Invoking the Secular

Gendered Delineations of Muslim Belonging in Switzerland

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ABSTRACT In contemporary public discourses across Europe, concepts of religion and secularity are drawn on in delineations of national 'Selfs' and acceptable Muslim positionalities. Based on six Swiss-German media outputs discussing Islam in Switzerland in 2016, I argue that concepts of the 'secular' as progressive and the 'religious' as potentially dangerous, disruptive and as currently arriving from the outside shape images of national identity and belonging in Switzerland. Analyzing the entanglements of these images with gendered issues, such as gender equality as tied to 'secular,' male (sexual) violence and the oppression of women as inherently 'religious' and particularly Muslim, I illustrate the specific positionalities that mark the fault line between acceptable and unacceptable Muslimness. In this context, the joint declaration of the group *secular Muslims* is introduced as an example of how gender-specific views associated with current normative notions of the 'secular' are invoked to declare belonging to German-speaking Europe.

KEYWORDS secularism, gender, religion and media, national belonging, Islam, discourse theory, Switzerland

Introduction

The focus of this paper lies on the ways notions of secularity and religion are drawn on in public media discourses on Islam and national belonging in contemporary European and specifically German-speaking contexts. Thus the present work is part of a larger body of research concerned with public discourses surrounding Islam and Muslims in Europe, in which scholars in the last two decades have repeatedly pointed out the utilization of religious and particularly Muslim identity in boundary delineations of current European nations.[1] There is

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1 For a comprehensive analysis of the underlying construction of Islam and Muslims as outside of and as a threat to Europe, see Asad (1997). Many scholars have since empirically found a discursive differentiation between specific European national collectives and Muslims; see, for example, El-Tayeb (2011), Korteweg and Yurdakul (2014), Meer, Dwyer, and Modood (2010), Modood (2005), and Weber (2013, 2015) to name just a few.

also a considerable number of studies that specifically focus on current media discourses in Europe, which all indicate that notions of European identity and specific national identities are frequently constructed vis-à-vis the image of Muslim "difference," as is the case in German-speaking countries.[2] In addition, some scholars have focused on the role gender conceptions play in such discourses and have noted that in current European debates on Islam, issues of gender and sexuality are often at the forefront when negotiating the boundaries of national collectives.[3] In these studies, the emphasis mostly lies on the 'othering' of Muslims via the attribution of misogyny and homophobia, whereas less attention is placed on how normative gender conceptions play a role in the constitution of 'the secular.' This article contributes to this sparsely researched area of interest by taking the Swiss-German media discourse as a case study to highlight the specific interconnection of 'the secular' and gender-specific issues in discourses on Muslim belonging.

The present approach is characterized by a conceptual understanding of categories such [2] as 'the secular' and 'the religious' as discursively constituted in media debates. The aim is to investigate how notions of 'the secular' and 'the religious' figure and are (re-)produced in current societal discourses on Islam and Swiss national belonging. Drawing on a Foucaultian conceptualization of discourse (Hall 2001, 67–77; Diaz-Bone 2006, 252), discourse is understood as producing a "set of effects" (Scott 2018, 10).[4] In this view, the discourse at hand produces not only normative notions of 'the secular' and 'the religious' but also available subject positions tied to such notions (Foucault 1982, 777–85). According to Butler, inhabiting such a subject position and hence being discursively named is a prerequisite for becoming a subject (1997a, 1997b). However, rather than being entirely determined through discourse that produces and restricts available subject positions, Butler sees the possibility of *discursive agency* from within discourse. In this concept, individual agency is possible under the condition that the subject first inhabits an available subject position and is hence made a subject within a specific discourse (Youdell 2006, 515). Thus, the agency of a subject is dependent on how it relates to the norms a discourse imposes (Mas 2006, 602). In the discourse at hand, the focus specifically lies on how available subject positions, such as 'Muslim' and 'secular,' are constituted and adopted in (self-)positionings as part of an imagined national collective.

In order to further investigate the relationship between discourse and agency, the media [3] discourse on Islam and national belonging in contemporary German-speaking Switzerland is taken as an example. Based on a discourse analysis approach as operationalized in the sociology of knowledge (Bormann and Hamborg 2016; Keller 2011a, 2011b, 2001), I specifically investigate how gendered notions of 'secularity' and 'religion' are operationalized as identifiers in the differentiation between 'Self' and 'Other' as well as drawn on in positionalities adopted by Muslims. I address the potential interrelation between the Swiss discourse of secularism and Muslim subject formation by focusing both on available Muslim positionalities in an overall media discourse and on a specific example of self-positioning. The argument is presented

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2   This has been shown for Swiss media discourses; see, for example, Ettinger (2017, @Ettinger_problematisation_2008), Ettinger and Imhof (2011), Röllin (2013), Schranz and Imhof (2002) or Behloul (2011), who all point towards an increasingly commonplace depiction of Muslims as the problematic 'Other' in media outputs. In Germany, scholars such as Breger (2017), Karis (2013), and Spielhaus (2010, 2013) have found a similar tendency to delineate national boundaries vis-à-vis Muslims depicted as 'foreign.'

3   See, for example, Barras (2013), El-Tayeb (2011), Fassin (2010, 2012), Fassin and Salcedo (2015), Korteweg and Yurdakul (2009).

4   In his genealogy of sexuality, Foucault shows that the discourse on "perversion" has not suppressed "perversions" but has effectively created such a mode of classification, and thus the possibility of identifying with it (1977, 59).

in two steps: First, I outline the "particular vision of the world" (Scott 2018, 10) produced in the contemporary Swiss-German public sphere. In this part, I outline the gender-specific notions of 'the secular' and 'the religious' produced in six Swiss-German media news outputs published in 2016 that discuss Muslims in Switzerland and invoke 'the secular' in some way. Secondly, the declaration of the group *secular Muslims* (säkulare Muslime) is analyzed in relation to the overall media discourse. The adoption of a 'secular Muslim' positionality, I argue, may be interpreted as an act of discursive agency, or rather as the articulation of a Muslim identity that is legible as acceptable and as belonging to Switzerland. Of particular interest is the way gender-specific issues are draw on in both Swiss-German media outputs as well in the group's self-positioning, highlighting the connectedness of 'secularity' and gendered issues in normative representations of the Self in contemporary German-speaking Switzerland.

Feminism, Modernity and Discursive Formations of the Secular

There is a variety of different conceptions and discourses that shape current understandings [4] of what constitutes the 'secular.' Many established approaches within the academic study of religion are driven by considerations related to the secularization thesis (Führding 2013, 72). The process of secularization has generally been understood as a gradual loss of social significance of religion in a previously religious world. In this conceptualization, secularization is seen as causally connected to modernity and rationalization.[5] However, such a view has been criticized by a variety of scholars. An influential intervention can be found in the book *A Secular Age,* in which Taylor refutes the explanation of secularization as a consequence of Darwinist scientific knowledge, as he does not "see this as an adequate explanation for why in fact people abandoned their faith" (2007, 4). In another notable commentary, Casanova (1994, 22) pointed out that secularization should be conceptualized on three different levels, namely in terms of a differentiation of state and religion, a privatization of religion and a general decline in religiosity or church membership. According to Casanova, only the first of these processes can be seen as constitutive for the relationship between religion and modernity (Führding 2013, 74). Lastly, other critics of the secularization thesis, such as Thomas Luckmann (1967) have pointed towards a narrow definition of religion underlying secularization theory and have identified a shift towards individualized religiosity instead (Stolz and Tanner 2019, 5). In general, sociological macro-theories on secularization or de-secularization and individualization,[6] as well as investigations into 'secularity' and 'religion' and their relation to each other,[7] are based on substantial definitions of 'the secular' and 'the religious' as classificatory categories (Führding 2013, 73–74).

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5   Initial expressions of such a thesis can be seen in Max Weber's (1930, 17) idea of a societal disenchantment, in which a devaluation of religion was seen as the consequence of an increasing scientific rationalization of society. Later representatives of the secularization thesis are, for instance, Steve Bruce (1999) or (the early works of) Peter Berger ([1967] 1990; 1979), who since has critically engaged with his initial views on secularization.

6   See Stolz and Tanner (2019) for an overview of the three dominant approaches in theories on secularization and secularism in the second half of the twentieth century as well as new theoretical approaches in the field. These approaches are based on a definition of religion as "a sociocultural phenomenon consisting of a religious ideology that is produced and transmitted by religious groups and experienced and acted out by individuals" and of secularity as "a state in which a phenomenon is free from religion" (Stolz and Tanner 2019, 2).

7   See Bochinger (2013) on importance of such scholarly approaches to "secularity" and "religion" within the study of religion and for the necessity of substantial definitions of religion in order to implement such research.

While such work has heeded a myriad of crucial insights and new theoretical prospects continue to be developed, the focus and investigative aim of this paper differs from such approaches. Rather than basing the investigation on an analytical definition of secularity and religion, the aim is to investigate how notions of 'the secular' and 'the religious' figure and are constituted in current societal discourses on Islam and Swiss national belonging. In such an approach, 'religion' and 'secularity' are conceptualized as discursively constituted (Führding 2013; Von Stuckrad and Kocku 2003). A discourse perspective allows grasping the contested nature of the communicative processes that delineate religion and secularity and the ways in which these concepts "serve as instruments in the communicative formation of identity and provide people with a concrete script of action" (Von Stuckrad and Kocku 2003, 269). Thus, not only can the formations of religious or secular identity be examined, but such a perspective also makes it possible to consider the normative associations connected to the secularization thesis and notions of the secular and the religion that are historically and currently tied to it.

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Discourse of Secularism

Recently, scholars in European societies such as France, the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Germany have identified the tendency to invoke a nation's 'secularity' as a possible means of delineating the inside and outside of the nation in immigration politics and at times specifically in anti-Muslim discourses (Fassin 2010; Mepschen, Duyvendak, and Tonkens 2010; Modood, Triandafyllidou, and Zapata-Barrero 2006; El-Tayeb 2011). In these discourses, "Western-European democracies see the separation of religion and politics as one of the unique features of their normative self-conception" (Behloul 2013, 30). Such arguments specifically draw on understandings of 'secularity' as inherently linked to modernity, individualization and gender-specific values, such as gender equality. Following Asad's elaborations, an assumption of 'secularity' as central to modernity underpins secularism "as a political doctrine [that] arose in modern Euro-America" (Asad 2003, 1). In a similar manner, Scott talks about the *discourse of secularism* and states that "the point is that secularism is a political discourse, not a transcendent set of principles, or an accurate representation of history" (Scott 2018, 6).

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I understand *secularism* to include all discourses that draw on normative notions of 'secularity' and 'religion' in order to manage the state and its relationship to religious institutions as well as to minority groups and individuals that are identified via their religious affiliation. Central to current secularist discourses is not only the classical distinction between state and church but more generally the necessity of seeing public principle as 'secular' and placing the 'religious' in the realm of private reason in modern societies (Asad 2003, 8). Asad understands such a concept of modernity not as a verifiable object but rather as a political project that aims at specific ways of being in the world (2003, 12–139). Within the project of modernity, images of 'the secular' and 'the religious' are conceptualized "in terms of which modern living is required to take place, and nonmodern peoples are invited to assess their adequacy" (Asad 2003, 14).

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Religion, Gender and Secularism

In current discussions on the possibility of living in and belonging to 'modern' European nation states or to Europe as a whole,[8] gender-specific issues, such as gender equality or

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8   With Sabsay (2012), the geographic context in which a hierarchy between the sexual, liberal Self and
     the cultural, religious and racialized 'oriental Other' is currently discursively produced can be expanded

sexual freedom, have been noted to be central, discursive benchmarks against which an as- sumed misogynist, sexually oppressive and potentially violent Muslim 'Other' is to be mea- sured (Fassin 2010; Mepschen, Duyvendak, and Tonkens 2010; Modood, Triandafyllidou, and Zapata-Barrero 2006; El-Tayeb 2011). For the context of Germany, for instance, Weber out- lines the evidence of, as well as potential challenges to, the "narrative of an enlightened Ger- man secularism that is juxtaposed to a religious, misogynist Muslim Turkish culture" (Weber 2013, 21).[9] This narrative is drawn on most strikingly in debates surrounding the headscarf, in which gender equality is perceived as achieved in contemporary Germany and "the Ger- man woman" is seen as an embodiment of "Western democratic and liberal values", and, most importantly, as emancipated, while "the Muslim woman" is seen as oppressed (Rottmann and Ferree 2008; Rommelspacher 2010).

Similar, yet not identical variations of such arguments have been identified and examined   [9] across Europe, all building on the presupposed notion of a discernible distinction between the 'modern secular European Self' and the non-modern religious, specifically Muslim 'Other.' In this way, the current version of secularism "has become synonymous with an [often] (ill- defined) gender equality that distinguishes West from East, the Christian secular from the Islamic" (Scott 2018, 16) and the 'modern' from the 'premodern.'

The entanglement of gender, religion and secularity in public debates on societal norms   [10] and ideals is, as Scott (2009, 2013, 2018) outlines, in no ways new. Yet the specifics of what comes to be framed as the ideal gender relation secularity supposedly facilitates—and religion allegedly hinders—as well as the particular version of religion that is framed as problematic, are continuously re-negotiated and context-specific. Scott's recent historical analysis of the secularism discourse (2018), though selective in the time periods covered[10] as well as at times methodically vague and simplifying, convincingly outlines these two points. Firstly, she outlines that in the secular/religious binary, Christianity has been included on the secular side not only in recent debates on Islam's perceived incompatibility with Western democracy but that Christianity, and in particular Protestantism, have at times been equated with the secular state ever since the mid-seventeenth century in Euro-American discourses (2018, 43– 51).[11] A similar view is expressed by Behloul, who points to a Protestant understanding of religion as pertaining to the private sphere and to individual subjects rather than to religious communities that he sees as the consequences of the Thirty Year's War (Behloul 2013, 18). According to Behloul, this discourse not only primarily defines religion in relation to politics, based on the notion that (communal) religion potentially disturbs social peace, but can also be seen as the epistemic framework of both inter-denominational (Protestants vs. Catholics)

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to Euro-American countries. In her work, she argues that contemporary "colonial and orientalist ideas about the sexual rights-bearing subject follow from an orientalist conception of citizenship and the liberal sovereign subject in which sexual citizenship is sustained" (Sabsay 2012, 606).

9   Weber has identified the same framework that places the "rational secular subject of liberal humanism" (2016, 80) vis-à-vis Muslims as racialized and sexually violent 'Others' in the more recent debates surround- ing events in Cologne on New Year's Eve 2016.

10   For instance, although she clearly states that the aim of her book is to paint a picture in a "broad brush" (Scott 2018, 7), it arguably remains a particular choice not to address the first half of the twentieth century.

11   As an example, Scott cites a 1888 text by Philipp Schaff, a church historian, who saw Christianity, or rather "Christian civilization and culture," as opposed to the "pagan or Mohammedan" disposition, as a prerequisite for the American Constitution, including freedom of worship (Schaff 1888, cited in Scott 2018, 43).

conflicts in the nineteenth century[12] as well as current anti-Muslim discourses (Behloul 2013, 18–21).

The point I want to take from Scott's and Behloul's elaborations is that the religious/secular [11] divide is not clear cut but rather an oftentimes strategically filled set of oppositions tied to normative notions of modernity, in which (Protestant) Christianity may come to figure on the side of the secular. Secondly, Scott (2018) outlines that the particular relations between gender, religion and secularity have shifted throughout history.[13] By pointing to the central position the difference of sex, and hence a notion of gender *in*equality, had for explaining social and political organization in secularist discourses of the nineteenth century, Scott argues against current conceptualizations of secularity as a facilitator and at times even as a prerequisite for gender equality (2018, 25).

Secular Feminism and its Critique

Such imagery of the secular as beneficial for gender equality and women's rights and of the re- [12] ligious as oppressive and misogynist has been evident in certain versions of feminist activism and thought in the last couple of decades. A prominent example is the political philosopher Okin's widely discussed critique of multiculturalism in her work *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* (1999). The central argument of Okin's text postulates that minority cultures, a concept that comes to be strongly linked to a notion of "Muslim culture,"[14] are potentially more likely to be patriarchal and misogynist than the majority culture and that hence, from a feminist point of view, minority group rights "may well exacerbate the problem" (Okin 1999, 22). Similarly, in their text *The True Clash of Civilizations,* Inglehart and Norris (2003) draw on Huntington's notorious concept of the "clash of civilizations" and argue that "when it comes to attitudes toward gender equality and sexual liberalization, the cultural gap between Islam and the West widens into a chasm" (2003, 67). Such views have been criticized as particular to a secular or secularist version of feminism that contentiously accuses the religious and specifically the Muslim 'Other' of necessarily being misogynistic and oppressive of women and at the same time denies the possibility of female agency from within religious and Muslim thought.

Many scholars have criticized the underlying assumption of patriarchal structures in minor- [13] ity cultures, or specifically in "Islam" as resting on "an essentialist understanding of culture in general and of Muslim cultures in particular," as well as revealing a blindness towards the unmarked liberal backdrop "for evaluating the level of freedom or unfreedom of 'other cultures'" (Amir-Moazami, Jacobsen, and Malik 2011, 2). Abu-Lughod further invites her readers

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12   Behloul identifies the nineteenth century anti-Catholic discourses in the Protestant-dominated countries of Europe, such as Germany and Switzerland, and current Western-European Islam discourses as similar because in both cases minority religions are being scrutinized and their members suspected to be "by virtue of their religion somehow disloyal and anti-modern" (2013, 22).

13   In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, political discourses of secularism that distinguished between the religious private and the secular state built on "idealized distinctions between spheres of public and private, political and religious, modern and traditional, state and family, West and East, masculine and feminine, male and female" (Scott 2018, 25). An example of a particularly notable gendered binary can be seen in the nineteenth century North American discursive distinction between religion as not only belonging to the private realm but specifically the realm the women, who were depicted as naturally closer to religion (Scott 2018, 43–51).

14   Although not explicitly talking about religion or Islam, Okin draws on a variety of examples associated with "Muslim culture," for instance wearing headscarves, which she reads as necessarily oppressive, forced marriage or women being charged with "the serious Muslim offense of zina" when reporting rape in "some cultures—notably in Pakistan and parts of the Arab Middle East" (Okin 1999, 15–16).

to contextualize secularist feminist discourses in their (post-)coloniality and think of the colonial violences exerted and presumptions made in narratives about the "Muslim women [who] need saving" (2002, 788–89). Specifically, drawing on the notion of "colonial feminism," Abu-Lughod points to the secularist continuance of colonial instrumentalizations of the "woman question" in the contemporary focus on the "Muslim woman" in the US (2002, 783–85) as well as in secular-feminist frames in "the 'government' of European Muslims" (Amir-Moazami, Jacobsen, and Malik 2011, 6).

In addition, prominent scholarly interventions, such as those by Mahmood (2001, 2005) and Abu-Lughod (2002), have questioned the supposition of feminism as something secular and outside of religion. Mahmood mainly problematizes what she sees as the dominant narrative in current feminism, namely the assumption that freedom and agency is inherently progressive and located outside of religious traditions (2001, 203). In her delineation of piety as a discourse of self-empowerment, although arguably based on a potentially oversimplified and somewhat decontextualized binary between liberal feminist discourse of agency and the piety discourse, she points in a direction feminist understandings could develop that allows to grasp notions of religious agency. More recently, feminist scholars have addressed other kinds of relationships between feminism, agency and Muslim women in Europe, thereby exploring a variety of positionings, "including Muslim women's cultivation of pious sensibilities within liberal-secular European societies, as well as the cultivation of 'secular' sensibilities" (Amir-Moazami, Jacobsen, and Malik 2011, 1). Hence, even though there is evidence of dominant tendencies to conflate feminist issues with secularism, the discourses on how gender, secularity and religion are to be understood in relation to each other are in flux. [14]

In the following, the contemporary public discourse in the German-speaking part of Switzerland is taken as an example to illustrate the normative dimension of current discourses of secularism and to elaborate on their particular interrelation with gender-specific issues. In a second step, the self-positioning of the *secular Muslims* is analyzed in relation to such discourses in the German-speaking world, as illustrated with regards to the Swiss-German discourse on Muslims in Switzerland. This is taken as an intriguing and productive starting point for raising further questions about the relationship between discourse and agency, as well as discourse and subjectivation. [15]

Delineating the Self: Religion and Secularity in Current Swiss Media Debates

Switzerland, although lacking an explicitly secularist conception of the public as evident in France (Lüddeckens and Walthert 2010, 5),[15] shows evidence of premises related to the discourse of secularism, such as the assignment of religion to the sphere of individual and private freedom and piety.[16] Especially the idea of *legitimate* religious diversity as located on the level of the individual and of *suspicious* religious difference as attributed to community is evident in [16]

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15   In Switzerland, the relation between church and state is legally regulated on a cantonal level, hence there are 26 different systems in place (Pahud de Mortanges 2015, 5; Rostock and Berghahn 2009, 17). While this means that in most cantons both the Catholic as well as the Protestant church are recognized under public, a legal form derived from the German system in the nineteenth century, there are two cantons, Geneva and Neuchâtel, that have a strictly laical system, as seen in France (Pahud de Mortanges 2015, 18–20).

16   With Behloul, this concept of religion may be understood as especially salient in Switzerland, shaped by its history of anti-Catholic discourses (Behloul 2013, 22).

Swiss discussions on so called "religious sects" in the 1970s and 90s as well as in the more recent campaign to ban minarets in 2009 (Lüddeckens and Walthert 2010, 5). Moreover, in their analysis of the Swiss *Tagesanzeiger* blog, Michel and Honegger outline discursive mechanisms that tend to delineate Swissness "as embodying 'secularised modern Europe and Christian culture'" (2010, 442).

Data and Method

In the following, I draw on six Swiss-German news media outputs discussing Islam and Muslims in Switzerland in 2016 in order to outline the specific ways notions of the 'secular' and the 'religious' figure in current images of national identity and belonging. The approach to data collection, selection and analysis was guided by the operationalization of discourse analysis as developed within the sociology of knowledge (Bormann and Hamborg 2016; Keller 2011b, 2011a, 2001).[17] First, a comprehensive corpus of material was gathered containing all Swiss-German radio and television shows by the publicly funded Swiss Radio and Television broadcasting company (SRF)[18] and all newspaper articles published in 2016 that directly discussed Islam and Muslims in Switzerland.[19] Second, this data was screened for media outputs (a) that set an in-depth thematic focus on Muslims in Switzerland and on questions of national belonging, (b) that are argumentative in nature[20] and (c) in which 'secularity,' 'secularization' or the attribute 'secular' is invoked at some point. In this procedure, six media outputs were identified as significant when analyzing the discursive construction of images of 'the secular' and 'the religious' in current debates on Muslim belonging in Switzerland.

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These six media outputs can be differentiated into two thematic threads; The first three media outputs identified continued ongoing discussions with regard to Muslims in Switzerland that gained salience in the aftermath of 9/11, such as religious violence and terror and an overall 'clash of cultures' narrative. The three broadcasts on this topic are the Swiss Radio and Television (SRF) television debate on *Fear of Islam*[21] on April 1 (SRF 01.04.16), the SRF Kultur radio segment called *Debate: Is Islam a Threat to the Free West?*[22] on September 9 (SRF 09.09.16) and another SRF Kultur radio debate on the question *What are the values of the Occident?*[23] on December 26 (SRF 26.12.16). The second three broadcasts discussed two

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17   Specifically, this approach to discourse analysis is carried out in four stages: (1) identification of the subject area, the time period and the research question, (2) the compilation of a comprehensive corpus of material, (3) the rough analysis in order to create a manageable corpus of analysis, and (4) an in-depth qualitative analysis (Bormann and Hamborg 2016, 101–3).

18   Since the publicly financed Swiss television and radio programmes exceed the private programmes in all four language regions in terms of reach and are also used more substantially in order to gather information on societal debates (Künzler 2013), the present analysis is limited its German-language productions (SRF).

19   The data was gathered via searches in the online archive of the Swiss Radio and Television (SRF) and in the print media database *Factiva*. The search terms used were "Muslim* in der Schweiz" and "Islam in der Schweiz" and the search was limited to outputs published in the year 2016 in Switzerland and written or spoken in German or Swiss-German. The overall dataset comprised 54 radio and television shows and 633 print articles.

20   In contrast to mostly descriptive media outputs, which primarily focus on detailing events or topics, argumentative texts aim to explain such events and topics and embed them into overarching contexts (Konerding 2005, 11). As a result of the focus on argumentative media outputs, short radio and television news segments as well as the majority of news articles were not included in the analysis.

21   SRF Arena, *Angst vor dem Islam*, 01.04.16, https://www.srf.ch/sendungen/arena/angst-vor-dem-islam, accessed November 29, 2019.

22   SRF2 Kultur Kontext, *Debatte: Bedroht der Islam den freien Westen*, 09.09.16, https://www.srf.ch/sendungen/kontext/debatte-bedroht-der-islam-den-freien-westen, accessed November 29, 2019.

23   SRF2 Kultur Kontext, *Debatte: Welche Werte hat das Abendland?*, 26.12.16, https://www.srf.ch/sendungen/kontext/debatte-welche-werte-hat-das-abendland, accessed November 29, 2019.

instances that took place in 2016, namely the New Year's Eve events in Cologne, where a number of sexual assaults and robberies allegedly performed by young men of predominantly "North African or Arab" descent were reported to the police, and an incident in the small town of Therwil, in Basel, where two school boys refused to shake their female teacher's hand on religious grounds, developed into key media events that covered questions of integration and acceptable intra-national difference. Thereby, specifically gendered notions of the Swiss 'Self' and the Muslim 'Other' attracted renewed attention and were tied to notions of Muslims as refugees and migrants in the context of an overall German-speaking media discourse on the so called "refugee crisis" that gained ground in 2015 and early 2016. The media coverage around these two events and the overall investigative media gaze directed towards Muslims in Switzerland in the context of the "refugee crisis" are exemplified in the SRF television debate *Assaults from Cologne—Ignition of Cultures*[24] on January 12 (SRF 12.01.16), the debate on July 12 specifically discussing the incidence in Therwil under the title *Tolerance without Limits?*[25] (SRF 12.07.16) and lastly the August 2016 NZZ[26] Folio publication titled *Muslims in Switzerland: How much Islam can the country bear?*[27] (NZZ 02.08.16).

In the last step, the selected media outputs were analyzed based on the premises of [19] qualitative-interpretive analytics (Bormann and Hamborg 2016, 103). For this study, transcripts of the radio and television broadcasts and scans of the NZZ Folio articles were fed into the computer program NVivo for qualitative coding. In the text-based coding process, the specifics of the discursively constituted notions of 'the secular,' 'the religious' as well as gendered narratives of progress were detailed. Lastly, by analyzing the entanglements of these notions, I was able to establish the gendered positionalities that serve as markers of acceptable difference in Switzerland.

The Secular, Christian Self and the Muslim Other

In all six media outputs, explicit or implicit notions of 'religion' and 'secularity' figured in the [20] delineation between 'Swiss' and 'Muslim,' and more specifically between acceptable, unproblematic and potentially integrated Muslims on the one side and threatening, unacceptable and foreign Muslims on the other. On a first level, "secularity" and "secularization" is explicitly attributed to a "Western," European or specifically Swiss "we/us." This is evident in the following statement by Norbert Bischofsberger, SRF religion expert on the program *Tolerance without limits?* (SRF 12.07.16):

We have secularization, the people here who gradually abandon faith. And we [21]

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24   SRF Club, *Übergriffe von Köln—Zündstoff der Kulturen,* 12.01.16, https://www.srf.ch/play/tv/club/vide o/uebergriffe-von-koeln-zuendstoff-der-kulturen?id=b53adfc4-a280-4c56-ad03-95f55e43948c, accessed November 29, 2019.

25   SRF Club, *Toleranz ohne Grenzen?*, 12.07.16, https://www.srf.ch/play/tv/club/video/religion-toleranz-oh ne-grenzen?id=5d8686dc-bebc-4609-b7ec-354b29c68119, accessed November 29, 2019.

26   The Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ) is considered to be one of the most widely read and renowned newspapers in Switzerland. The Folio is the monthly special issue of the NZZ, which dedicates an entire issue to a thematic focus.

27   NZZ Folio, *Muslime in der Schweiz: Wieviel Islam verträgt das Land?*, 02.08.16. More information under https://folio.nzz.ch/2016/august/muslime-der-schweiz, accessed November 29, 2019.

have migration, we have people who come to us with other customs, not only with other religions, also with other cultures (SRF 12.07.16, my translation[28]).[29]

On the one hand, this establishes an image of a secular "we" in Switzerland, an idea centrally present in the overall framing of the analyzed debates, for instance when the moderator in the debate on *the values of the Occident* stated that "we are in a very secularized world, religion is largely on the retreat" (SRF 26.12.16)[30] or when the introductory text of the NZZ Folio talked about "our secular, open society" (02.08.16). On the other hand, Bischofsberger attributes religion to "other cultures" and to migrants coming to Switzerland, which both externalizes religion as well as potentially culturalizes the migrant 'Other.' Because this statement is made in a debate that explicitly revolves around Muslims in Switzerland and the extent to which they are "tolerable," the "other religion," perceived as arriving via migration, is framed as Islam.[31] This delineation between a secularized Europe and Switzerland and a religious, currently Muslim, migrant is echoed in the other broadcasts and remains largely unchallenged. By framing Swiss people as secular, that is as largely dissociating or dissociated from "the faith in God" or participating only "pro forma in religious communities" (NZZ 02.08.16), religion is framed as an attribute of migrants and (once migrated) minorities. A tendency to ethnicize[32] religion can also be found in recent anti-Muslim media discourses in Great Britain, in which secularity was not only aligned to "Britain" but a "baffling" and "fierce" commitment to religious belief was further attributed to "ethnic minorities" such as people that have migrated from "Asia" or "Africa" (Aeschbach 2018, 47–48).[33]

[22]

In addition to allocating a specifically Muslim religiosity to migrants and minorities, Christianity is portrayed as tied to and part of the 'Swiss secular Self.' The alignment of Switzerland with both secularity and Christianity can be seen in in the debate on *Fear of Islam* in a short dialogue between Nicola Blancho, a Muslim representative of the Islamic Central Council of Switzerland (IZRS), and the moderator of the segment, Jonas Projer. Projer identified Switzerland as a "Christian country," to which Blancho reacted with the words "it [Switzerland] is not (…) a Christian country (…) it is a secular state" (SRF 01.04.16). In this instance, invoking a secular state while opposing the notion of a Christian country can be read as a strategic moment that may enable Muslim belonging to Switzerland to be perceived as equally likely and possible. However, the short quarrel ended in the moderator's statement "let's correct it (and say) Christian history,"[34] thereby simultaneously imagining a secular state and re-aligning

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28   All English translations of German and Swiss-German media quotes have been translated by the author of this paper and the original quotes are given in the footnotes.

29   "Wir haben die Säkularisierung, die Menschen hier, die den Glauben schrittweise ablegen. Und wir haben die Migration, wir haben Menschen, die zu uns kommen, mit anderen Gepflogenheiten, nicht nur mit anderen Religionen, auch mit anderen Kulturen." (SRF 12.07.16).

30   "Wir sind in einer sehr säkularisierten Welt, die Religion ist weitgehend auf dem Rückzug" (SRF 26.12.16).

31   In one instance, the incoming religion is even characterized as "fundamentalist Islam," namely when the NZZ Folio introduction that states "fundamentalist Islam has long arrived in our secular, open society" ("Der fundamentalistische Islam ist längst in unserer säkularen, offenen Gesellschaft angekommen," NZZ 02.08.16).

32   The term *ethnicized* refers to Balibar's concept of "fictive ethnicity" that is the basis of perceived national identity. As nations are formed, populations are ethnicized, "that is, represented in the past or in the future *as if* they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins, culture, and interests, which transcends individual and social conditions" (Balibar cited in El-Tayeb 2011, xiii, original emphasis). Hence, in invoking the migrant other as linked to a different origin and with that to a different culture, and in this case religion, both the Swiss 'Self' and the 'Other' are conceptualized as ethnically different.

33   In this example, religion is also explicitly tied to skin color in that secularity is linked to "white Britain" and religiosity to "people of colour" (Aeschbach 2018, 47–48).

34   Original dialogue: Blancho: "Ja…vilich söttmer d Schwiiz richtig definiere, ich bin nöd iiverstande mitde Definition dases es christlichs Land isch." / Projer: "christlichi Gschicht" / Blancho: "Christlichs Land ischs

Switzerland to Christianity. In a similar manner, the link between Christianity, secularity and the 'Western Self' is negotiated in the debate on the *Values of the Occident* (SRF 26.12.16). Here, although "Christian values" are seen as retreating or as fading, secularity itself is still aligned with the "Christian world" or the "Christian West." This link is clearly stated by the moderator of the debate, who asks:

> Individualization tendency, no matter in which religion. *Secularization tendency, especially now in the Christian world*. Do common values exist in the West? (SRF 26.12.16, my emphasis)[35]

[24]

Interestingly, although the question "Do common values exist in the West?" is posed as an open question, the way it is framed arguably suggests that "individualization" and "secularization" should be considered common denominators in "the West," "especially (…) in the Christian world." Keeping in mind Asad's (2003) and Scott's (2018) view that secularization— and individualization as well, for that matter—should not—or at the very least not only—be seen as categories of analysis but rather as part of political discourses that aim to establish a certain way of being in the world, this framing in itself can be read as promoting the norms of "individualism" and "secularity." In this way, current Swiss-German media discourses (re-)produce a normative image of a secular/religious dichotomy in which Christianity comes to figure on the 'secular' side with Islam as its opposition (Behloul 2013; Scott 2018). Moreover, the media outputs analyzed portray the 'Christian secular' as tied to notions of individuality and individual religiosity and assess such religiosity not only as acceptable but even as a "triumphant" marker of progress (SRF 26.12.16).[36] This further emphasizes the embedment of the concept of secularity in a political project of modernity (Asad 2003, 12–13) in concrete Swiss-German discourses on Islam in Switzerland.

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Acceptable Muslimness and the "Secular Muslim Woman"

However, the overall dichotomy established between an imagined 'secular Christian West' and a 'Muslim Other' is, of course, not the full picture. As early as 2002, Mamdani pointed to the increasingly utilized rhetorical fault line between 'good Muslims' and 'bad Muslims' in American post-9/11 discourses expressed by the Bush administration. In this line of argument, the notion of a threshold that separates "moderate, called 'genuine' Islam from extremist political Islam" (Mamdani 2002, 767) was conjured, centrally implying that "unless prove[n] to be 'good', every Muslim was presumed to be 'bad'" (Mamdani 2005, 15). The initial version of this discourse primarily targeted countries such as Afghanistan, Palestine, or Pakistan, thereby simultaneously culturalizing these countries as "Muslim cultures" as well as problematizing them to the extent to which military intervention was deemed justifiable (Mamdani 2002, 2005). Increasingly, however, the idea of a fault line between 'good' and 'bad' Muslims has also been used in discussions on the acceptability of Muslims living in European nations. This idea is taken up in immigration and integration policies that aim to both distinguish between

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nöd, ez so definiert, aber es isch nöd so, es isch en säkulare Staat" / Projer: "Korrigieremers uf christlichi Gschicht." (SRF 01.04.16).

35 "Individualisierungstendenz, egal in welcher Religion. Säkularisierungstendenz, vor allem jetzt in der christlichen Welt. Existieren im Westen gemeinsame Werte?" (SRF 26.12.16).

36 This is evident in the introduction of the debate on *the values of the occident,* which states: "With the secularization from the 1960s onwards, Christian values have receded into the background in the West. Individual freedom *triumphed*" (SRF 26.12.16, my emphasis).

'good' and potentially 'bad' Muslims as well as to discipline Muslim migrants to be 'good' (Fassin 2010).[37]

In current Swiss discourses, although never explicitly marked as a 'good Muslim' vs. 'bad Muslim' dichotomy, the idea of problematic Muslims on the one hand and acceptable, "well adapted" Muslims on the other hand is wide-spread in discussions on Muslims in Switzerland. Thereby, the specifics of what comes to mark acceptable intra-national versions of Muslimness are closely tied to "secularity" and forms of religion and religiosity perceived as connected to it. In the media debates analyzed, there is a continuous thread in which debate participants clarify that "the majority of Muslims [in this country] are (very) secular(ized)" (SRF 01.04.16; SRF 09.09.16; NZZ 02.08.16). This is either directly evaluated as positive and/or contrasted to problematic forms of Muslimness, such as in the statement of the religious expert Hugo Stamm, who stated that "*fortunately*, the vast majority of Muslims [here] are very *secular* (…) but they suffer because there (simply) are *radicals*"[38] (SRF 01.04.16). Similarly, Saïda Keller-Messahli, herself a Muslim woman often marked as progressive or secular, contrasted "secularized" Muslims with the IS interpretation of the Quran (SRF 01.04.16) and the NZZ Folio differentiated between Muslims that "do not much care about faith" with "strictly devout" and "ultraconservative" Muslims, who supposedly think "there's only one true God" and "those who are not for Islam are against it" (02.08.16). Finally, the idea of "secularity" as a prerequisite of Muslim compatibility with "Western societies" is made explicit by Saïda Keller-Messahli when she states that Islam is "in principle not compatible [with Western enlightenment] as long as Islam makes political demands. That is, it is only compatible if (…) this secular principle is always defended and upheld" (SRF 09.09.16). In this way, secular Muslims come to figure as 'good Muslims' that are potentially compatible with Swiss society in contrast to 'bad Muslims' that are portrayed as orthodox, and hence as potentially violent and close to terrorism. [27]

Both the notion of acceptable "secular[ized] Muslims" as well as of problematic, "strictly devout" Muslims are closely tied to gendered imagery in current Swiss discourses, as evident in the editorial introducing the NZZ Folio *Muslims in Switzerland: How much Islam can the country bear?*: [28]

> What to do if the last available parking space in a multi-story car park in the city of Zug is occupied—by *three men kneeling* on their jackets and bowing to the concrete wall behind which Mecca must lie? "Honk! Scold!" advises *Saïda Keller-Messahli*, because one should *not* allow oneself to be restricted by *believers* who mark their presence in *public*. *Religions should* be respected, but they are a *private* matter. [29]

> *Saïda Keller-Messahli,* head of the "Forum for *progressive Islam*" is one of the ten Muslims we visited for our magazine. Many Europeans have become *suspicious of Islam* in recent years, for it is not Buddhists or Christians who spread *terror* in the name of their faith. *Fundamentalist Islam* has long since arrived in *our secular, open society*. How do we deal with this? How do Muslims living in Switzerland react to this? Is it none of their business? Or is it? [30]

> "Of course it is", says the *Egyptian (woman)* who is fighting for the *sexual liberation* [31]

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37 A striking example of disciplining migrants is the 2006 citizenship text introduced in Baden-Württemberg, which included questions such as "What do you think of a man in Germany who is simultaneously married to two women?" or "How would you feel about an openly gay politician?" (Fassin 2010, 516).

38 Original: "Es isch absolut richtig das, zum Glück die ganz grossi Mehrheit vode Muslim (…) sehr säkular sind. (…). Aber si liidet drunder wills ebbe radikali giit" (SRF 01.04.16).

of the Arab women's world from Zurich with Youtube films. "No," says the *(female) student* who *only decided to wear a headscarf a year ago…* (NZZ Folio 02.08.16, my emphasis)[39]

Two points in this introductory paragraph of the NZZ Folio seem quite striking. First, while the overall magazine portrays ten Muslims, four of which are women, the first three people mentioned in the editorial are Muslim women. In placing emphasis on the positionality of Muslim women in introducing the overall title question of "how much Islam can the country bear"—that should arguably rather read "what kind of Islam can the country bear"?—Muslim women come to mark acceptable intra-national Muslimness.

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Second, the position of acceptable and unacceptable Islam are both portrayed in a highly gendered manner; On the one hand, "three kneeling men" come to symbolize strongly discouraged "public" religiosity, which is contrasted with "private" religion marked as aspirational. On the other hand, the Muslim woman Saïda Keller-Messahli both embodies as well as calls for a 'secular,' i.e. private, Islam, which, in line with her and her group's self-positioning, is labelled "progressive." Her position is further aligned with Switzerland, by identifying Switzerland as "our secular, open society." Moreover, the two other women mentioned come to mark the positively assessed female positionalities of "sexually liberated"[40] as well as "self-determined"[41] Muslimness. By portraying the positionality of a "secular," "progressive," "sexually liberated" as well as "self-determined" Islam as embodied by women, and contrasting it with an Islam that is not only publicly visible and visibly male but also "fundamentalist" and potentially terrorist, the suggested fault line between 'good' and 'bad' Muslims is introduced in a clearly gendered manner in which Muslim women figure as markers of acceptable difference.

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Such interrelations of secularity and gendered positionalities as well as issues in notions of acceptable and unacceptable Islam are echoed in further 2016 media broadcasts on Islam in Switzerland. The religious expert Hugo Stamm, for instance, contrasted "secularization" with "the radicalization of Islam" and suggested emphasizing "that there is secularization" as a "counter-measure" to "islamization", which he saw as evident in the gendered image of "girls" who are "forced" to wear a headscarf (SRF 01.04.16). In a similar manner, one of the participants in the debate on *the values of the Occident* stated that ever since "secularization," "dogmatic" religion, seen as embodied by "of course in the end always *men* who say what is valid in religion" (SRF 26.12.16, my emphasis), is supposedly not accepted "anymore." While such evidence of narratives of progress tied to secularity and its supposed overcoming of dangerous as well as misogynistic versions of religion is widespread, Saïda Keller-Messahli makes explicit the often underlying understanding of a causality between secularization and gender equality:

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39   The words *woman* and *female* are in brackets here, as those nouns are gender-marked in the German original.

40   The "Egyptian" woman is positioned as a "sexually liberal" Muslim woman who liberates the Arab women's world. This introduces the necessity of a sexual liberation of "Arab" women, which, since the issue deals with Islam, implies the liberation of predominantly Muslim women. Moreover, by stating that the project can be carried out from Zurich (via Youtube videos) but not (and this is emphasized several times in her article later on) from Egypt, the imagined group boundaries are reproduced in terms of (sexually) liberal Switzerland and the oppressed women in the Arab world.

41   The female law student is positioned as a religious and educated Muslim woman who, as is emphasized, wears a headscarf out of her own conviction. This is underlined by the temporal reference to having worn a headscarf "only since one year." In this way, although she marks the possibility of a different opinion and indeed of visible religiosity, this seems to be dependent on being clearly marked as a free and self-determined woman.

> The woman is worth less, she only inherits half (of it), her voice is only half as   [35]
> valuable. But that's, I don't blame *Islam* here either, in the *Torah* and in the *Bible*
> women don't get away well either, only these societies simply *did more* culturally
> and could relativize that. That means (…) *assigning religion a place* where it does not
> determine what is going on in *politics*. So whenever we [Arab countries] politically
> advance we actually always take the religious further with us (…) a great step
> *backwards*. (SRF 12.01.16, my emphasis)

In this statement, 'secularization,' understood as the separation of religion and politics, is   [36]
not only directly linked to "Christian"—and in this case also "Jewish"—"societies," but is also
seen as the necessary causal factor that helped "relativize" misogynist tendencies in religious
texts. In this way, gender equality is not only seen as a marker of progress that accompanies
secularity but is rather explicitly seen as possible *only because* of secularity and as impossible
within religions, specifically within un-seculariz(able) Islam.

Moreover, the way Muslim women figure as embodiments of potentially acceptable Islam   [37]
and hence of the possibility of Muslim belonging to Switzerland can be seen as part of a larger
European discourse in which the bodies of Muslim women serve as "crucial markers of na-
tional belonging and function as boundary markers between communities" (Moors and Salih
2009, 376). I understand the emphasis on Muslim women as the current specific intersectional
manifestation of the overall centrality women play in the delineation of national communities,
as prominently outlined in the work of Yuval-Davis (1997, 1996, 1993) and McClintock, who
has demonstrated that "nationalism is […] constituted from the very beginning as a gendered"
(1993, 63). In the context of what Asad criticizes as "culture talk" (2003), or rather as a ten-
dency to culturalize difference in contemporary delineations of 'Self' and 'Other,' women, and
specifically Muslim women and their 'appropriate' behavior, figure as cultural transmitters
as well as signifiers of national and cultural collectivities frequently perceived as internally
homogenous (Yuval-Davis 1993, 627–28). Drawing on a variety of examples from European
countries, including recent poster campaigns in Switzerland depicting veiled Muslim women,
Barras outlines the way the "'veiled' woman remains a *passive* actor—a marker" (2013, 88,
my emphasis) in discourse that suggest both the necessity of Muslim women to be saved as
well as their potentially embodying a threat to the polity (Barras 2013, 87–88).

At the same time, however, Muslim women actively take part in the public negotiation   [38]
of how and what kind of Islam may be integrated into European societies (Fernando 2009;
Rommelspacher 2009). Figures of secular Muslim women or female Muslim Islam critics,
for instance, are highly public in current European discourses, with women such as Fadela
Amara in France (Fernando 2009), Necla Kelek and Seyran Ateş in Germany (Rommelspacher
2009), and Saïda Keller-Messahli in Switzerland. Based on the notion of discourse as produc-
ing specific effects, I suggest that such public appearances could be seen as responding to
the "pressure to perform" acceptable Muslimness produced within an overall discourse on
secularism that establishes "a national belonging that claims to be secular" (Moors and Salih
2009, 376). In the remainder of this paper, I argue that the positionality of the group called
secular Muslims, prominently co-founded by Saïda Keller-Messahli, may be interpreted as a
moment of discursive agency that draws on the gender-specific implications of current Swiss
notions of secularity and belonging outlined above.

Embodying the Acceptable: Gendered Connotations of the Secular Muslims' Self-Positioning

In a discursive regime that invokes secularity as a central norm in the description of Europe and individual European nations, the self-identifying "secular Muslim" inhabits a particular positionality. In the context of contemporary France and its strictly secularist conception of the state (*laicité*) concerned with "restraining the public presence of religion" (Moors and Salih 2009, 375) and typically constructing Islam as the opposite of *laicité,* Mas raises the question of the possibilities for Muslim subjectivity (2006, 586). Delineations of possible Muslim positionalities within France are evident in numerous current publications that aim to establish an "Islam of France" by identifying "the 'appropriate' relationship of Muslims to secularism" (Mas 2006, 594). In this context, a variety of groups and individuals have positioned themselves as "secular Muslims." Mas (2006) interprets interpellating secular Islam as an articulation of a Muslim identity that can claim secular allegiance to the French state. Thereby, the invocation of the identity position of "secular Muslims" can be seen as disrupting the dominant dichotomy between 'secular' and 'Muslim.' At the same time, however, the articulation of the position "secular Muslims" necessarily draws upon both the very understanding of those concepts as mutually exclusive as well as the normative views associated with them (Mas 2006, 603; Fernando 2009, 390). It is only within the context of a particular "type of subjectivity governed by the secular state" (Mas 2006, 588) tied to current discourses of the European self that the positionality of "secular Muslims" becomes legible.

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In the following, I investigate the public presence of the group *secular Muslims* (säkulare Muslime) as part of and in relation to the overall discourse on secularity, religion and Muslim belonging in Switzerland. Based on a text-based qualitative analysis of the group's declaration according to the discourse analysis procedure as outlined above, I argue that the self-positioning of the *secular Muslims* reveals as well as reproduces the specifics of current concepts of secularity and religion as they relate to notions of modernity, gender, and belonging in German-speaking Europe. The *secular Muslims* are an interest-based association from Germany, Austria and Switzerland, with 15 Muslim members. Many of these members as well as the founders of the association are well-known and highly active as "liberal" and "progressive" Muslims in the German-speaking public, for instance Seyran Ateş and Necla Kelek in Germany and Saïda Keller-Messahli and Jasmin El Sonbati in Switzerland. In a joint declaration, called the *Freiburger Declaration,* they explain their guiding principles and introduce themselves as standing "for a humanistic, modern and enlightened understanding of Islam in a contemporary context and (…) as secular Muslims."[42] This introduction, as well as the objectives listed in the *Freiburger Declaration,* heavily draw on and reproduce normative notions of secularity and Islam. In the following, I first outline the specifics of what 'secular' comes to signify in the declaration of the *secular Muslims* and then highlight the conception of religion in general and Islam in particular that accompanies that view.

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Firstly, in the *Freiburger Declaration,* secular does not refer to a non-religious state of being[43] but rather invokes normative notions of secularity as both a certain relationship between state and religion as well as a marker of a specific type of religion and religiosity that is desirable. In reference to the relationship between religion and state, the group states:

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42   Säkulare Muslime, Freiburger Declaration, http://saekulare-muslime.org/, downloaded 03.06.18, website last accessed December 4, 2019.

43   The group clearly defines itself as Muslim and refers to faith in God as "a source of spirituality, resilience and inner strength" (*Freiburger Declaration*).

> We stand behind the state commandment to religious and ideological neutrality. We support it when civil servants, especially teachers and judges, refrain from wearing religiously motivated clothing, especially the headscarf. (*Freiburger Declaration*)

[42]

This is the only explicit reference to the concept of state secularity as religious neutrality, which is related to the idea of necessary invisibility of religious symbols in a state public, frequently symbolized by gender-specific religious clothing in the public court and school system. The concept of a public/private dichotomy in which religion is supposed to occupy the latter realm is also evident in the way the *secular Muslims* outline their understanding of faith as "based on the very *personal* and *individual* relationship of the *individual* to God" and as "a source of *spirituality*, resilience and *inner strength*" (my emphasis). In this way, religiosity is produced as something personal, internal and most notably as something individual, which ties back to Protestant understandings of religion as supposed to pertain to individual subjects as well as to the notion of the (Christian) 'secular' as both enabling as well as dependent on an individualized form of religiosity (Behloul 2010; Scott 2018). Moreover, naming this "individual" faith "a source of *spirituality*" (my emphasis) evokes a long discursive history of juxtaposing religion and spirituality, both in the humanities and social sciences as well as in emic discourse (Knoblauch 2012). Thereby, spirituality is framed as, in Troeltsch's words, the embodiment of a "radical individualism without community" ([1911] 2003, 174, my translation), in which the social aspect recedes behind the "immediacy, presence and inwardness of the religious experience" ([1911] 2003, 173, my translation).[44] Finally, in calling for a "reform of Islam" (*Islamreform*) in order to render Islam "compatible" with the "challenges of modernity," the "secular Muslims" link their "secular," "individual" and "private" form of Muslim religiosity to a project of reform and modernity and thus strongly emphasize and reproduce the normative undercurrent of contemporary European notions of religion.

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Secondly, with the desire for a reform the *secular Muslims* establish a dualism between an acceptable and unacceptable Islam in which they embody the reformed state of Islam via the attribute 'secular,' while at the same time re-enforcing gendered notions of (unreformed) Islam as pre- or anti-modern, intolerant and violent.[45] In the *Freiburger Declaration*, the entanglements of the notion of the 'secular' and gender-specific issues are evident in the issues the *secular Muslims* distance themselves from as well as in the concrete objectives they list in order to achieve a reform of Islam. One central topic the reform revolves around is gender equality and women's rights. This is stated clearly in the objectives listed in the *Freiburger Declaration*, namely a support of "equal rights (specifically men & women)," "gender-mixed mosques, female Imams," as well as programmes that aim at "strengthening girls and women." At the same time, they distance themselves from "discrimination" and "segregation" and see "*polygamy* as a *misogynistic* form of partnership." Another topic that is evident in the declara-

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44   Scholars have regarded this way of seeking the source of knowledge in subjective experience as a clearly recognizable characteristic of the so-called "subject-life spirituality" (Heelas 1996, 15–16; Heelas et al. 2005, 77–80). However, the designation of the field of subjective spirituality is scientifically inconsistent (Lüddeckens and Walthert 2010, 17; Knoblauch 2010, 159). In this paper, I emphasize the normative assumptions linking 'spirituality' to a positively assessed individualism and notions of modernity and progress that are evident in emic and at times also in scientific discourses.

45   The attribution of violence to (unreformed) Islam is twofold in the declaration. On the one hand, the *secular Muslims* make explicit that what they reject in the version of Islam they want to overcome is "any type of physical and psychological violence, including death penalty and physical punishment" as well as "extremism" and "the glorification of violence." On the other hand, they include programs that aim at "violence prevention" as part of their reform (*Freiburger Declaration*).

tion is sexuality. On the one side, (unreformed) Islam is seen as tied to sexual repression. In this way, (female) sexuality is listed as something that should be free rather than repressed[46] and homophobia is rejected. On the other side, with the explicit rejection of "the *sexual abuse of minors*," there is an instance where sexual deviance is introduced as an issue within the overall framework of reforming Islam. Overall, gender- and sexuality-related issues are central to the public self-positioning of the *secular Muslims,* re-invoking the image of unreformed Islam as misogynist and sexually repressive as well as sexually abject.

As the *secular Muslims* aim to make Islam compatible with "European societies" and "European culture," the outlined objectives come to represent what is necessary to be compatible and the rejected issues what is necessarily incompatible with Europe. This notion of belonging is further emphasized when the *Freiburger Declaration* explicitly includes "integration projects" such as "German-speaking mosques" as objectives. Hence, by aiming at compatibility (with Europe) and integration, the outlined reform and self-description of the *secular Muslims* discursively delineates the boundary of national belonging, which becomes specifically related to the sexuality- and gender-related issues that figure at the very centre of the *Freiburger Declaration*. While the self-positioning as "secular Muslims" might be understood as a disruption of a normative understanding of 'secular' and 'Muslim' as mutually exclusive (Mas 2006, 603), it at the same time reproduces current discourses that conceptualize the 'secular' as modern, free, democratic and emancipatory and the 'Muslim other' as mostly violent, misogynistic, possibly terrorist, and—in this instance—at the same time sexually repressive as well as sexually deviant. In order to publicly situate themselves, the *secular Muslims* particularly revert to the gendered connotations of prevailing conceptions of 'secularity' and Islam in discourses of secularism in German-speaking Europe as exemplified by current media debates on Islam in Switzerland. In this way, the self-positioning of the *secular Muslims* can be read as an example of how the binary juxtaposition of European secularity and Muslim belonging is complicated while gendered understandings of both are simultaneously rearticulated.

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Final Remarks: Discursive Agency and the Invocation of "Secular Islam"

In conclusion, I argue that the contemporary secularism discourse as exemplified by current Swiss-German media debates can be read as opening up a specific field of discourse in which positionalities marked as 'Muslim' and 'secular' are regarded as politically relevant, yet are each associated with radically different values and thus with fundamentally different prerequisites for public participation and legitimacy of voice. Thereby, there is a strong tendency to delegitimize Muslim positionalities as incompatible with modern, 'secular' nation states. In this context, I agree with Mas in her argument that combining the attributes 'secular' and 'Muslim' may facilitate the establishment of a subject position as 'Muslim' that can be publicly perceived and heard. In other words, in light of the way gendered understandings of the secular are instrumentalized to delineate national belonging in dominant public discourse, self-positioning as 'secular' can be seen as an act of *discursive* agency, an adoption of the imposed norms, or rather as an embodiment of the acceptable. This position is legitimized by, on the one hand, subverting the assumption of a dichotomy between Muslimness and secularity,

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46   The *secular Muslims* reject "dress constraints, forced marriages and religious marriage bans as well as any repression of self-determined free *sexuality*" (*Freiburger Declaration*).

as well as, on the other hand, drawing on the normative and specifically the gendered association of 'secularity' in order for the *secular Muslims* to position themselves as "individual" Muslims that are compatible with "modernity" and "gender equality." In light of the long history of placing women at the heart of nation and group building projects as well as with regards to the veracity of current gender discourses, both in general as well as with reference to Islam, gender-specific issues may be a particularly prolific resource to draw on in the public self-positioning as "secular Muslims." This, I argue, may help explain the prominence of gendered issues in the *Freiburger Declaration.*

Overall, the example of the *secular Muslims* indicates that self-portrayal as "secular Muslims"   [47]
may be a politically strategic positioning that allows self-inscribing into a gendered concept of belonging to a secularly conceived state. However, the subversion of the dichotomy between the 'secular' and the 'Muslim Other' is achieved only through a linguistic pluralization of the category 'Muslim' in the creation of the subcategory 'secular Muslims.'[47] Hence, only certain Muslim positionalities can legitimately appear and express opinions in public discourse, namely Muslims marked as compatible with secularity, whereas not thusly marked Muslims continue to be ascribed the assumptions inherent in secularism discourse, evident even in the self-positioning of the group *secular Muslims.* In this sense I suggest that the self-positioning of the *secular Muslims* can be understood as an effect of and a response to contemporary secularism discourse that produces a plurality of Muslim subjectivities while at the same time inherently limits the public legitimacy of many of these Muslim positionalities.

Given the transnational nature of conceptions of 'Self' and the 'Muslim Other' within Europe, the outlined mechanisms of the current Swiss-German discourse of secularism can be   [48]
expected to be valid for other national contexts as well. Switzerland's media debates in particular have been identified as influenced by the respective neighboring language regions (Künzler 2013). Hence a similar discourse of 'the secular' as tied to gender equality vis-à-vis a misogynist 'Muslim Other' might be seen in Germany and Austria. The fact that the *secular Muslims* address their declaration to people in all German-speaking countries further indicates the expected legibility of their self-positioning across national borders. Due to this study's focus on German-language media outputs in Switzerland, I can only hypothesize on whether the French or Italian speaking discourse might differ in the specific details that come to be associated with 'the secular.' One possible difference potentially specific to national contexts in current discourses of secularism could be expected in the emphasis placed on issues of homosexuality and tolerance towards non-binary gender identities. In France and the Netherlands, for instance, narratives of progress prominently integrate tolerance of homosexuality as a demarcation from the 'Muslim Others' (Fassin 2010, 2012; Fassin and Salcedo 2015; Mepschen, Duyvendak, and Tonkens 2010), while dominant narratives in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, and arguably also in Germany, tend to focus predominantly on gender equality. The use of such gender-specific notions of progress could shed light on their social perception within the respective nations. In this sense, I suggest it would be of great interest for future research to elaborate on the similarities and differences of gender- and sexuality-specific representations of the 'progressive,' 'secular Self' across and within different European nations.

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47   In addition to "secular Muslims," there is evidence of a variety of other subcategories in the overall media discourse, such as "cultural Muslims," "progressive" or "liberal Muslims," "radical Muslims," "conservative Muslims," etc.

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