Muslim Girlhood, *Skam* Fandom and DIY Citizenship

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Abstract

While fandom is a dominant girlhood trope, few accounts examine faith within the context of girls' fandom. Addressing this gap, using a feminist poststructural analysis, I draw on interviews and participant observation to locate fan communities as a space for Muslim girls to enact citizenship. Combining youth cultural studies, girlhood studies, and fan studies, I explore how Muslim fangirls of the Norwegian teen web-drama *Skam* (2015-17) draw upon their desire for recognition and their creativity as cultural producers to engage in participatory storytelling which challenges popular representations of Muslim girls. This process enables the production of communities rooted in shared interests, experiences, and identities. I conclude by suggesting that fandom should be recognized for its capacity to generate new meanings of citizenship for minority youth.

Key words: Muslim girls; citizenship; fan culture; cultural production; religion.

Introduction

Muslim girls living in non-Muslim majority countries are routinely discursively positioned as objects of public anxiety in relation to their citizenship and civic engagement. They are positioned as "at-risk" or "in crisis" (Gilmore and Marshall 2010), as "victims" of an oppressive culture as well as a "threat" to Western modernity (Bilge 2010). Adding to these discursive constructions, policy initiatives aimed at improving Muslim youth citizenship often cohere around the seemingly gender-neutral term "youth," which tends to refer exclusively to Muslim boys and young men, rendering Muslim girls invisible (Rashid 2016). Such discursive formations reproduce normative understandings of minority youth citizenship as suspect or "lacking" (Smith et al. 2005). Furthermore, existing accounts of Muslim girl citizens largely center Malala Yousafzai (Khurshid and Pitts 2019), whose "spectacular" (Projansky 2014), or exceptional, citizenship has displaced attention from everyday forms of citizenship expressed by Muslim girls in the West.

Responding to the under-theorization of Muslim girl citizenship, and countering both negative discursive constructions and spectacular exceptionalism, this article builds on conceptualizations of "cultural citizenship" (Zobl and Drüeke 2012) and "DIY citizenship"

(Ratto and Boler 2014) to locate fandom as an important space for Muslim girls to shape their identities. Drawing upon qualitative research with 13 Muslim girls, I combine the insights of youth cultural studies, girlhood studies, and fan studies to reveal how Muslim girl fans of the Norwegian teen web-drama *Skam* (2015-2017) utilize the skills they have developed as fans to enact DIY citizenship.

Guided by feminist poststructural theorizing, my analysis emphasizes the discursive instability of meanings, identities, and categories and recognizes the complex flows of agency, power, and resistance, through social, cultural, and political processes. Rather than understanding concepts such as "agency", "subjectivity", or "voice" as self-evident and unqualified, I interpret them as produced by structural and regulative discursive constraints (Davies 1991; Butler 1997; Driscoll 2002). Agency, then, is partial and contingent, and can be located in "moments of (active) resistance or re-signification" (Maxwell and Aggleton 2010, 330-1) within a broader context of discursive constraint. Thus, Muslim girlhoods are constituted by a "dynamic of discursive regulation *and* subjective negotiation and movement" (Ringrose 2013, 62; emphasis added).

In what follows, I outline the connections between youth cultural citizenship and DIY citizenship before detailing the relationship between DIY citizenship and fan culture. I then introduce my participants and discuss the process of data collection and analysis. My analysis reveals how Muslim fangirls challenge popular cultural representations of Muslim girls, engage in acts of participatory storytelling which center experiences of Muslim girlhood, and establish political solidarities rooted in shared interests, experiences, and identities. I argue that fandom enables the Muslim fangirls in my study to generate and negotiate new discursive meanings of citizenship and civic engagement. In doing so, I trouble understandings of the homogeneous, white, Western, and secular *girl* in fangirl, and challenge assumptions about Muslim girls' civic engagement

DIY Citizenship, Fandom, and Civic Engagement

While normative definitions of citizenship emphasize the status and rules of formal state membership, feminist and youth studies scholars have identified other discursively produced meanings (Isin and Turner 2007; Kock and Villadsen 2017). Civic engagement loosely refers to activities and practices oriented toward the "public good" (Dahlgren 2009). However, traditional definitions of citizenship and civic engagement center state-based, adult-oriented practices, and tend to "ignore, devalue, or otherwise marginalize the ways in which younger

citizens are connecting with one another to collectively make a difference in their own worlds" (Earl and Schussman 2008, 73). Research thus suggests that young people are turning away from conventional modes of (adult) citizenship in favor of more fluid and informal modes of participation that often grow out of youth cultural practices online (Harris et al. 2010).

Based on less acknowledged, everyday modes of engagement, youth studies and feminist scholars have produced more expansive notions of citizenship which foreground the cultural dimensions of youth citizenship (Vinken 2005, Bennett 2008). Consequently, "cultural citizenship", as a mode of citizenship that corresponds with cultural identities and practices and addresses processes of inclusion and exclusion, has gained traction as a legitimate form of engagement (Klaus and Lünenborg 2012, Lopez 2016). Cultural citizenship exists in dialogue with "DIY citizenship", a concept used to explore how processes of DIY, or do-it-yourself, cultural production can provide "new modes and possibilities for political and social engagement" (Ratto and Boler 2014, 18). Notably, forms of cultural production associated with DIY citizenship, such as blogging or zine-making, have been described by girlhood studies scholars as spaces for girls to cultivate political identities and express civic values oriented towards social and cultural inclusion (Kearney 2006, Harris 2012).

Fan communities, or "fandoms", which form around an intense shared engagement with a popular cultural text, have also been cited as examples of DIY cultural production (Hinck 2019). While fan communities are generated around texts that may not be explicitly political, they can nevertheless offer resources for new modes of citizenship (Jenkins et al. 2020). Liesbet van Zoonen (2004) argues that routine fan activities, including deliberation, information sharing, and community building, help fans cultivate skills that are important for civic engagement. Emphasizing to this point, Ashley Hinck (2019) has positioned "fan-based citizenship" as an emergent mode of youth participation grounded in one's identity as a fan. Drawing upon the community structures of fandom, combined with the social and cultural skills of fans, it "provide[s] the means for civic action, while fan-objects provide the inspiration" (16). Popular cultural texts thus offer "shared references and resources" (Jenkins and Shresthova 2016, 258) for young people to discursively articulate social and political critique. Fan communities, therefore, have the potential to integrate civic engagement into young people's everyday lives and should be given attention in understandings of youth citizenship.

NRK's *Skam* (2015-2017)

Skam (Shame) is a teen web-drama produced by the Norwegian public service broadcaster NRK. The series follows a group of teenagers, mostly girls, in Oslo as they navigate everyday life. Following unprecedented domestic success, Norwegian fans began to translate and distribute the series through the global subcultural networks of fandom. By late 2016, it had developed a reputation as an international cult phenomenon to such an extent that, without formal international distribution, it became the most popular television series on Tumblr in 2017 (Fandometrics 2017). Described as "the internet's latest obsession" (Hughes 2016), its popularity prompted remakes in the US, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands.

*Skam'*s fourth and final season, which aired during Ramadan in 2017, focused on a hijabi Muslim girl named Sana (Iman Meskini). It featured Sana's negotiation of friendships, identity and belonging, and inter-faith relationships, and was commended for its nuanced representation of a Muslim girl at the center, rather than margins, of a popular cultural text. Muslim journalist Naureen Nashid (2017) praised the series for its desire to "tackle the realities of being a Muslim … in today's political climate." Muslim fangirls' responses to *Skam* subsequently form the basis of this research.

Researching Muslim Fangirls

The data for this article were gathered between 2018 and 2020 using online interviews, participant observation, and textual analysis. I came to this research as an aca-fan (academic and fan) (Cristofari and Guitton 2017), and my "insider" status was central to the process of recruiting participants, providing a mechanism for establishing trust, legitimacy, and accountability. I used a combination of purposive and snowballing sampling (Creswell and Poth 2018), and recruitment took place through fannish networks on Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, and Instagram. My positionality called for a reflexive approach to the research process mindful of my "insider" role as a fellow fan, as well as my "outsider" role as a white, Western, non-Muslim young woman. This involved adopting a de-orientalizing approach which actively rejects orientalist representations of Muslims and Islam (Said 2003), and "privileges, supports and validates Muslim knowledges, experiences, and perspectives" (Imtoual 2009, 167). My approach aligns with feminist poststructural methodologies, which interrogate the ability of the researcher to represent the social world (Pillow 2003), and instead

foreground the voices, lived experiences, and standpoints of marginalized groups (Harding 2004).

Thirteen semi-structured interviews were conducted using instant messaging platforms, which enabled me to adopt the style of interaction fangirls routinely engage in online. During our interviews, I encouraged participants to share examples of their fanworks (fan-made creative works) centering the Muslim girl character, Sana. Interview data were combined with observations generated from participants' fannish social media accounts on Tumblr, YouTube, and the non-profit fanfiction archive, Archive of Our Own (AO3). This method involved historical data mining to gather insights into their participation in *Skam* fandom, which enabled me to gain deeper insight into the contexts driving them to participate. Given ethical concerns about fans' expectations of privacy online (Busse and Hellekson 2012), these forms of observation, as well as the analysis of fanworks, did not take place without the consent of the participant. Participants chose pseudonyms to preserve confidentiality.

My participants were a heterogeneous group of Muslim girls, articulating multi-layered subjectivities, and coming to this research from a diverse range of contexts united by their participation in the *Skam* fan community. They lived in North America (Canada), Western Europe (Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Scotland), North Africa (Egypt), and South-East Asia (Indonesia), describing themselves as South-East Asian, Egyptian, Pakistani-Algerian, South Asian, Somali, Moroccan, and Sudanese. In this article, I focus on the responses of eight Muslim fangirls living in non-Muslim majority countries. While I did not ask participants about their sexual orientation, two referred to themselves as queer. Their ages ranged from 20 to 25, yet they discursively positioned themselves as girls (see Driscoll 2002). Thus, rather than conceive of girlhood as a fixed or universal category, I approached the concept from a feminist poststructuralist perspective, emphasizing that conceptions of girlhood are socially, historically, culturally, and discursively constituted (Pomerantz 2009). Furthermore, the performance of fangirl identities trouble age-related norms surrounding girlhood (McCann and Southerton 2019), and the specificities of diasporic Muslim girlhood further complicate these discursive instabilities. For instance, for some Muslim girls, the elasticity of girlhood is tied to cultural, familial, and religious norms surrounding marital status, where the perception of emerging adulthood and freedom from parental authority is "a consequence of marriage, rather than that of coming of age" (Basit 1997, 433, also see Basit 2012, Ahmad 2012). The heterogeneity of these Muslim fangirls subsequently defies simple understanding of the *girl* in

fangirl, while also troubling normative assumptions about the *fan* in fangirl as white, Western, and secular (see Pande 2018).

Popular Culture, (Mis-)Recognition, and Belonging

Participants demonstrated a high level of awareness of dominant discursive constructions of Muslims and Islam in Western media cultures, articulating an astute understanding of the routine "misrecognition" (Modood 2017, 66) of Muslim girls in popular cultural texts. Zifu, for example, explained that most Muslim "representations don't connect with us," adding, "they're not written with Muslim girls in mind, it's mainly for a non-Muslim audience." She jokingly referred to dominant constructions of Muslim girls as the "oppression Olympics," noting the prevalence of "save me from myself narratives," which discursively anchor Muslim girls to dichotomies of "victim/agent" and "repression/resistance" (see Mahmood 2005). Nabiha similarly expressed her sense of disconnect with dominant representations of Muslim girls. She explained, "I had never been represented through any of this type of media. I think that 'my version' of being Muslim is very different than most media depictions." For many participants, *Skam* acted as an alternative depiction of Muslim girls, as "representation I never really had" (Asmaâ).

Several of the girls I interviewed emphasized that Sana's visibility in *Skam*, as a hijabi and girl of color, had piqued their interest in the web-series. Nora, for instance, described the moment she first encountered *Skam* on social media, explaining that, "I was shocked because in Belgium and in Western media I rarely see a hijabi and she was able to say her piece and I was so interested." Similarly, Rameen noted, "it was so strange to see a girl in a hijab as the main character of her own season, especially in a Norwegian TV show for teenagers … I was hooked."

Throughout the interviews, participants emphasized how meaningful it was to see an agentic Muslim girl at the center of a popular cultural text. As Zifu noted, "Muslim [women of color] rarely ever get to be the main character." Throughout these discussions, participants adopted *Skam* as a lens to discuss their own struggles for recognition as Muslim girls. Nabiha, for example, highlighted how personally important it was to her that Sana was able to exercise various forms of agency throughout the series:

> It felt really good to know that other people out there would see that the way I live my life isn't some kind of big prison. Like, people watching the show love Sana,

> and they see her making all of these choices for herself and seeing them as just the way she lives and not as constant restrictions. It just felt so good to be seen.

Participants highlighted the importance of feeling recognized by the routine and ordinary aspects of Muslim girlhood captured within Sana's story. As Anita Harris and Joshua Roose (2013, 798) note, "young Muslims are rarely permitted to remain unremarkable" (also see Imtoual 2009). This lack of attention is something that Asmaâ discussed at length during our interview, expressing her sense of joy at recognizing many ordinary and routine aspects of her own life on screen:

> Seeing things I do, like fast for Ramadan or pray, or just a house with some Oriental stuff in it on a screen was amazing. The fact that Sana herself was just a regular girl with friends and hobbies and wasn't portrayed any differently than anyone else was amazing … They showed Sana's home life as something very casual, and her culture and everything … All of those moments are so warm and ordinary. I love it.

Participants drew upon the text to explore and reflect upon their sense of belonging, using Sana's story to make meaning of their experiences of negotiating "dual identities" (Halima) while moving "between two worlds" (Aya) and "trying to balance everything" (Halima). Huff, for example, discussed this issue regarding her positionality as a Scottish Muslim girl from an immigrant background:

> I enjoyed how much I could relate to her … I often struggle to feel like I fit in anywhere. I was born and raised in Scotland … , but people look at my face and will constantly have a reminder (whether they want to admit it or not) that I'm not 'originally' from here … I see a lot of myself in Sana that I would maybe struggle to find other places and she's a very good example to me of what a good person who also is Muslim should be like and that's nice to see and I'm glad other people will see that too.

Huff expressed her hope that the recognition of Sana's struggle to belong captured within *Skam* might raise awareness of Muslim girls' ordinariness, their routines, their hopes and dreams. As Tariq Modood (2005, 134) notes, this "politics of recognition" is central to the everyday expression of citizenship, as our encounters with popular cultural texts encourage us to take "belonging, being part of social groups, seriously" (Hermes 2006, 159-60). However, Huff's description of her response to *Skam* notably invokes the disproportionate pressure many

Muslim youth feel to be seen as a "good" Muslim – a pressure that is urgently felt for many Muslims girls and young women given the dominance of regulatory discourses which position them as both threatening and oppressed (see Harris and Roose 2013, 808).

Participants framed their consumption of *Skam,* as well as their participation in the fan community, as a way to discursively reformulate and recognize their experiences within a popular cultural domain. Halima, for example, emphasized how moved she was by the notion that a Muslim girl's "point of view" would be foregrounded to the same extent as the white main characters in *Skam*. She explained:

> The thought of someone like Sana getting the care and point of view like Eva, Isak and Noora [(white characters)] got made me incredibly happy and emotional. I related to Sana because I was a Muslim and ethnic girl growing in a Scandinavian country. Everyone looks like Vilde and Noora [(white characters)]. I knew her struggles.

Halima's description of her "incredibly happy and emotional" response to Sana's story suggests an intense affective response to these feelings of recognition. This movement towards what van Zoonen (2004, 47) describes as "affective identification" – a process where fans relate fictional narratives to events in their own lives, using them as resources to "make meaning of their personal experience" (ibid.) – points to the significance of the parallels between Sana's position as a Muslim girl in *Skam* and Muslim fangirls' own positionalities. Melissa Brough and Sangita Shresthova (2012) highlight that fan-driven civic participation is often fueled by fans' affective engagements with fictional content worlds. Fictional content worlds, they argue, may serve as affective resources for fannish performances of citizenship. Thus, it is worth considering how Muslim fangirls' affective identifications with a text, produced by this politics of recognition, may become the basis for performances of DIY citizenship.

Exploring Muslim Girlhood through Cultural Production

Participants engaged in various forms of fannish DIY cultural production surrounding *Skam*. For example, Ikram, Nabiha, and Asmaâ create fan-made videos[1] ("vids"), while Halima, Zifu, and Rameen write long-form fanfiction[2] ("fic"). Nora writes short-form fanfiction ("headcanons" and "drabble"), and co-curates an archival Tumblr blog of fanworks about Sana. Participants share their creations with other fans online. They described their cultural productivity as an informal and everyday leisure practice, and as a form of creative self-

expression. Ikram, for example, described it as a "diary" she uses to "express whatever I'm feeling." Rameen similarly described it as an emotional "outlet", while Zifu and Asmaâ positioned it as a means to explore their "perspectives" and "experiences".

Throughout the interviews, cultural production emerged as a meaningful way for participants to exercise public voice, as a form of "discursive agency" (Butler 1997), through their engagements with the fictional content world of *Skam*. Nora, for instance, authored a series of blog posts examining her own experiences of the challenges Sana was confronting on screen. In a post titled "Muslim girl's daily life," she emphasized that Sana's struggle with "feel[ing] like an outsider with her own friends but also in society" was something that "happens to me daily." In another, she compared her experience of "the constant issue of trying to adapt … having a majority of white friends" to Sana's. Throughout these posts, Nora draws on her experiences to lend credence to the gendered forms of anti-Muslim racism depicted on screen and compel her readers to take them seriously. Thus, Nora's affective identification with Sana becomes the basis for her desire to assert a public voice as a Muslim girl, to challenge dominant discourses, and express social and political critique. Elsewhere, Zifu embedded this process of exercising voice into her production of fanfiction, emphasizing her desire to "write from a Muslim woc [(woman of color]) perspective":

> Since I knew a lot of people were reading, [I wanted to] open up this new avenue for them into many aspects of our lives/culture … I was like yes, I can write about so many Muslim experiences!! Our festivals of Eid, our culture, religious little titbits.

For Zifu, writing fanfiction about Sana involves drawing upon her experiences to reinscribe and make visible the specificity of Sana's positionality as a Muslim girl from an immigrant background. This strategy is something that other participants also alluded to. Both Rameen and Zifu produced fanfiction, titled "Eid" and "Iftar at the Acar Household" respectively, that foregrounded Sana's everyday engagement with Islamic traditions and rituals, combining their shared fannish interests with their culturally specific knowledge and experiences to depict Sana's expressions of faith on their own terms. They described this process as an attempt to represent "Muslim experiences" (Zifu) and "cater to the Muslim girls who watched [*Skam*]" (Aya). Here, we can see how participants drew upon their affective identification with the text to craft political identities, express civic values, and exercise public voice – thus operating as an everyday expression of DIY citizenship.

It is useful to understand these modes of fannish DIY cultural production as a form of *participatory storytelling*, which Brough and Shresthova (2012, para. 5.6) define as a "collective activity in which individuals and groups contribute to the telling, retelling, and remixing of stories through various media platforms." They argue that participatory storytelling can facilitate processes of civic engagement through its ability to build upon a fan's affective attachment to a text to raise awareness of social injustice and compel them to action. Indeed, such acts of storytelling emerged as an important discursive space for my participants to express social and political critique and intervene in dominant constructions of Muslim girlhoods. For example, in a vid created by Ikram, titled "religion", she reappropriates and reformulates a range of media content to examine the hijab's status as a discursively "contested signifier" (Meer et al. 2010), and the impact of this contestation on Muslim girls. Combining newsreel clips with footage from *Skam*, she juxtaposes mediatized public discourse about the hijab in the newsreel with the impact of this discourse on a micro-level of lived experience for Muslim girls (represented by Sana). Through her focus on Sana's subjectivity, her vid disrupts understandings of the hijab through a lens of constraint, and instead frames the hijab as an agentic form of identity work and self-expression (Figure 1). During our interview, Ikram explained that her creation of the vid was informed by her experience of gendered Islamophobia and her desire to resist dominant and normative discourses about Muslim girls:

> I wanted to highlight how Sana was treated really, just because I was so incredibly frustrated with every comment anyone has ever made about my hijab. Like, I'm not hurting you in any way by wearing it? Why do you feel the need to hurt me? … I just wanted to represent that feeling really! My aim was to highlight how Sana was treated but then I went a bit broader and started showing how Muslims in general are treated.

More broadly, participants emphasized their desire to generate positive and agentic stories of Muslim girlhood informed by their experiences and positionalities. For instance, Asmaâ explained that, when creating vids, her priority was to create "anything where [Sana's] happy, really." Similarly, Nora explained that she was highly motivated to produce *Skam* fanfiction which positioned Muslim girls as "carefree", describing it as "the representation we deserve." These forms of cultural production, she added, allowed her to "bring more life into them" and "give them the experiences that my sibling, my friends, that I went through." Here, we can understand these Muslim girls as exercising a form of "discursive agency" (Butler 1997, 127), wherein discursive positionings are "misapplied or misinvoked" (ibid., 151) in moments of

resistance and resignification. Ikram, Asmaâ, and Nora thus (mis)invoke the discursive production of Muslim girls as "at risk" or "in crisis", in order to reformulate and resist these positionings, and instead open up the discursive possibility of more agentic, happy, and carefree Muslim girlhoods.

[Insert Figure 1. Caption: "religion" vid thumbnail, created by Ikram in 2017.]

Across these accounts, Muslim fangirls' re-appropriation of a popular cultural text to tell, retell, and remix multivalent stories of Muslim girlhood emerges as an important space for them to collectively explore their own experiences, craft public selves, and articulate social and political critique, thus performing DIY citizenship. As Shresthova (2016, 151) argues, these forms of faith-based and identity-related expression "that would not necessarily be read as political among other communities do extremely important work" for Muslim youth.

Establishing Political Solidarities through Fannish Community Building

These practices of cultural production are central to the process of establishing political solidarity between Muslim fangirls. As Joshua Roose (2012) highlights, such forms of youth cultural practice can facilitate a space for Muslim youth to develop new forms of community. We can see this process at work across the interview and observational data. Ikram, for example, noted that she had received many messages from other Muslim girls in response to her "religion" vid, explaining that, "I've had people send me messages … telling me how much it meant to them … It's led to some interesting conversations!" The vid itself is punctuated by a series of highly expressive comments from other Muslim girls sharing their experiences of racism and discrimination.

Huff described these social ties as "the only thing that kept me going while watching," emphasizing her desire to feel a sense of community and shared understanding with other Muslim fangirls. She explained, "it can be really hard to try to explain things about racism to someone who will never be able to understand." Similarly, Nabiha noted that "there were times when I just needed support" from other Muslim girls, and Rameen explained that:

> I think there's an element in interacting with people connecting to experiences that [they] have gone through themselves which just isn't present when speaking with others. I think there's a layer of understanding between a conversation about Sana or her season between two Muslim and/or [women of color] that's not there otherwise. That's not to say you cannot have an in depth conversation about the

> topics explored in [season four] if you aren't Muslim or a [woman of color], but I personally felt like there was less of a push for me to explain myself during conversations with people like me versus those who were not as familiar.

In recognition of the need for Muslim fangirls to establish solidarities and connect with one another, Nora developed an initiative on Tumblr for Muslim *Skam* fans to "find and talk/follow each other." In a blog post advertising the initiative, she positioned it as a method to counter "all the white people talking over us" and "invalidating our opinions … this is just so we can find each other more easily because I know it can be tough sometimes with all the racism and Islamophobia." One of the outcomes of this post was the development of four group chats for Muslim fangirls, divided according to time zone. During our interviews, both Nora and Zifu described these group chats as "an outlet" for Muslim fangirls, noting that "we comforted each other" (Nora). Nora, in turn, explained that they were an important space for Muslim fangirls to work through their experiences of racism and Islamophobia. Harris and Roose (2013, 805) argue that such forms of dialogue between Muslim youth in a safe and supportive environment may act as a form of catharsis from experiences of social hostility, and this relief is reflected across the interview data.

For example, Halima highlighted the importance of these online fora as a space to connect with other Muslim girls who shared both her interests (in fandom) and her experiences (as a Muslim girl from an immigrant background). Having grown up in a small and white rural town in Denmark, she explained, "I didn't have a lot of Muslim girlfriends, so I wanted to talk to people who got it." She added:

> [It was] a safe space, if you will … it was meant for talking about the series, but as time went on we talked less about *Skam* and more about … our lives – school, Ramadan, experiences. We all had pretty similar stories!

Here, we can see how the ties, initially established for Muslim fangirls' shared interest in *Skam*, became the basis for deeper connections and support networks between Muslim girls,. As Henk Vinken (2005, 150) notes, shared youth cultural tastes, interests, and activities can "yield new forms of solidarity, community life, and involvement in the common good."

While Nora, Halima, and Huff discussed their attempts to craft exclusive "safe" spaces for Muslim fangirls, others highlighted the importance of the international fan community surrounding *Skam* as a space to establish ties with sympathetic non-Muslim fans. Rameen

emphasized the importance of these inter-faith connections during our interview, explaining that her participation:

> Allowed me to meet others who connected with Sana like I did … I saw a lot of fans tuning in and not just those who were Muslim! … It was really nice to see such a wide variety of people watching, and even more interesting to see different peoples' opinions on facets of the season.

Here, Rameen's feelings of recognition extend beyond the text and become the basis for intra- and inter-faith community building within the fan community. As both Rameen and Zifu noted, these positive interactions with non-Muslims within the context of their shared knowledge of youth popular culture were highly meaningful, operating as a way for Muslim girls to use their shared interest in *Skam* to challenge misconceptions about Muslims, as a way to "normalize this so-called 'otherworldly' religion" (Zifu). While this pre-supposes scrutiny of their identities as Muslim girls, Zifu nevertheless emphasized that she "loved" engaging in discussions with non-Muslims about her faith, positioning herself as a vocal and valued contributor to public debate about Muslim girlhood taking place within the community. Across these responses, fandom once again emerges as an informal and everyday space where Muslim girls can exercise public voice and, in doing so, establish solidarities and build community.

Conclusion

This article locates fan communities as an informal, interest-driven, and culturally oriented space for Muslim girls to express civic values and perform DIY citizenship. The girls I interviewed demonstrated their awareness of dominant discursive constructions of Muslim girls and young women in Western media cultures, emphasizing their need for meaningful cultural recognition. They welcomed *Skam*'s move towards more nuanced fictional representations of Muslim girlhood, adopting the text as a lens to work through their own struggles for recognition. In doing so, they situated their participation within the fan community as a way to have their experiences recognized within a cultural domain. Building upon these feelings of recognition, they draw upon their skills as cultural producers to express civic values, exercise public voice, and generate positive and agentic narratives of Muslim girlhood informed by their positionalities. These informal and everyday media practices facilitate the process of participatory storytelling, allowing Muslim fangirls to collectively theorize their experiences and express critique. Moreover, these processes enable these Muslim fangirls to establish new forms of solidarity and community rooted in shared interests and identities. Thus,

while fannish cultural production may not be read as political, and questions remain about the extent to which these forms of creative and cultural expression can be scaled up, they do important work for Muslim girls and should be recognized for their capacity to generate new discursive meanings of citizenship and civic engagement for minority youth.

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[1] The creation of a vid involves re-editing film and television texts set to music. In vids, the interplay of music and footage often invites new interpretations of the original text.

[2] Fanfiction is fiction written by fans that draws upon source texts to retell, extend, and often subvert, their original meaning.