivation to wear a *hijab*. The first main reason/motivation is religion and the belief that the Islam requires wearing a *hijab* in particular. The second main reason/motivation is the wish of a clear and positive identity in this case a Muslim identity. The third reason/motivation is the wish to be accepted by their primary group. Thereto they conform to the socialization pressures of their family and community. They believe that their parents and community want them to wear a *hijab* (because they were asked to wear a *hijab* by their parents, received mainly positive messages about wearing a *hijab* from their parents and others, and have seen and interacted with *hijab* wearing women) and conform to these primary group socialization in order to be accepted by their own family and community.

Table 13: Wearing a *hijab* and the informants' various reasons/motivations

	<i>Hijab</i> wearing informants	Occasionally <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Non- <i>hijab</i> wearing informants	Total
Physical force or fear of it	2	0	0	2
No Physical force or fear of it	10	1	14	25
<i>Hijab</i> is required by the Qur'an	9	1	3	13
<i>Hijab</i> is not required by the Qur'an	3	0	11	14
Father wants women wearing a <i>hijab</i>	5	1	3	9
Father does not want women wearing a <i>hijab</i>	2	0	8	10
Father has no opinion about women wearing a <i>hijab</i>	5	0	3	8
Mother wears/wore a <i>hijab</i>	11	1	6	18
Mother does not wear/wore a <i>hijab</i>	1	0	8	9
Mother asked to wear a <i>hijab</i>	7	1	3	11
Mother has not asked to wear a <i>hijab</i>	5	0	11	16
Messages from parents about wearing a <i>hijab</i>				
Positive	7	1	4	12
Neutral	3	0	2	5
Negative	2	0	8	10
Perceived socialization pressure from one's ethnic ingroup				
Yes	10	0	3	13
No	2	1	11	14

Perceived negativity in Dutch society				
Yes	5	1	7	13
No	7	0	7	14
Perceived negativity in Dutch politics				
Yes	6	1	7	14
No	6	0	7	13
<i>Total</i>	12	1	14	27

6.2 Theories

Four dominant theories that explain behavior in general were used to prepare the interview schema (see chapter 3).

Based on Reasoned Action Theory it was expected that wearing a *hijab* is mainly motivated by the expectation of only positive or more positive than negative personal and social consequences of wearing a *hyab*. Many informants reported about their weighing of possible positive and negative effects of wearing a *hijab*. Their choices of wearing or not wearing a *hijab* can be seen as rational decisions. An important reason/motivation for not wearing a *hijab* is the wish to get and keep a job. Wearing a *hijab* gives a clear identity and acceptance by their family and community.

Based on the Social Identity Theory it was expected that wearing a *hijab* is mainly a result of the striving for a positive identity. The striving for a positive identity is a permanent condition according the theory. During the interviews many informants reported about a struggling for identity. Wearing a *hijab* helps to develop and maintain a clear Muslim identity.

Based on Socialization Theory it was expected that wearing a *hijab* is mainly a result of having received only positive or more positive than negative messages about wearing a *hijab* from relevant others. Most of the twelve *hijab* wearing women reported positive messages about wearing a *hijab*. Also most of the non-*hijab* wearing women told their socializers were negative about wearing a *hijab*. The family is the main socialization agency and the mother is the main socializer. Also one's ethnic group is an important socializer. The informants told that the social contacts they have are mainly based on their own ethnic group. The positive or negative messages received from the members of these group are relevant for the decision-making process. The fear of not being accepted or even being excommunicated by members of the own ethnic group is for many informants an important reason to wear a *hijab*.

The Direct Contact Theory suggests that wearing a *hijab* is mainly the result of having positively experienced direct contact with *hijab* wearing women or the result of no or negatively experienced contact with non-*hijab* wearing women. Almost all *hijab* wearing women have experienced positive contact with women who wore a *hijab*. They have most frequent contact with their relatives and their friends. A minority of them has experienced negative contact with non-*hijab* wearing women particularly non-relatives. When non-Muslims are negative about the *hijab* or when they are saying negative things about the *hijab* or about *hijab* wearing women, a part of the *hijab* wearing informants told me that they felt ‘sad’, ‘hurt’ or ‘disappointed’.

In retrospect, the choice of these four theories was a good choice. Variables from each of these theories came back and were performed in the words of the informants during the interviews.

6.3 Perspectives

Several different obstacles had to be overcome in this interview study. It was difficult to find Muslim women willing to be interviewed about their wearing or not wearing a *hijab*. Also because of time constraints only a small number could be interviewed. Also only women who spoke the languages of the interviewer (Dutch and Turkish) could be interviewed. Mainly elderly Muslim women could not be interviewed because of this reason. The findings are as a result not representative for any group.²⁹ The interviewer had to listen carefully to recognize socially desirable answers and to get “true” answers. Transcribing the interviews costed very much time (3-4 hours per interview of 40-90 minutes). The interview was selected as the method of data collection because individuals’ reasons and motivations for wearing a *hijab* were not extensively studied previously. Advantages are that the informants can tell their reasons and motivations in their own words and that the interviewer can study these reasons and motivations in depth and can ask all kinds of sub-questions to find the ‘truth’.

The next step may be a quantitative study using a survey (in Dutch, Turkish, Arabic) involving a sample that is representative for the Muslim communities. Thanks to the interview study we know now various reasons/motivations and the words that the future informants use

²⁹ The total Muslim population in the Netherlands in 2006 was about 850.000 people (approximately 5% of the Dutch population). Most Muslims lived in and around the three big cities; in the Amsterdam area about 13 percent of the population is Muslim, in and around The Hague 11 percent and in Rotterdam and surrounding area about 10 percent. Source: Statistics Netherlands, ‘*Number of Muslims differs considerably per region*’. Retrieved 19 May 2010 from <http://www.cbs.nl/en-B/menu/themas/bevolking/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2004/2004-1432-wm.htm?Languageswitch=on>.

themselves when talking about these reasons/motivations that can be included in the questionnaire. Quantitative data analyses will make it possible to compute the strength of the correlations between wearing a hijab and the various reasons/motivations found in this interview study, to determine the relative effects of these independent variables on wearing or not wearing a *hijab*, and to develop a structural equation model to explain wearing a *hijab*. A web survey may be preferred in order to avoid personal contact between researcher and respondent which may reduce the pitfall of socially desirable and political correct answers. A panel study may be preferred to find out how the decision-making process about wearing or not wearing a *hijab* evolves during lifetime.

7. Summary

The *hijab* or headscarf - a veil that covers the hair, neck and often the bosom – has become an important political issue in various European countries since the terrorist attacks of ‘9/11’ in the USA and the 2004 and 2005 attacks in Europe. Although the *hijab* was high on the political agenda empirical studies on reasons and motivations for wearing a *hijab* were missing. Not one study had verified whether the key assumption of some politicians - that Muslim women are forced to wear a *hijab* by their father, husband, relatives and communities - correspond with ‘reality’. The research question in this study is why do some Muslim women wear a *hijab* and others not?

First the political context of the study was studied, including the political debate concerning the *hijab* together and the policy preferences regarding wearing a *hijab* in the 2010 election programs of the main political parties in the Netherlands. Leading politicians of right wing parties in the Netherlands, including Geert Wilders (first VVD, later PVV), expressed very negative views on the Islam. The *hijab* was presented as a symbol of Muslim oppression of women. The right-wing parties LPF and PVV placed the ‘Islam-problem’, symbolized by the *hijab*, central in their electoral campaigns. The 2010 election party programs show that the PVV is in favor of a general ban of the *hijab*. Other parties support a ban of the *hijab* for public officers in uniform. Wearing a *hijab* is rejected in order to stop ‘the Islamization’ (PVV) or to maintain the religious neutrality of the state (other parties). An important argument against wearing a *hijab* is the assumption that wearing a *hijab* is not a voluntary but a forced choice (Chapter 2).

Previous published literature about wearing a *hijab* was studied to find out the state of the art. The existing literature presented five theoretically possible reasons/motivations for wearing a *hijab*: fear of physical force, complying to a religious command, complying to socialization pressures, wishing social participation, and political protest (Chapter 3.2).

Next four theories that try to explain behavior in general were consulted. Reasoned Action theory, Socialization theory, Direct Contact theory and Social Identity theory suggest various reasons/motivations to wear a *hijab* (Chapter 3.3)

Semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were used to collect the data needed to answer the research question. The theoretically possible reasons and motivations for wearing a *hijab* provided by the political discourse, mentioned in previous publications, and derived from the various behavior explanatory theories were recast in interview questions.

The interviews with 27 Muslim female informants showed that wearing a *hijab* is a continuously evolving process in a Muslim woman's life. Why a woman is wearing a *hijab*, or why she doesn't wear a *hijab*, depends on several considerations which are in turn influenced by different actors and events during her life. The interviews revealed three main reasons/motivations to wear a *hijab*. The first main reason/motivation is fulfilling a perceived religious obligation, in this case a perceived Islam rule. The second main reason/motivation is the wish of a clear and positive identity, in this case a Muslim identity. The third reason/motivation is conforming to primary group socialization pressures in order to be accepted by this primary group, in this case their Muslim family and community.

The key assumption of some politicians regarding the wearing of a *hijab* in non-Islamic countries - that Muslim women who wear a *hijab* are forced to do so by their relatives and communities – does not correspond with 'reality'. Our informants reported no physical force but a socialization 'force' to which they conform in order to satisfy basic human needs.

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9. Appendices: Interview questionnaires

9.1 Interview questionnaire for Muslim women who wear a *hijab*.

I would like to ask you some questions about other Muslim women in your environment and particularly about those people with whom you regularly have contact.

1. Are there any women in your environment who wear a *hijab*?
2. Does your mother wear a *hijab*?
3. Have you ever talked to your mother about wearing a *hijab*?
4. What did she tell you about wearing a *hijab*?
5. Were these positive or negative reactions?
6. Did this affect your decision of whether or not to wear a *hijab*?
7. Does your sister(s) wear a *hijab*?
8. Have you ever talked to your sister(s) about wearing a *hijab*?
9. What did she/they tell you about wearing a *hijab*?
10. Were these positive or negative reactions?
11. Did this affect your decision of whether or not to wear a *hijab*?
12. Does your best friend wear a *hijab*?
13. Have you ever talked to your best friend about wearing a *hijab*?
14. What did she tell you about wearing a *hijab*?
15. Were these positive or negative reactions?
16. Did this affect your decision of whether or not to wear a *hijab*?
17. Have you ever considered not wearing a *hijab*?
18. Why did you decide to wear a *hijab*?
19. How important is it for you to wear a *hijab* in order to:
 - Finding / having a job.
 - Finding / having a partner
 - Finding / having friendswhere 1 = not important and 5 is very important.

I would like to ask you some questions about the people in your environment. There will be women in your area who wear a *hijab* and women who do not wear a *hijab*.

20. If you look at the people in your environment with whom you have most contact, are they women with *hijab* or women without *hijab*?

21. It is sometimes said that wearing a *hijab* is an obstacle for Muslim women, especially when they are looking for work. What do you think? Do you think that you would get a job faster if you wouldn't wear a *hijab*?
22. Are there times when you do not wear the *hijab*? If so, when do you not wear a *hijab*? And how do you feel when you don't wear a *hijab*?
23. If you could now choose whether or not to wear a *hijab*, what would your choice be? And why?

I would like to ask you to imagine how it would be if you would decide today not to wear a *hijab*. What would be the reactions of the people around you.

24. How would your father react if you would not wear a *hijab*? Was it important for him that you would wear a *hijab*? Has he ever asked you to wear a *hijab*?
25. How would your mother react if you would not wear a *hijab*? Was it important for her that you would wear a *hijab*? Has she ever asked you to wear a *hijab*?
26. How would your brothers and sisters react if you would not wear a *hijab*? Was it important for them that you would wear a *hijab*? Have they ever asked you to wear a *hijab*?
27. How would your best friends react if you would not wear a *hijab*? Was it important for them that you would wear a *hijab*? Have they ever asked you to wear a *hijab*?
28. There is talk of a ban on wearing *hijabs*. How would you feel if *hijabs* were banned? What would such a ban mean to you?
29. Suppose that you would live in a country where wearing a *hijab* is obligatory. What would that mean to you?
30. Suppose that your partner/husbands family or your mother in law asks you not to wear a *hijab*. What would that mean to you? Would you choose not to wear a *hijab*?
31. Suppose that your boyfriend/fiancé (or the boy you are in love with) would only marry you if you would not wear a *hijab*. What would that mean to you? Would you choose not to wear a *hijab* any longer?
32. This year Geert Wilders put forward the idea of taxing women who wear a *hijab* with a yearly tax of 1000 euros. Regardless of whether this is legally possible, imagine that this would occur and women who wear a *hijab* need to pay a tax of 1000 euros. What would you advise the women who wear a *hijab*?

I would also like to ask you some general questions:

33. What is your date of birth? (If the interviewer does not want to say, in what year were you born?)

34. What is your hometown? (Or: What is your native country?) Sub-question: were you raised there as well?
35. How many inhabitants does the place where you grew up have? Is that a village, medium-sized city, large city? (Population questions)
36. Do you have brothers and/or sisters?
37. How many brothers?
38. How many sisters?
39. How many younger brothers?
40. How many older brothers?
41. How many younger sisters?
42. How many older sisters?
43. At what age did you come to the Netherlands?
44. What kind of work does/did your father do? (If living at home with parents)
45. What kind of work does/did your mother do? (If living at home with parents)
46. What kind of work do you/your partner do? (If living independently)
47. What is your highest level of education?
48. What is your monthly income (approximately?)
49. Is there a certain Islamic movement to which you count yourself? If yes, which one?
50. Do you go to the mosque or other religious meetings? If yes, how often?
51. Do you wear a *hijab* when you go to the mosque?
52. How do people react, when you wear your hijab to the mosque or to religious gatherings?
53. Do people talk at those meetings about women wearing a *hijab* or not?

We arrive at the very last question.

54. I would like to know what you think about each statement. The scale is from 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. You can write down your answer (number) on the form.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself
2. At times I think I am no good at all
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
7. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself

9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself

These were my questions. Do you have any questions about the interview or comments?

Thank you for participating in the interview. Would you be interested in receiving the results of this study? Would you like to participate in a follow-up study in the future? [If so, e-mail address].

9.2 Interview questionnaire for Muslim women who do not wear a *hijab*

I would like to ask you some questions about other Muslim women in your environment and particularly about those people with whom you regularly have contact.

1. Are there any women in your environment who wear a *hijab*?
3. Have you ever talked to your mother about wearing a *hijab*?
4. What did she tell you about wearing a *hijab*?
5. Were these positive or negative reactions?
6. Did this affect your decision of whether or not to wear a *hijab*?
7. Does your sister(s) wear a *hijab*?
8. Have you ever talked to your sister(s) about wearing a *hijab*?
9. What did she/they tell you about wearing a *hijab*?
10. Were these positive or negative reactions?
11. Did this affect your decision of whether or not to wear a *hijab*?
12. Does your best friend wear a *hijab*?
13. Have you ever talked to your best friend about wearing a *hijab*?
14. What did she tell you about wearing a *hijab*?
15. Were these positive or negative reactions?
16. Did this affect your decision of whether or not to wear a *hijab*?
17. Have you ever considered not wearing a *hijab*?
18. Why did you decide not to wear a *hijab*?
19. How important is it for you to not wear a *hijab* in order to:
 - Finding / having a job.
 - Finding / having a partner
 - Finding / having friendswhere 1 = not important and 5 is very important.

I would like to ask you some questions about the people in your environment. There will be women in your area who wear a *hijab* and women who do not wear a *hijab*.

20. If you look at the people in your environment with whom you have most contact, are they women with *hijab* or women without *hijab*?
21. It is sometimes said that wearing a *hijab* is an obstacle for Muslim women, especially when they are looking for work. What do you think? Do you think that you would get a job faster if you wouldn't wear a *hijab*?

22. Are there times when you do wear the *hijab*? If so, when do you wear a *hijab*? And how do you feel when you do wear a *hijab*?
23. If you could now choose whether or not to wear a *hijab*, what would your choice be? And why?

I would like to ask you to imagine how it would be if you would decide today to wear a *hijab*. What would be the reactions of the people around you?

24. How would your father react if you would wear a *hijab*? Was it important for him that you would not wear a *hijab*? Has he ever asked you not to wear a *hijab*?
25. How would your mother react if you would wear a *hijab*? Was it important for her that you would not wear a *hijab*? Has she ever asked you not to wear a *hijab*?
26. How would your brothers and sisters react if you would wear a *hijab*? Was it important for them that you would not wear a *hijab*? Have they ever asked you not to wear a *hijab*?
27. How would your best friends react if you would wear a *hijab*? Was it important for them that you would not wear a *hijab*? Have they ever asked you not to wear a *hijab*?
28. There is talk of a ban on wearing *hijabs*. How would you feel if *hijabs* were banned? What would such a ban mean to you?
29. Suppose that you would live in a country where wearing a *hijab* is obligatory. What would that mean to you?
30. Suppose that your partner/husbands family or your mother in law asks you to wear a *hijab*. What would that mean to you? Would you choose to wear a *hijab*?
31. Suppose that your boyfriend/fiancé (or the boy you are in love with) would only marry you if you would wear a *hijab*. What would that mean to you? Would you choose to wear a *hijab*?
32. This year Geert Wilders put forward the idea of taxing women who wear a *hijab* with a yearly tax of 1000 euros. Regardless of whether this is legally possible, imagine that this would occur and women who wear a *hijab* need to pay a tax of 1000 euros What would you advise the women who wear a *hijab*?

I would also like to ask you some general questions:

33. What is your date of birth? (If the interviewer does not want to say, in what year were you born?)
34. What is your hometown? (Or: What is your native country?) Sub-question: were you raised there as well?
35. How many inhabitants does the place where you grew up have? Is that a village, medium-sized city, large city? (Population questions)

36. Do you have brothers and/or sisters?
37. How many brothers?
38. How many sisters?
39. How many younger brothers?
40. How many older brothers?
41. How many younger sisters?
42. How many older sisters?
43. At what age did you come to the Netherlands?
44. What kind of work does/did your father do? (If living at home with parents)
45. What kind of work does/did your mother do? (If living at home with parents)
46. What kind of work do you/your partner do? (If living independently)
47. What is your highest level of education?
48. What is your monthly income (approximately?)
49. Is there a certain Islamic movement to which you count yourself? If yes, which one?
50. Do you go to the mosque or other religious meetings? If yes, how often?
51. Do you wear a *hijab* when you go to the mosque?
52. How do people react, when you wear your *hijab* to the mosque or to religious gatherings?
53. Do people talk at those meetings about women wearing a *hijab* or not?

We arrive at the very last question.

54. I would like to know what you think about each statement. The scale is from 1 to 5, where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. You can write down your answer (number) on the form.

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself
2. At times I think I am no good at all
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
7. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself

These were my questions. Do you have any questions about the interview or comments?

Thank you for participating in the interview. Would you be interested in receiving the results

of this study? Would you like to participate in a follow-up study in the future? [If so, e-mail address].