

# Euromuslim, Gangster, Prophet-Lover, Islamist? Young Muslim Men in Berlin between Public Discourse, Religious Discursive Traditions, and Gendered Subject Formation

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In my PhD project, I apply an anthropological approach to the study of Islamic masculinity in Germany, focusing on ethical subject formation as well as bodily and emotional practices. My primary field sites are mosque communities in Berlin that are to a certain extent affiliated with the Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland (IGD; Islamic Community of Germany) and who have mainly German and Arabic speaking audiences and teaching staff, such as Interkulturelles Zentrum für Dialog und Bildung (IZDB; Intercultural Center for Dialogue and Education), Teiba Mosque, Darassalam Mosque, and Islamisches Kultur- und Erziehungszentrum (IKEZ; Islamic Cultural and Educational Center).

## Theoretical framing

Drawing on Michel Foucault's and Saba Mahmood's works on the ethical dimension of subject formation and the role of 'techniques of the self' (Foucault), I attempt to offer a theoretical framing of Islamic masculinity beyond the tradition-modernity distinction that still pervades many academic studies regarding masculinity in Islamic contexts. Researching religiously grounded forms of masculinity, it is of particular interest to me to investigate the ethical work men in the field perform on themselves in order to comply with certain ideals of masculinity, and in which ways their bodies are involved, emotions cultivated, and gender regimes applied in this process. How is masculinity enacted and addressed in the field of mosque lessons and sermons? Which practices feature centrally in the process of learning, adopting, shaping, affirming, transforming, criticizing or contesting certain forms of masculinity? How are these practices tied to the body and emotional dispositions? As Monique Scheer has shown, emotions can be understood as practices and as a subject of learning and training. Using her notion of emotional practices, I shall rivet on the efforts of shaping and re-shaping inner dispositions in the context of

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Islamic teaching. Since gender interactions are closely linked with conceptions of masculinity, during the course of fieldwork I will also concentrate on the kind of gender regimes enacted within the mosque spaces and beyond, and examine how gender relations and interactions are negotiated both verbally and non-verbally.

## Dimensions of gender identity

I understand identity constructions (and therefore constructions of masculinity) as fluid and dynamic, shifting over time as well as from context to context. These constructions are shaped and manifest themselves in social interaction and are bound to discursive structures of power. In this vein, an important question is how and if men in the field conceive of their masculinity in different ways in different social spaces. Working in an Islamic setting, it is of particular interest to analyze how men frame the practices that are constitutive of their masculinity: To what extent are these practices portrayed as religiously grounded? Is reference made to Islamic reasoning or to ethics in a broader sense? What kind of discursive traditions do they locate themselves in? And what does this mean regarding the men's self-positioning within the German discursive framework?

## Exploring transnational ties and the German discursive context

To further contextualize my field research, I intend to trace discursive traditions and transnational links relevant to the imams in the field and their audience, and their importance to men's knowledge acquisition, subject positioning and masculinity constructions. On the other hand, my ethnographic approach shall be combined with a text-based analysis of the discursive context male Muslims in Germany find themselves in. This analysis includes state practices directed at Muslims in Germany in the form of programs to prevent radicalization and antisemitism, for example, as well as media images, and publications on Islam in Germany. By combining these approaches, I hope to shed light on how public discourse (which often problematizes Islamic masculinity) is intertwined with the subject formation processes of young Muslim men in Germany.



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