Katharina Limacher / Astrid Mattes / Christoph Novak (eds.)

Prayer, Pop and Politics

Researching Religious Youth in Migration Society

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Part III – Negotiating Religious Belonging in Migration Society

Katharina Limacher / Astrid Mattes / Christoph Novak

Introduction: Prayer, Pop and Politics[*]

As we write this introduction, 300 Catholic bishops meet in the Vatican to discuss how the Catholic Church can address the needs of younger generations, the Austrian government attempts to ban religious head-coverings in early childhood educational facilities and we witness religious youth activism that ranges from saving the lives of refugees in the Mediterranean sea to calls for an exclusively Christian Europe. That there are plenty of examples of conflicting interests between generations, political ideologies, and religious orientations, clearly calls for a scholarly investigation into what we subsume here under prayer, pop and politics. These terms put together do not just encompass those rare occasions when they manifest simultaneously, but they represent three dimensions, which, when studied in conjunction, allow us to grasp highly interwoven aspects of the lives of religious young people in a migration society.

Among scholars of various disciplines, there is an increasing interest in research on the religious engagement of young people in a migration society. While some are concerned with identity politics and processes of boundary drawing as well as minority representation and participation, others focus on issues of a changing religious landscape, the effects of pluralization and the diaspora situation of religious communities. Most scholarly perspectives share an interest in understanding the renewed role of religion in societies that have undergone secularization in their recent history and the ways in which young people shape and engage with religion today. Scientific interest might have remained limited to specialists in religious studies, if there was no wider politicization of religion and migration processes.

Religion, migration and politics are not only discursively interwoven but far too often lumped together by political actors and researchers alike. Recent years

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saw a vast amount of research on religion and migration. Although often conducted with best intentions, such studies have frequently reproduced problematic notions and perspectives. When focussing on the religion of 'others', or on religion as a marker of otherness, researchers often ignore certain realities of contemporary societies, such as their longstanding history of (religious) diversity. Critical literature observes a racialization of religion in both politics and research, but often ignores that religion at the same time continues to be a relevant means in people's lives (Larsson / Spielhaus 2013; Brubaker 2013; Amir-Moazami 2018). Therefore we argue that empirical research on religious youth should take into account the delicate interrelationships between religion, race and age.

This edited volume brings together researchers who share an interest in reflecting on contemporary debates on migration, religion and youth, as well as in reassessing their own academic work with a focus on these shortcomings. Despite coming from different disciplines, we all know situations in our empirical work when we felt uneasy because we did not understand what young people meant when making what we might call a pop-cultural reference. We experienced moments of unexpected self-reflection when encountering spiritual practices and we met young people who found political causes to fight for through their religious engagement. In this light, prayer, pop and politics is exactly what we, as scholars of religious studies, political science, sociology, Islamic studies and educational sciences, encounter in our work. On a more abstract level, there is more to prayer, pop and politics than a fancy alliteration: With this book, we seek to address pressing political and societal issues at the intersection of religion, age and race while taking the agency of the people whose lives we are studying seriously and including our own research experiences in the outcome of our work.

Research on Religious Diversity in a Migration Society

When researching young religious people in contemporary society we come across a broad range of different religious traditions and religious practices in spatial proximity. This diversity has been associated with migration and therefore has been the stimulus for a vast amount of research on migration since the 1980s. A long-standing concept within migration studies is that of diaspora. It is inherently related to religion and interested in inter-group contact. Originating in the Jewish context, the concept of diaspora has had a stellar career in many fields of social sciences and humanities. First used to describe the dispersed Jewish community, diaspora soon designated any group of people, religious or not, on the grounds of a common history or the common experience of living

away from a former homeland (Vertovec 1997, Baumann 2000, Mayer 2005, Somalingam 2017). The concept of diaspora therefore became an important analytical category to analyse a society shaped by migration.

Another way to analyse diversity in contemporary society is the concept of super-diversity. Steven Vertovec (2007) coined the term super-diversity to refer to a society that is diverse not only in terms of ethnicity but also as a result of the interplay of different variables, such as immigration statuses, labour market experiences, age, gender and spatial distribution (ibid., p. 1025).

As much as these and similar concepts try to grasp migration from an inclusive perspective, they have also been the subject of considerable controversy. Brubaker, for instance, is critical of the inflationary use of the term diaspora and fears that it makes the term conceptually irrelevant (Brubaker 2005). And the analytical category of super-diversity is criticized because it claims to represent a new approach to politics of identity when in fact it reproduces certain colonial hierarchies as it fails to consider global power relations and their influence on these categories of diversity (Ndhlovu 2015, p. 33). Nevertheless, super-diversity has resonated widely among critical migration scholars as it promotes an intersectional point of view and is considered a valuable descriptive model.

A concept that takes the intersectional perspective one step further and avoids the reproduction of symbolic boundaries is that of migration society, *Migrationsgesellschaft*, a term coined by Paul Mecheril, et al. (2013). We suggest conducting research on the complex linkages between migration and religion in the light of this concept. Mecheril et al. (2013) position themselves in the fields of education and critical migration studies and understand their work as an endeavour to analyse structures of domination. According to this perspective, migration is not an exception but the historical norm; migration is perceived as constituent of contemporary society:

> "There are good reasons for investigating and discussing contemporary society from the perspective of *migration society*, since the phenomenon of transgressing culturally, legally, linguistically and (geo-) politically significant borders is very important from a global perspective (albeit in different ways)." (Mecheril / et al. 2013, p. 8, our translation, emphasis added)[1]

With their approach, Mecheril et al. foster a specific view on migration. Migration should no longer be thought of or treated as an exception but instead as an inherent structural feature of society, past and present. The shift from migration

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1　"Die Gegenwart kann also mit guten Gründen unter der Perspektive Migrationsgesellschaft untersucht und diskutiert werden, da Phänomenen der Überschreitung kulturell, juristisch, lingual und (geo-)politisch signifikanter Grenzen unter Bedingungen der Gegenwart weltweit (gewiss jedoch in unterschiedlicher Weise) sehr große Bedeutung zukommt" (Mecheril / et al. 2013, p. 8).

as something extraordinary has important consequences for questions of be-longing (*Zugehörigkeit)* and identity. Through a notion of migration as the ex-ception, questions of belonging arise and boundaries between a seemingly ho-mogenous 'we' and differing 'others' are drawn (Broden / Mecheril 2007, 7), naturalized and racialized. We thus risk politicizing questions of belonging when we address migration as an exception rather than a normality. Consequently, if we see migration as an essential feature of society, we can move towards an analysis that refrains from politicizing questions of belonging and instead fo-cuses on processes of politicization as such.

Approaching the topic from this perspective, Mecheril et al. (2013) list dif-ferent goals of critical migration studies, two of which are especially important for research on religious youth: Researchers in critical migration studies are encouraged to take a self-reflective position and look at knowledge production in this domain not as a neutral process but as a social practice of normalization in a highly contested domain (Broden / Mecheril 2007, 7). Critical migration studies should moreover be aware of the potential changes in power structures that influence different forms of belonging (Mecheril / et al. 2013, p. 49).

Religion – Age – Race

This book presents research at the intersection of religion, age and race and gathers several different approaches to the broader question what it is like to be young and religious in a contemporary migration society. We can view age, race and religion as categories of difference that, together with an array of others, such as gender, class and ability, intersect and contribute to a person's societal situatedness (Haraway 1988). But there is more to the story than three (or more) overlapping categories that, depending on their manifestation as a marker of majority or minority, may or may not result in (multiple) discrimination. Each of these categories of difference emerges from processes of boundary drawing and is therefore subject to constant reproduction, discursive changes and shifting power structures. It is worthwhile exploring how the concepts of religion, age and race interlock, how this interdependence has come to colour our under-standing of each one of them, as well as the ambiguities which have emerged for each of these concepts. While issues of gender, class and disability are no less important, we have deliberately chosen religious phenomena, age and race as our primary focus points, as we consider their intersections as particularly relevant for understanding contemporary social formations and political struggles.

Age, as Jenkins et al. argue, is one of the most overlooked categories of dif-ference, as we perceive the limited inclusion of children or young adults as agents as quasi natural (2015, p. 40). Research on age and intersectionality emphasizes

the relatively weak and vulnerable position of both very young and very old people (Calastani / King 2015). Being young is then a particular expression of age as an individual and group characteristic. However, age must not be considered a purely descriptive and therefore de-politicized term. Notions of childhood, adulthood, old age and so on have changed profoundly in recent decades and centuries (Ariès 1962; Cunningham 2014). From an intersectional perspective that evaluates situatedness with regard to power structures, being young means for the most part to be in a position of little influence on processes of boundary drawing, at least for boundaries dominant in mainstream, 'grown up' discourses. At the same time, young people are frequently drivers of change, bearers of political and social movements, and creative minds in terms of technical, artistic and societal innovation (Shadmehr / Haschke 2016; Ho / et al. 2015). Depending on context, youth may also be subject to romanticization and glorification (Mitchell 2017), and being young might open up windows of opportunity and allow taking unconventional ways. There is an inherent ambivalence to age, depending on context, individual dispositions and, importantly, on relation to other intersectional categories.

In a migration society, and thus within societal surroundings characterized by heterogeneity, as discussed in the beginning of this introductory chapter, belonging becomes politicized. Racialization and racisms structure the way and extent to which a person's membership is subject to politicization. Race is, however, a tricky category, as speaking of race is always at risk of solidifying a categorization that has no bearing in biological facts, while not making it explicit ignores the marginalization that actually occurs (Lentin 2008; Gilroy 1998). In particular, in a European context, the historic taboo of race frequently results in seemingly non- or even anti-racist public debates that reproduce patterns of exclusion and merely rename or shift boundaries. Although most people agree that biological racism lacks any basis in science whatsoever (Gilroy 2001, pp. 11 ff.), many scholars argue that racism did not simply disappear but transformed itself. This contemporary articulation of racism, cultural racism, considers attributed, essentialized cultural characteristics as the legitimate basis for social stratifications and hierarchies (Balibar 2005).Without going into details of research on race, we want to emphasize the critical perspectives this book promotes with regard to race, processes of racialization and racism. Although race is not the primary subject of our research, we take into account processes that build on racialization and transfer racial structures to culture (Lentin 2005), ethnicity and nationalism (Gilroy 2001; 2005; Brubaker 2009), or, as discussed in the next paragraph, religion.

As argued by many scholars, religion is an increasingly racialized category (El-Tayeb 2011; Grillo 2010; Modood 2009). In particular, women wearing headscarves become the visible other in a seemingly colour-blind Europe. At the

same time, nationalist, populist and far-right actors claim Christianity as central to their own/national/European identity (Marzouki / et al. 2016; Hafez / Heinisch 2018). Meanwhile, some scholars speak of a post-Christian Europe, thereby emphasizing the inconsistency and contradictions in the ways that large parts of European societies deal with religion. "This is the paradox of Europe: its societies are marked as much by the Christian faith as by its abandonment and rejection", writes Evert van de Poll (2013, p. 251). In spite of all this, many political debates today ignore this ambivalent relation and put religion at the centre of identity politics. This makes a complex field, the governance of and conviviality in religious diversity, even more contentious.

This contention is by no means new and has led to complex forms of legal and institutional accommodation. Religion as a category of difference is frequently treated in special ways. Liberal theories of democracy, which have developed along the question of how to govern diversity in a just way, acknowledge religions as a form of "deep diversity" (Galston 2002) in need of legal establishment. In fact, religion is subject to special forms of legal protection, not only as a marker of difference (as such protected through anti-discrimination laws) and fundamental rights (freedom of religion and others), but also through particular institutional provisions (broadly referred to as state-religion relations). However, religion is not only a distinct category at the legal level.

Most importantly, at least in a liberal democratic context, religion as an individual attribute marks a personal decision. Although never fully free of constraints, people do choose their religion. Much more than race or age, religion is subject to individual choice. This is a crucial point, often overlooked in social-scientific work that treats religion at the intersection with race. While religion can also be an ascribed, constructed and racialized category, it often is an affiliation and agenda people choose willingly. It is therefore important to bear in mind the complexity of religion, as the result of both self-and other-identification, sometimes subject to racialization, as a fundamental right and an individual choice.

Moreover, as with all intersectionality, it is crucial to avoid a blind spot on the hegemonic expression of a category. When discussing the intersection of race, age and religion, we tend to think of younger persons of colour who follow minority religions. However, a white person has a race, a 40-year old has an age and a Christian has a religion as well. What differs are the experiences of normalization and otherness respectively. Depending on what kind of age, race and religion a person has or is associated with, processes of othering and boundary drawing may make a person painfully aware of his/her markers of difference or allow him/her to widely ignore them. Depending on the specifics of intersectional situatedness, age can be more of a benefit or more of a constraint, race will be experienced as affecting adolescence or be hardly perceptible and religion

might reinforce or weaken these impacts. Here again, it needs to be emphasized that, much more than age and race, religion is (also) subject to voluntarism and choice.

Therefore the question of religion is somewhat trickier, as it has an additional dimension. Do non-religious people have a (non-)religious identity marker that is situated within the category of religion? When asking that question from a religious studies perspective, we might want to start a discussion on what non-religious means: non-affiliated, atheist, agnostic or just not interested, and what about implicit religion? But as we write a book about religion, youth and politics, it is sufficient for our scope to ask which kind of religion is relevant to political discourses, influencing societal situatedness and most importantly, relevant to the young people we engage with in our research.

Reflecting Methods

In the light of what has been said above, what does it mean to ask questions about prayer, pop and politics in migration societies? What does it mean to let such questions guide one's empirical research? Even taking up a 'critical' perspective is not without its inherent pitfalls, as it still requires navigating conceptual dilemmas and taking responsibility for one's own situatedness in the field. How do we, as academics doing research, contribute to the problematization and thereby the politicization of our research subjects? We have argued that the pivotal concepts framing the topic, religion, age and race, are themselves ambiguous and problematic constructions, entangled with discursive powers and deployed in the service of very different, often diametric political interests. As we see the need for researchers to take responsibility for their particular standpoint, account for their interests and intentions, as well as for the social positions they have come to occupy through discursive processes of attributing powers, entitlements and privileges, how can we with a clear conscience do this kind of research?

Actually, we cannot and must not free us of those doubts. Instead, they should constitute the basis for a constant, critical assessment of our research practice and work as knowledge producers. As we find ourselves trapped in a situation where we are constantly in danger of contributing to the very reproduction of the problematic concepts which we are investigating 'critically', we ought to cultivate those worries to become better researchers. Many academics have addressed these problems of empirical research practice by pointing out different problematic spheres: the chimera of methodological nationalism (Glick Schiller / Çağlar 2009; Wimmer / Glick Schiller 2003), the uncritical reproduction of racial classifications (Ladner 1998; Zuberi / Bonilla-Silva 2008), and the equally problematic construction of ethnic groups (Brubaker 2002; Glick Schiller / et

al. 2006). Gillespie, Howarth and Cornish summed up the problem of using social categories in research by pointing out that social categories are: "(1) perspectival, (2) historical, (3) disrupted by the movement of people, and (4) re-constitutive of the phenomena they seek to describe." (Gillespie et al. 2012, p. 392) Researchers, we argue, must not discard this criticism lightly, nor should they stop doing research. Instead we ought to make use of the privileges we enjoy to work against the grain, which means using our creative capacities and scientific knowledge to work towards the dissolution of problematic social phenomena and categories we investigate and use in our research.

This leads to the second issue: How are researchers positioned and how can they position themselves vis-à-vis their research subject? A neutral or objective stance is unattainable to any researcher given the discursive baggage one carries around all of the time. This baggage is performed (e.g. through internalized gendered or classed behavioral patterns) and embodied (e.g. through being associated with dominant gender constructions). It materializes in legal documents, such as passports or birth certificates, in how one is seen (and categorized) by others, but also in how one perceives one's social surroundings. Researchers ought to account for their particular situation as part of their research practice, whether they share a location with their research participants or are positioned very differently. This "situated knowledge" (Haraway 1988) needs to inform our research practice. This requires discarding the notion of the researcher as an invisible, neutral observer and taking one's particular standpoint, emerging from meta-discourses (on race, age, religion, etc.), seriously into account. Reflecting on one's social location in such a way involves acknowledging that the characteristics one is associated with, do not have a fixed meaning but are contextual and socially constructed. This is not the same as assuming that those characteristics are not real. Rather, their specific meaning has not emerged from the characteristics as such, but involved human activities that attributed meaning to them (Sprague 2005, p. 51). It is this attached, flexible, socially constructed and context specific meaning through which those characteristics receive their discursive power and eventually have real impact on one's life and research practice. At this point, we have gone full circle, as it becomes clear that religion, race and age are not meaningful categories by themselves, but are imbued with power only through political processes that have turned those terms into meaningful categories with real-life implications.

This effectively means that we, as researchers, need to reflect critically on our own research interests and practices. We should ask ourselves, how did our interest in the research subject emerge and whose problem perspectives did we intentionally or unintentionally apply in formulating our research questions? Whose concerns are we addressing with our research? What are our own (implicit) assumptions about the lives of others, through which we come to our

hypotheses or perceptions of what seems to be the problem with regard to a specific phenomenon?

We also should question ourselves on what being positioned in some way (e.g. in terms of religion) means in different social contexts relating to our research. What kind of discursive baggage do we bring with us into our research, which entitlements and privileges have become so 'normal' to us that we have stopped being aware of the particular socio-historic trajectory upon which they rest? Experiences some of us consider normal and 'natural' might be far from normal for research participants. How do these privileges influence the research process and how can we still do valid research in spite of this?

Finally, yet importantly, we need to be critical of our own engagement with research participants and ask in which ways we can make our research valuable for them, so that it acknowledges and maybe addresses their problem perspectives as well. We should also ask what role the participants play in shaping the research trajectory and/or the interpretation of data. Even more radically, we may ask how we can find ways to let our research be guided by the actual problem perspectives of research participants. How can we realize such critical perspectives, not only as researchers, but also as knowledge producers, when writing up our research? Are there ways to represent participants, or to let them represent themselves, in the written-up results of research?

None of these questions relate exclusively to religion, age and race. They are equally relevant in spheres like gender, ability/disability, class and respectability, to name just a few. However, as the focal points of this volume, religion, age and race play a particularly important role – in one way or another – in all the contributions presented here. None of the questions we just raised are to be answered with certainty, but they ought to make us aware of some of the most problematic issues in empirical research practice and, at the same time, stimulate our creative capacities to come up with new ways to do research in spite of the entanglements and fallacies of our situatedness.

This book covers a wide spectrum of subjects, each connected to its own body of literature and to specific challenges. The articles are grouped in three main sections. The first section deals with methodological reflections already hinted at above. The first paper, authored by Christoph Novak, examines forms of privileges, which emerge from different social positionings of researchers and research participants. Based on his own research experiences with young, self-identified Muslims in Zurich and Vienna, he sketches an approach that seeks to account for the researcher's privileges in qualitative interview encounters. The second contribution takes a complementary stance and addresses the position as in-group researcher. Farid Hafez and Linda Hyökki discuss challenges of boundary-drawing as peer researchers in Muslim communities in Austria and Finland. While they see peer research as a means to avoid othering and cultur-

alization, they emphasise that in the light of an acknowledged fluidity of identity as well as different lines of differences, a critical reflection of the researcher's subjectivity is important. The third chapter in this section provides a perspective on quantitative social research on identity and youth. Anastas Odermatt critically assesses the operationalization of concepts of identity and youth by means of a comparison of two large-scale research projects. He shows that the use of concepts such as identity and youth tend to be over-simplifying or imprecise and asks for a clearer theoretical positioning to enhance the explanatory power of research on identity in adolescents and young adults in quantitative research.

The second section of this volume addresses questions of online identifications and the role of social media when researching religious youth. The first paper by Astrid Mattes develops a conceptual framework for the analysis of identifications of religious youth in digital spaces. Bringing together research on religious belonging and politics of belonging, the author suggests a multi-dimensional research framework to analyse identifications of young people growing up as digital natives. Giulia Evolvi shares this interest for digital media and explores the concept of *hypermediated religious spaces* in her paper. Using the hashtag #NousSommesUnis, which was created in response to the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, she dissects the various aspects of identification processes of religious youth. The third contribution, by Rüdiger Lohlker, describes the embedding of an activist's project in academic research: the production of alternative narrations to Jihadi narratives by means of the YouTube video clips of *Jamal al-Khatib*. It is an example of participatory action research that creates the possibility for young Muslims to express a critical position in collaboration with researchers, social workers and a professional film crew.

The third section gathers case studies that look more broadly at negotiations of religious belonging in migration society. Katharina Limacher's contribution analyses different forms of religious knowledge of Hindu youth in Zurich and Vienna. Using Bourdieu's distinction of different forms of capital, she characterizes young people's assessment of their own religious knowledge in the light of a society shaped by privileges for certain religious communities. The second contribution, by Andreas Tunger-Zanetti, Silvia Martens and Jürgen Endres, dissects the religious orientation of young Muslims in Switzerland. Analysing data from a qualitative research project, the authors register a shift away from the religious community as a place of collective authority to individual actors. The third article in this section investigates the place of religion in identification processes of Vietnamese Buddhist youth in Switzerland and Germany. Through the analysis of two biographies, Rebekka Khaliefi demonstrates the different forms that religious identification processes take in predominantly Christian societies. Jana Wetzel's chapter presents a critical reading of European research on self-identified Muslim youth from the perspective of de- and post-colonial

theories. In reference to her own research in mosques, the author advocates taking different concepts of religiosity and religion as well as the spatial dimensions more seriously. The section concludes with a paper by Dilek Aysel Tepeli and Martina Loth on Alevi youth in Germany. The authors shine a light on different aspects that influence Alevi identity constructions among young Alevis in Germany and in the light of the political developments in Turkey.

Given this diversity of subjects and approaches, we will not be able to answer all the questions described above. However, we are confident to introduce a book that manages to treat religious young people as actors with agency. For the field of racial studies, which is equally concerned with marginalization and racialization, Robbie Shilliam argues:

> [M]y main point is that this research agenda is dominated by one story – what the master does unto the sufferers – and addressed to one politics – can the master redeem the detritus of his humanity? What of the sufferers and their stories and politics? Are they merely fragments of raw data? Or do they have an epistemic part to play in the research agenda on race and racism? (2013, p. 156)

We equally find such a "master's narrative", as Shilliam calls it, in the scholarly literature on youth identifications and religious belonging. It is this particular criticism that we want to overcome by treating the subjects of our research as agents who determine their own (identity) politics through their actions and choices. We as researchers are not in the position of granting this agency but merely able to observe it carefully while taking into consideration our own role as situated individuals.

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Part I –
Methodological Reflections at the Intersection of
Age, Race and Religion

Christoph Novak

Facing Privilege in Qualitative Interview Settings.
The A-B-C-D-Approach

"The central argument is that what distinguishes critical from uncritical research is not
the method used, but how the method is used, both technically and politically."

Joey Sprague 2005, p. 27

Abstract

Most people are bestowed with social privileges, whether they want them or not. Carrying specific racialised and gendered characteristics, being associated with some religious groups, being raised in certain socio-economic conditions, being categorised in specific age groups and performing a certain professional role come with different, context specific advantages. Manifestations of such privileges not only show in social interactions (e.g. being attended well by a waiter), but also influence lived-realities quite fundamentally (e.g. never having experienced sexual harassment). Often privileges are working to one's advantage so seemingly naturally, that one does not only take them for granted for oneself, but one is inclined to assume that one's privileged experiences constitute the norm, rather than an exception.

While investigations of privilege and privileged groups have become labeled as Privilege Studies under the influence of Peggy McIntosh, knowledge of privilege is only slowly making its entry into critical research practice. This chapter addresses this gap by identifying some areas in which privilege can have a problematic impact on data generated in one-on-one research encounters, particularly qualitative interviews. The issues raised relate primarily to situations in which privilege differentials between researchers and researched exist. Based on these reflections, in the second part of the chapter I develop the A-B-C-D-approach, which ought to help researchers integrate a critical self-assessment of privilege in research design, practice and analysis. The four steps proposed are (1) the assessment of privilege, (2) the balancing of the influence of privilege through research design, (3) the act of communicating the knowledge about privileging structures as a way to control for its influence and signal one's critical position to research participants, and (4) the deconstruction of the influence of privilege throughout analysis.

This chapter develops a structured process of self-reflection, which invites researchers to see themselves as social beings embedded in social power relations and as having context-specific privileges. By privileges, I refer to advantages, which originate in social interactions and have their basis in material living conditions and/or hegemonic discursive formations. Those advantages can be linked, for example, to how someone is perceived by others (e.g. based on stereotypes) and the particular experiences one has due to those perceptions.

Knowledge of one's context-specific privileges is important for methodological reasons (as this knowledge can be used to reduce bias throughout data collection and interpretation) as well as from a normative perspective (since having privileges needs to be accounted for as something influencing research on many levels).

I realised the need to confront my embodied and performed privileges while doing research with young self-identified Muslims in Zurich and Vienna. Already during a pilot interview, I became aware of several aspects influencing the interview situation, which I had not yet taken adequately and structurally into account. When reviewing the conversation, it became clear to me, that the interview would have progressed very differently, if I had not been identified as a young, white, male, non-Muslim researcher from Austria, but as being seen as bearing other characteristics. There was clearly no point in trying *not* to be identified this way, since it is impossible to make others perceive oneself detached from social power relations. (Spillers 1987) While there is no feasible way to prevent the formation of implicit assumptions about a person with whom one engages, the central question is this: If it cannot be avoided, how can aspects which might lead to serious biases within data be controlled for in a scientific process?

The solution I came up with comprises four steps: (1) *assessing* the discursive meaning that I inadvertently brought to the interview situation; (2) *balancing* my influence on the research process and provided more autonomy to research participants; (3) *clarifying* my motivation for the research and the reflexive process which it involved when meeting research participants; (4) *deconstructing* my influence in the process of data analysis. The *A-B-C-D-approach* is the focus of the second part of the chapter. I start, however, with discussing privilege conceptually, highlighting different spheres of privilege (particularly those relevant for the general topic in this volume) and how they influence qualitative interviewing contexts. (Gubrium / Holstein 2003; Rosenthal / Fischer-Rosenthal 2010)

As this chapter addresses the effects of privilege differentials emerging from different social positionings occupied by researcher and researched, it complements Hafez and Hyökki's contribution (this volume) who discuss the situation of researchers sharing certain characteristics with their research participants (see also: Kubica 2016). However, while they emphasize the relevance of the social construction of in- and out-groups, my chapter follows Joey Sprague's (2005) standpoint theory, developed from critical realist epistemologies (Bhaskar 2008; Archer / et al. 2013). Sprague, like other researchers, emphasises that detailed knowledge of the scientific tools and methods is essential for knowing which questions can be asked and what data eventually emerges from the research encounter. Social scientists working within a field responsive to their

presence (e. g. in interview situations) need to realise that their major research tool is their own physique (body) and performance (actions) (Archer 2013, pp. 200 f.), which also influences which questions can be asked and what can emerge as knowledge, eventually.[1] Nevertheless, I argue that the applicability of the A-B-C-D-approach is not limited to critical realist perspectives, but stretches to other approaches as well.

Defining Privilege

While being privileged provides the basis for very particular experiences, it has largely remained out of focus of mainstream social research. This is so because a central property of privilege is its ability to obscure its genesis in power relations, hide its un-naturalness and non-transcendence. (Pease 2013)[2] Consequently, it was not until Peggy McIntosh's (1988) seminal self-reflection, that privilege as a scientific concept received broader attention. McIntosh defines white privilege as "an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was 'meant' to remain oblivious." (1988, n.p.) In a later work, McIntosh complements this by comparing white privilege to a "bank account which I was given at birth, and did not ask for [...]. And because it is white privilege it will automatically refill even after I spend it down." (McIntosh 2012, p. 196).

While McIntosh's metaphors help in making privilege comprehensible, they are not sketching it in great conceptual depth. Looking at privilege more systematically, Winddance Twine and Gardner (2013b) identify several interconnected characteristics of privilege.

Privilege manifests as a form of power. Rather than seeing oneself as part of a privileged racialised, gendered, etc. group, characteristics, which allocate to its bearer a position of power, tend to be naturalised and rendered unremarkable. Media scholar Richard Dyer summed this up by stating that: "There is no more

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1 With respect to the relationship between social constructionism and critical realism, it is good to keep in mind that critical realists do not deny the role of one's socially constructed positions and privileges as part of reality. Instead, they emphasise that "the fact that [a discourse, a social practice, or physical reality] is socially defined and produced does not make a societal phenomenon any less real." (Alvesson / Sköldberg 2012, p. 41)

2 Nevertheless, in some scientific traditions, interest for studying privilege is not particularly new. Already around 1900, W.E.B. DuBois interrogated white privilege in the United States. DuBois' works are among the earliest examples of the change of perspective, which has become paradigmatic for privilege studies, namely the debasement of white, adult, male, heterosexual, Christianity as the supposedly "neutral" standpoint of most social research (Winddance Twine / Gardener 2013b, 9; Du Bois 1990; Du Bois / Sundquist 1996; Ferber 2012; McIntosh 2012).