Migrant Families and Religious Belonging

Edited by
Giovanni Giulio Valtolina and
Laura Zanfrini

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Over the past three decades, migration has become the main driver of population growth (or of preventing its decrease) in many EU countries. The presence of so many families with a migrant background is, however, to some extent, an unexpected phenomenon arising from the permanent settlement of migrant guest workers expected to be temporary residents and from other unplanned processes such as decolonization and the influx of asylum seekers. Moreover, family reunification is today one of the main legal channels by which migrants come to Europe, so it is no coincidence that the main issues animating European public debate on inter-ethnic coexistence involve family, religion, and the relationships between genders and generations. Finally, the migrant family has to some extent, become a lens through which to analyze many key topics connected with the present and future of European societies.

This work, *Migrant Families and Religious Belonging*, is a collection of nine essays exploring the relationship between family, religion, and immigration. These essays mainly focus on the integration process, with particular attention to the experience of migrants' offspring. The book consists of an introductory chapter and four thematic sections, and topics covered include gender equality, forced marriages, child fostering care, and religious radicalization.

The relationship between family, religion and immigration provides a fascinating perspective to explore and shed light on European society today. The book will be of interest to a wide range of academics, researchers, and practitioners.

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Migrants, Families, and Religion: An Intriguing Research Agenda. Book's Content and Introduction

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Abstract. This chapter introduces the collection of essays presented in the book, starting by describing the challenging and exploratory meaning of the relationship between family, religion, and immigration. In the European landscape, only recently has the religion of migrants started to be investigated in new ways, that are careful to grasp the complexity of the religious experience and to avoid pre-conceived and stereotyped readings: a sort of "normalisation" in the approach to the topic, fed by both migration studies and religion studies. The chapter presents a reading of a selected sample of recent studies, adopting an approach based on the de-instrumentalization of religion and on the re-humanization of migrants, enabling them to express their subjective outlook on their own experience and on the significance of religious belonging. Lastly, the contents of the following chapters are presented and discussed.

Keywords. immigration, family, religion, interreligious relations, diversity, European identity

1. Introduction

Once confronted with immigration, both the realm of the family and the realm of the religion reveal all their challenging and exploratory meanings: the relationship between family, religion and immigration represents a prism allowing to explore and shed light on a few significant features of today's European societies.

On the one hand, the conceptualisation of immigration as a "family process" [1] has extraordinarily enlarged our understanding of migratory choices, strategies, and developments. The "discovery" of the immigrant family has completely changed the impact of immigration and its perception by European societies, in a context strongly marked by the illusion of an immigration made up of temporary [2, 3].

On the other hand, the religion of migrants, while questioning the assimilationist imprinting of integration models and integration policies, has imposed the issue of interreligious coexistence, urging the construction of a system of governance of religious pluralism [4]. What is more, it has strongly defied the concept of secularization, encouraging a reflection on the role of religion in the public sphere [5].

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2. Migrant families as an unexpected and "disturbing" phenomenon

In contemporary Europe, the ample presence of families with a migrant background, originating from both EU and non-EU countries, can be understood as an "unexpected" phenomenon, due to the permanent settlement of migrants initially selected as *guest workers* and to other unplanned processes –from decolonization to the influx of asylum seekers. Moreover, family reunification has been the main channel to enter Europe for a long time and continues to represent an important portion of new arrivals even in the most recent years, which have seen an increase in entries for work reasons (with a significant share of seasonal entries) and for requests for international protection (Table 1). Indeed, entries for family-related reasons constitute the most stable component of immigration and are often oriented towards definitive stabilization.

Table 1. First Permits issued by the EU 27 countries, by Reason, 2013-2020[2]

Reason	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Family	576,544	583,887	670,295	688,996	736,667	814,911	810,275	621,391
Education	280,743	299,606	296,755	328,419	353,779	396,556	400,038	249,183
Employm.	425,662	456,599	589,552	737,478	905,330	983,742	1,197,786	904,078
Other	350,649	419,749	434,877	739,590	705,218	594,734	547,242	484,007

In its 2019 edition, the *OECD Migration Outlook* provided interesting data which confirm the familial character of immigration in Europe: for nearly 95% of married migrants, the spouse was present in the same household in the destination country (ranging from 66% in Lithuania to 98% in the United Kingdom), and 44% of married migrants arrived in the host country in the same year as their spouse. Initially, slightly more than half of married migrants lived with their children; this share, then, had risen steadily over time and reached a peak with 15-19 years of stay, attaining 75%.[3]

Considering this, the migrant family has become not only an unescapable theme for both family and migration scholars, but also a "lens" to analyse many topics connected with the present and the future of European societies.

It was after the restrictive turn in the possibility of economic migrants' legal entry (dating back to the '70s), that, for a sort of historical nemesis, European societies started to acknowledge that they had turned into immigration societies, even if the process of "metabolization" of the implications of this transformation is still ongoing [3]. The emblem of this transformation is precisely the appearance on the public scene of immigrant families; particularly when these families belong to "other" religious traditions, even more so when they are Muslim. By no coincidence, all the main issues that have been animating the European public debate on inter-ethnic coexistence call into question the family and, within it, the relationships between genders and generations.
Despite the initial adoption of a regime based on the importation of temporary workers, European countries have been soon obliged to recognise the right to family reunification, due to the obligations which derive from their regime of *embedded liberalism*.[4] This

[2] *Eurostat, First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship,* https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_resfirst&lang=en, migr_resfirst, extracted August 5, 2022, last updated August 3, 2022.

[3] Oecd – International Migration Outlook 2019. Paris: Oecd Publishing; 2019. https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/international-migration-outlook-2019_c3e35eec-en

[4] With this expression we mean a legal and cultural context which strongly influences the decisions on both the volume of arrivals and the treatment imposed to migrants (Cornelius WA, Martin PL, Hollifield JF. Introduction: The Ambivalent Quest for Immigration Control. In: Cornelius WA, Martin PL, Hollifield JF, editors. Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspectives. Stanford: Stanford University Press; 1994. p. 3-41).

recognition, in turn, marked their definitive transformation into countries of settlement – that is, into multi-ethnic and multi-religious countries. Following the initiative of several States, the EU Directive 2003/86[5] states the absolute right to residence to the sponsor's spouse and minor children, and some EU States have also extended this right beyond these categories, including parents, adult children and, in exceptional circumstances, dependent relatives.[6] After these legislative developments, family members have become one of the major components of new entry flows, with about 600-800,000 entries on a yearly base.

Table 2. First entry permits for family reasons in the European Union, by country of entry, 2010-2021[7]

	2010	**2011**	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**	**2018**	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**
Spain	141,891	148,061	119,863	107,051	101,025	102,454	115,143	125,637	134,196	143,860	119,738	159,249
Italy	180,391	141,403	119,745	108,358	99,051	109,328	101,269	112,607	121,930	100,939	62,274	120,520
France	85,593	80,284	84,747	91,707	92,272	99,312	94,345	94,247	97,664	98,174	80,240	93,278
Germany	52,172	46,782	75,928	82,492	91,661	133,893	136,982	156,973	190,856	167,443	130,701	70,812
Sweden	33,552	35,934	43,999	43,156	46,262	46,354	47,697	60,358	60,229	48,922	41,899	39,482
Others	156,930	149,698	137,478	143,780	153,616	178,954	193,560	186,845	210,036	250,937	186,539	226,653
Total	*650,529*	*602,162*	*581,760*	*576,544*	*583,887*	*670,295*	*688,996*	*736,667*	*814,911*	*810,275*	*621,391*	*709,994*

In addition to the new entries, the growth of the residents with a migratory background is due to the births to immigrant parents, thereby creating the so-called *second generation*. Since 2015, in the EU-28, the number of births to foreign-born mothers has been more than 1 million per year (including the United Kingdom in the calculation) and in any case over 800,000 per year even after the United Kingdom's exit from the Union.[8]

Focusing on 2020 (last available data), in the EU-27 as a whole, births to foreign-born mothers' amount to 855,426 out of a total of 4,071,484 births and are particularly numerous in Germany (227,558; 29.4% of total births), Spain (95,949; 28.2%), France (178.099; 24.2%), and Italy (95,019; 23.5%). Most of them are from mothers born in a non-EU country (664,541), which covers 16.3% of all the births in the EU, and even 23.4% in Spain.

Because of these developments, over the past three decades, migration has become the main driver of population growth (or the main counterweight to its decrease) in many EU countries. Although it represents the least predictable component of population change, its contribution to contain the risk of a demographic decline has been repeatedly acknowledged, even by EU institutions.[9] Migration is expected to have a significant

[5] Council Directive 2003/86/EC of 22 September 2003 on the right to family reunification, *Official Journal* L 251, 03/10/2003 P. 0012 – 0018.

[6] EMN – European Migration Network data. Family Reunification of Third-country Nationals in the EU plus Norway: National practices – Synthesis Report. Brussels: European Migration Network; 2017 https://emn.ie/files/p_201704190426462016_family_reunification_synthesis_report_April2017.pdf

[7] Our elaborations on Eurostat data, "First permits by reason, length of validity and citizenship" (migr_resfirst, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_resfirst&lang=en), last update 9th August 2022, extracted 29th August 2022. Data on Croatia for the years 2010-2012 are not available and they have been estimated by a linear regression compared to 2013-2021 data.

[8] Eurostat data, "Live births by mother's age and country of birth", demo_facbc, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=demo_facbc&lang=en, last update 22th June 2022, extracted 29th August 2022.

[9] The most influential communication through which the European Commission started to overtly encourage more economic immigration in order to counteract the demographic ageing dates to 2000: COM

demographic impact also because migrant populations have different levels of fertility and mortality, due to a different age structure and different fertility patterns.[10] Moreover, differences in fertility levels tend to become more evident when we concentrate on religious (Muslim) minorities: although official statistical sources are not disaggregated by religious origins, the few available studies on the topic [6] show that being from an Islamic country tends to be associated with higher levels of fertility, but this does not apply to all national groups and the effect of religion can be strongly offset by other variables, such as migrant women's levels of education and employment.

Alongside the quantitative dimension of the phenomenon under consideration, its significance for European societies must be considered. In traditional settlement nations such as the US and Canada, the migrations of the modern age have taken on a familiar connotation from the beginning. To realize this, it is enough to look at the photographs exhibited in the Ellis Island Museum, which are teemed with children (who sometimes wave an American flag, as if to materialize the expectation of rapid assimilation). In Europe, on the contrary, post-war immigration was predominantly made up of individual workers who had left their family of origin or of choice behind them. In the less frequent cases in which children migrated with their parents, they often had to live segregated in the parents' home (as in the well-known Italian film "*Pane e Cioccolata*", set in Switzerland in the 1970s) or were encouraged to attend schools set up and financed by the governments of the country of origin, to which they were supposed to return someday (this was the case of , many Italian children living in Germany [7]). This explains why, in the experience of many European countries, the growing presence of families with a migratory background had the effect of transforming an economic issue –just as the importation of temporary workers– into a political and an identity one.

First of all, *family reunification called attention to the gender issue*, as it implied the arrival of many women who depended on their husbands/fathers. Even the (real or presumed) higher fertility rates of migrant women have been sometimes perceived as a deviation from the norm, or as a demonstration of cultural and social distance, particularly when they come from non-EU nations and from Islamic-majority societies [6]. In the context of the debate that developed after the fall of the assimilationist paradigm [8], the gender perspective has offered a notable contribution to the study of the integration paths of migrants (just as the feminization of economic migrations has stimulated attention to the gender structure of migratory networks, institutions and cultures). In addition to detecting the specificity of the female condition, scholars have progressively incorporated in their analysis the relationship between gender and the other dimensions that structure migration processes and influence the outcomes of integration paths –including the ethnic-racial characteristics [9]– and have paid attention to the impact of migration on gender roles and orders in immigrant communities (but also in the sending countries). Moreover, the presence of women has given rise to a strand of research aimed at investigating their role in the relationship with services, emphasizing their function as mediators between the constraints of the culture of origin –for example, in terms of conducts imposed on women– and the behavioural expectations of the institutions of the society of settlement. Their experience is illuminating with respect to the need to reflect not so much in terms of difference (of gender or culture), as of *differences* [10], placing itself almost as a link between feminist thought and the themes

(2000) 757 final, *Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on a Community Immigration Policy*.

[10] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/41896.pdf

of multiculturalism [11]. In recent years, in the context of the "integrationist turn" of migratory policies [12], migrant women are looked at with particular interest, both for the strong symbolic and political value of issues that directly involve them (such as those of the veil or of arranged marriages), and because their crucial role is recognized, more or less explicitly, in the education of their children as future "new citizens" loyal to the nation and to the values of Western culture. In this regard, the low participation in the labour market of women with a migrant background that is registered in many European countries [11] is a phenomenon to be watched with particular attention, both for its implications on the vulnerability of families of immigrant origin, and for the risks of social isolation that inactivity brings with it.

With the appearance of the second generation, a further line of research finally took shape, dedicated to *the choices and paths of young women born to immigrant families*, with particular attention to those belonging to communities more faithful to traditional gender roles. The studies concern topics such as marriage behaviours, school careers, and participation in the labour market. With regard to the latter, it is observed how the family and family responsibilities exert their influence both for the difficulties in reconciling the role of mother with that of worker (especially for those belonging to groups that tend to have children at an early age, or to have a greater number of them), and due to the influence of the maternal model (considering that the activity rates among first generation migrants are quite variable between one group and another). However, this influence can be largely offset by parental education levels (the higher they are, the more the daughters will be pushed to have a paid job) and by welfare systems that support working mothers; if this is generally true for all women, in the case of immigrants this effect is even amplified [13]. However, decades after the emergence of a "female issue", the condition of (Muslim) women with a migratory background continues to fuel the academic and political debate. Suffice it to remember how, even recently, an influential scholar like C. Joppke [14] claimed that Muslim attitudes on women and sexuality are illiberal and therefore pose significant challenges to the secular, liberal European democracies.

Over time, the problem of the *vulnerability of families of immigrant origin* has also emerged. In line with their historical imprinting, many European countries have been traditionally attracting a "poor" migration, predestined to concentrate in the bottom ranks of the professional hierarchy, earn low salaries and generate disadvantaged families. A consequence of these phenomena is the high exposition of migrants and migrant families to the risks of poverty and of social exclusion. According to the latest available Eurostat data (2020),[12] among the people living in the European Union, 19.6% of nationals, 29.6% of foreign EU citizens and even 48.6% of non-EU citizens face this kind of risks. Besides feeding the perception of the immigrant population as a "burden" for society and for the welfare system –to the point of constituting one of the main drivers of contemporary xenophobia and racism– migrants' structural disadvantage encourages the *perception of social distance*. Indeed, it is precisely this collocation within the social stratification that, by limiting the opportunity to get in contact and share experience with native people, prevents the dilution of this perception and of its discriminatory effects [15].

[11] Eurostat data, "Activity rates by sex, age and country of birth (%)" (lfsq_argacob, https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsq_argacob&lang=en), last update 27th September 2022.

[12] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ILC_PEPS05/default/table?lang=en&category=livcon.ilc.ilc_p (Accessed 3rd January 2023)

What is more, *it is precisely through families that migration manifests itself as a phenomenon capable of changing the very constitutive features of the European society*, affecting the somatic, ethnic, and religious characteristics of the population, to the point of undermining the presumed "original characteristics" of the native population and its cultural and religious heritage. This is especially true for the nations involved in deep demographic changes, therefore making the incidence of the population with a migratory background increasingly important [16]. But *it is above all the appearance on the public scene of the so-called second generation that has drawn attention to the challenges of inter-ethnic coexistence*, as well as to the "failure" of the various national integration models. The emblem of this epochal transition is the *affair du foulard*, exploded in France in the late 1980s, which condenses all the main issues connected to the association between family, migration, and religion(s): from the relationships between genders and generations in immigrant families to the "ostentation" of religious symbols in the public sphere, up to the role of the public school in a pluralistic society.

Lastly, in many countries, family law issues often rank among the most sensitive arguments in the governance of interethnic coexistence, particularly when they call into question the relationship between gender and generations. This last point deserves to be briefly described. In general terms, *any law or policy has a normative* (in the sociological sense of the term) *content*, since it involves and mirrors values and visions. This is particularly evident in the case of family law, which reflects the very nature of the family as both a *social construct* and a *moral order* [17]. For example, the rules governing the right of family reunifications reflect –with some ambiguity [1]– a "European" idea of family, that is a nuclear family, defined in legal terms, thus disregarding the concept of kinship according to the cultures of origin of the migrants;[13] by no coincidence , these rules explicitly prohibit to reunite more than one spouse, in cases of polygamy (an institution that the common European imagination tends to identify with Islamic culture). Indeed, once analysed from the perspective of the family sociology [18], immigration reveals all its challenging character. *Migrant households defy the "normal" configuration of family structures and behaviours* [8] and make the family's patterns and styles of functioning even more heterogeneous, not only through the appearance of disputable practices (such as polygamous cohabitations), or past practices (such as arranged marriages), but also of new family models that take shape in the context of transnational communities and circuits of migrants [19]. According to some influential scholars, these models even represent new ways of making a family, thus possibly supplanting the traditional family model made up of members who share the same nationality and live under the same roof [20].

The most striking example of the challenging character of the values and institutions connected with the migrant family is provided by the phenomenon of arranged marriages, given the risk that –once imported into a Western cultural context– it may easily morph into forced marriage. Undoubtedly, arranged marriages constitute a disturbing phenomenon for modern European democracies, as they become almost a symbol of cultural distance –if not of cultural incompatibility– and a source of delegitimization of migrants' religious traditions within a context marked by the "ethnicization of sexism" [21], which, for instance, associates Islam with gender violence and female subordination. However, as suggested by the few in-depth existing studies on the topic [22, 23] this kind of phenomena should be analysed in the context of migrants' transnational links and of

[13] These rules also disregard the common trend which see most children of age who continue to economically depend on their parents, particularly in Southern European countries.

their migratory cultures and strategies. Adopting a perspective that analyses forced marriages from an external point of view (i.e. not that of the spouses), reveals how complex it may be to strike a balance between the protection of individual choices and rights and the risk of imposing rules based on so-called liberal values, In any case, this issue emblematically mirrors the potential conflict between the first and the second generation: on the one hand, the arranged marriage can have a positive meaning within the parent's culture of origin, where it is defined as consensual; on the other hand, the processes of acculturation to which that children of migrants experience in their daily lives lead many of them to reject this custom and ask for the authorities' help [24].

In any case, it would be misleading to reduce the religion-family-migration nexus to phenomena such as that of arranged/forced marriages. Much more than through behaviours and values that accentuate the perception of a cultural distance and interethnic/intergenerational conflict, it is through their simple presence that "religiously different" immigrants challenge a (post)secularized European society. That is what the next section is about.

3. The religion of migrants in (post)secular European societies

In the last decade, with the multiplication of asylum seekers' arrivals, the religion of migrants has risen to the core of the political and media agenda [25] in the wake of nationalistic upsurge and representations of immigration as an identity threat. At the height of the refugee crisis (2015-2016), religion has even been identified as a useful filter to select those individuals who should be able to cross the symbolic and cultural boundaries of European national communities.

On the one hand, the influxes of asylum seekers solicit (or would solicit) European societies to become aware of the tremendous religious-based violations and persecutions which characterize the current global scenario and turn into a root-cause of contemporary migrations [26]. On the other hand, since they are perceived as more and more unpredictable in their dimensions and internal composition, new arrivals force Europe to come to terms with the full and long-standing legacy of its relationship with immigration and with the "diversity" –including the religious one– that immigration brings with it [27].

Indeed, the appearance of the immigrant family on the European public scene was not the only unexpected phenomenon: their cultural and religious identity, too, was unforeseen and unlooked-for by cultivating the illusion of the temporary nature of migration and defining it as a pure economic phenomenon, the European migration regime (unwittingly) underestimated immigrations' power to change the political and identity borders of European national communities [3]. In other words, the stable settlement of immigrant families –especially since they have been progressively included in the community of citizens– constitutes a disavowal of the *principle of isomorphism* on which European democracies have historically been founded [28], i.e., the overlap between the population of a country, the territory in which sovereignty is exercised –in turn delimited by state borders – and the membership defined by citizenship. In terms of the famous expression suggested by A. Sayad [29], immigrant families *disturb*, because they reveal the arbitrary and contingent nature of the boundaries of nations, both political-geographical and cultural-religious boundaries. Lastly, the transformation of an economic process –as immigration was originally conceptualized– into a political

process has catapulted issues and problems related with the "identity" (including the "religious identity") of European societies at the core of the political agenda.

First of all, the main European societal institutions have been put in question by the settlement of people with different cultural and religious background, and even more so when these people not only expect to be treated as "equals", but also ask to be acknowledged as "diverse". National school systems, invested by the task of socializing new generations to the role of future citizens, have been profoundly challenged by the growing presence of students with a (minority) religious background, and it is no coincidence that some of the episodes that caused most discussions –such as the aforementioned "affair du foulard" in France or the Italian controversy concerning the affixing of the crucifix in classrooms– occurred at school. At the same time, the introduction of an intercultural approach has enriched the school curriculum of all students, whether they are native or immigrant. Health services have been urged to deal with different experiences and conceptions regarding disease, health, the body, as well as with unusual requests, such as being examined exclusively by a doctor of the same sex. Finally, among the other consequences, the permanent settlement of migrant families and migrant communities, by transforming European States into multi-religious societies, has offered them *the opportunity "to test" the principles of religious freedom and religious rights in all their declinations*. And, to cite another example, work organizations had to face the difficulties of managing multi-ethnic and multi-religious staffs, but also had the opportunity to exploit the "diversity dividend" linked to the workers' migrant background [30]. Precisely civil society organizations have been drawing the characteristics of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Europe through their daily choices–conscious or not– in the management of diversity. However, as we have already observed, *the metabolization of the transformation into a plural society, far from the myths of homogeneity that fuelled the patriotic and nationalistic rhetoric, is a process yet to be completed*. It is enough to remember that it is not only "anti-migrants" actors that make an open and sometimes violent use of religion to endorse securitarian and selective approaches in the management of migratory flows: even more embarrassingly, the "pro-migrants" narrative sometimes evokes the low percentage of Muslim migrants as a supposed reassuring argument for the public opinion, thus implicitly reaffirming the problematic character of religious diversity. However, this in line, with the historical European approach to the topic, traditionally shared by both policy makers and social researchers.

Two other reasons have concurred to make the "religiously different" migrants a challenging presence: the European society self-representation as a secularised society and the condition of structural disadvantage suffered by migrants and their families.

Starting from the first reason, it is useful to remember that the concept of *secularization* –which has significantly received a strong impulse from the European sociologists since the last decades of the 19th century, – benefited of an undisputed hegemony, even in recent times [5]. The theses of a progressive decline (and of an eventual disappearance) of the religious phenomenon have strongly influenced both the scientific and the political approach to the issue, particularly encouraging religion retreat from the public sphere. What's more, *this assumption has deeply affected the way both social sciences and politics have approached the issue of migrants' religiosity*.

Indeed, in the context of migration and intercultural studies, the relationship between religion and integration has been approached in Europe according to a set of assumptions decidedly different than that which has traditionally characterized the American context [31]. In the latter, religion has been intended as a factor fostering migrants' integration

and sense of belonging to the host society. In the European context, *religion has been more frequently intended as a source of cultural distance, social disadvantage, and even potential conflict* (as well as a "consequence", when it favours the development of reactive identifications). This different approach certainly has to do –according to the prevailing interpretation– with the hegemony long exercised, in Europe, by the theory (and ideology) of secularization, which has confined religion to the private sphere and has ended up considering any manifestation of religiosity in the public sphere as dysfunctional. Equally important is to consider that the large presence of Muslim migrants (or immigrants from countries with an Islamic majority) has largely influenced the way in which social scientists have approached this topic.

To understand this phenomenon, it is useful to consider another reason that has concurred to make the "religiously different" migrants a challenging presence. Once more, we have to deal with the legacy of the European migration regime and its economic imprinting. As a "natural" inheritance of a model which has traditionally attracted a "poor" migration, *the immigrant families' condition of structural disadvantage has amplified the perception of a social and cultural distance between migrants and natives*. In other words, it has fed the anxiety for the "diversity" embedded in the population with a migratory background, starting exactly from their religious diversity. Religious affiliations, particularly Islamic affiliations, have come to be viewed as an element of vulnerability, if not as a barrier inhibiting the integration process and the relations with the native population. Not to mention that, according to available data, low levels of socio-economic inclusion tend to be correlated with a higher involvement in religious practices. This kind of phenomena has even led «religion to gradually become the defining category for diversity-related issues. This conceptual shift is best manifested in a semantic change in naming immigrants. Ex-colonial subjects and guest workers (a social category) first turned into Asian, Turks, or Arabs (an ethnic category) and then into Muslims (a religious category) » [32].

What is more, this condition of disadvantage gives birth to second generation members who suffer from a weaker starting position in the competition to accede to social resources and opportunities, and sometimes are (or feel they are being) clearly discriminated. If not because of the quantitative importance of migrant offspring, this issue has gained a great attention at both the academic and the political level. Alongside with their school careers and professional success/unsuccess, their attitude toward the society and their sense of belonging, their participation in or exclusion from civic and political life, and their involvement in deviant and criminal conducts, the religion of migrant offspring has, too, gained a place in the research agenda.

Although the tendency of researchers is to grasp specific elements pertaining to young people with a migrant background, it would be useful to understand their condition in the framework of both a process of social construction of migrants and their children and a process of social construction of age and intergenerational relations. In other words, it is useful to remember that young people with a migratory background experience both a "generation effect" –linked to their position towards their parents and grand-parents– and a "cohort effect", connected to being a young boy/girl with a migratory background in the present time. *All this makes the condition of young people with a migratory background doubly paradigmatic* [33]. On the one hand with respect to the repercussions, generated in the long run by the processes of social construction of the role of migrants that reverberate –as we have already illustrated– in a condition of structural disadvantage often transmitted to the second generation. On the other hand, with respect to the processes of social construction of age and intergenerational relations, which today

would seem to penalize the very young, forced to deal with a polarized labour market, subject to the risk of being downgraded with respect to their parents, prone to perceive themselves in competition with adults and the elderly in accessing resources and social opportunities, starting from job opportunities.

Given this picture, according to existing studies, *the religious affiliation of migrants' children can translate into a cause of "ethnic penalty"* which persists even after considering the differences in schooling, skills, and social origins [34], and which has to do also with a clear religious hostility [35]. Since it frequently becomes a symbolic marker, the religion of migrants' children (particularly in the case of young Muslims) is at the base of the so called "paradox of integration"[14] and feeds the possibility of choosing reactive forms of identification. Not incidentally, particularly after the episodes of religious radicalisation occurred in various European nations, scholars have directed their attention to the aspects that make immigrants' offspring feel either socially included or socially excluded [23]: the migration regimes historically adopted by European States, the social marginality of some migrant families, the characters of citizenship regimes (particularly when they mirror an ethnic conception of the nation),the social prejudices towards given migrant communities, the identity choices and strategies developed by some minority communities, the role of religious affiliations and the manner in which they are acknowledged in the different political and institutional contexts. In sum, *it is the association between the "inequality" suffered by migrant families and their "diversity" from an ethnic, cultural, and religious point of view that largely shapes the relationship between them and European societies* [18].

However, a new scenario has been today emerging, and it proves to be particularly promising for rethinking not only the "meaning" of the religion(s) of migrants, but also the "meaning" of religion(s) in the current European landscape. Indeed, although a vast literature from the second half of the 20th century had announced the imminent end of the religious phenomenon, in Europe –as well as in other regions of the world– a different scenario has been unfolding: religion is still present, even if it is in crisis, as it has increasingly been relegated to the intimate sphere and set free from institutional set-ups, reinvented in its contents and contaminated by secularization factors [5]. *This "post-secular" society constitutes the socio-cultural context within which migrants enter when arriving in Europe*, often bearing forms of religious belonging considered significant for the construction of their identity in interconnection with the other actors of society, whether it is a peaceful or conflictual interconnection.

As a matter of fact, religion is closely connected with cultural and social transformations involving todays' Europe, but it is also the borderline where contradictory pressures and, in some cases, thorny questions concerning the coexistence between people with different religious traditions interweave. In this scenario, the religion of migrants promises to be one of the relevant themes in the debate on what we have defined post-secularized society. Already now, a renewed attention to the role of religion, even within the public sphere, characterizes the social sciences and encourages civil society's activism. Across European countries, both institutions (at different levels) and civil society have started considering religious leaders and communities as potential allies in facilitating integration and in promoting social cohesion, thus possibly getting past the idea that religion is intrinsically an obstacle to integration. This, in turn, may

[14] With this expression we mean the phenomenon whereby the more immigrants and their children are integrated/assimilated from a cultural point of view, the more they feel the frustration of being victims of discrimination and prejudices.

open further directions for research, producing a rapprochement with the American experience [31], traditionally more attentive to the bridging function carried out by religion and religious organizations, that is, to the role that the latter can play in support not only of individual empowerment, but also of participation in the economic, civil, and political life of mainstream society. Perhaps we are witnessing a "normalization" in the approach to the religion of migrants, the results of which are surely promising.

4. An emerging research agenda: towards a "normalisation" in the approach to migrants' religious diversity?

As we have discussed, in the context of a secularized society, since religion suffered a strong decline in its role as a pillar of the transmission of values, it is easy to explain the "malicious" interest with which social scientists have looked at (religious) families with a migratory background. When not considered an obstacle to integration, the religion of migrants was appreciated exclusively for its bonding function, as a balm for the soul, just as places of worship and religious organizations were at most considered a refuge and a meeting place for migrants of the same origin, underlining their attitude to self-segregation. In the current (post)secularized European society, thanks to the contribution of both migration studies and religion studies, the religion of migrants is getting investigated in new ways, careful to grasp the complexity of the religious experience and to avoid pre-conceived and stereotyped readings.

According to our proposal –already tested on the occasion of an ample multi-disciplinary study [36]–, in the face of dominant narratives and of their ethical ambivalence, scientific research must first set itself the dual goal of *de-instrumentalizing religion* –in order to analyse the real, multidimensional role of religion and religiosity in migrants' and refugees' experience– and of *re-humanizing migrants* –that is enabling them to express their subjective outlook on their own experience and on the relevance of religious belonging [37]. As we will observe later, based on the contributions collected in this book, this approach may also help to produce the political effect of creating a public space in which the religion of migrants (and not only that of migrants!) can express its generative power. Here, we want to suggest a reading of the results of the most recent research from this perspective. In this contribution, we will limit ourselves to citing some works published in the last years, in order to offer some examples on the new perspectives of analysis of the religious phenomenon, without any claim to be exhaustive. Once again, it is above all the second generation's members that mainly attract the attention of researchers, due to their peculiar condition of "double belonging" which makes them the ideal subjects to investigate these phenomena.

A first aspect that deserves our attention, contrary to a widespread prejudice which represents migrants as strongly linked to their ascribed religious affiliations (or, possibly, as subjects who were able to free themselves from the religion of their fathers and integrate into a secularized society), is that *their experience cannot but reflect all the complexity –and ambivalence– of the religious phenomenon in contemporary society*. Even the life stories of migrants escaped from their countries for reasons linked to their religious belonging [36] testify to the spread of the phenomena of "spiritual nomadism" and syncretism are. Furthermore, these phenomena are variously intertwined with individual and family migration strategies, well beyond what suggested by the official data on displacements for religious motives [26]. In many ways, these are phenomena that can also be traced in the scenario of European societies, characterized by the advent

of a "religious market" that overlaps with long-term institutional affiliations [5]. In other respects, these phenomena appear intertwined with further factors of complexity, which refer to the intricate religious geography of the countries of origin, in which several phenomena coexist: ancestral beliefs and myths, processes of radicalization, neo-colonialist thrusts that foment inter-religious conflicts, practices of commodification of faith often mixed with the interests of the immigration industry. While much of the research conducted so far has focused on the religion of immigrants after their arrival in the country of destination, these phenomena illustrate the interest in further investigating the role of religion where the decision to migrate takes shape, especially in its intertwinement with the family and the system of family obligations.

This introduces a second aspect to take into consideration: even though migrants have been traditionally represented as "more religious" than native Europeans (as it is also confirmed by few available evidence), *it is by no means certain that a "conservative" interpretation of religion prevails among them*. For some of them, in search of identity anchors, religiosity is experienced in a more severe and dogmatic way. For others, a "use" of religion as instrumental to the needs of adaptation and emotional compensation may prevail; once these are satisfied, a greater laxity in religious practice can take over. For some others, adherence to a specific religion –perhaps following a conversion– can correspond to spiritual needs or be functional to an acceleration of the integration process. Finally, to cite another example, contact with post-modern European society can encourage a different way of living the faith, within a quest for greater authenticity. And as far as the intergenerational transmission of religious values is concerned, coherence, persistence, visibility, and the social acceptability of the religious message appear crucial in a process that does not appear linear, but multi-faceted. It is exactly this new way of looking at the religion of migrants that prevails in the most recent season of research, as it is demonstrated also by various contributions to the present book.

This type of approach makes it possible to *reduce the specificity factors concerning the religious minority par excellence –the Muslim one–* and to grasp the analogies with the wider religious phenomenon as it manifests itself in contemporary European society. A good example is the contribution of T. Müller, A. Taleb and C. Moses [38] dedicated to probing the manifestations of Islam in the European public space. These scholars observe that the encounter between religion and secularism is not an unprecedented challenge posed by Islam, but something in continuity with the claims of religiosity, non-religiosity and secularism that have co-existed in the European space for decades. At the same time, cities have always been the place of transformation of European society and of its value systems. If anything, as M. Griera and M. Burchardt [39] suggest, it is necessary to consider the greater control exercised by the authorities over Islamic (and Sikh) processions, which has to do with the fact that these groups are more "racialized" and "religionized" –with respect for example to Catholics and Buddhists. And yet, as shown by another study [40], the limitations imposed on the use of public space for Islamic rites can paradoxically turn into opportunities for communication with the local community, conveying a new sense of citizenship understood as a way of belonging to and enjoyment of the urban space. As can be deduced from the study just cited, the most recent phase signals a progressive convergence with the American research, traditionally interested [41] in grasping *the bridging function performed by religions and religious organizations*. This is another promising aspect to take into consideration.

Finally, the analysis of the behaviour and performance of religious minorities reflects the general evolution of the interpretation of integration processes through "post-assimilationist paradigms" [8]. In particular, it reflects the idea of *integration as a*

relational process –influenced by the attitudes of mainstream society towards the different minority groups– and whose outcomes are strongly influenced by the structure of opportunities available for socio-economic success; it also reflects the idea of *integration as a transnational process* [42], shaped by the material and immaterial links with the left-behind family and community, and possibly by the salience of *diasporic identities*) [43].

Within this new and encouraging landscape, a growing number of researchers have been approaching the relationship among migrants, family, and religion, with a special focus on the experience of migrants' offspring. This focus follows the general shift of the research attention to the so called "second generation", that we could witness from the '80s onwards.

As already underlined, the analysis of this theme must be framed in the light of two processes of social construction: that concerning migrants and interethnic relations, and that related to the age and intergenerational relations. Moreover, it is useful to keep in mind that, unlike their parents, children –whether they were born in the country of immigration or arrived there as minors– usually did not choose to migrate. Indeed, they have often experienced the decision of the parents, to whom they feel bound through a strongly ambivalent relationship, with surprise and [44]. All this implies that, although migration is a process that concerns the whole family, the different generations involved resort to different strategies to preserve-while-changing [45].

Given this picture, a first group of studies reinterprets the relationship between religiosity and integration by identifying the original ways in which migrant offspring "use" their religion to support the adaptation process. Reflecting the general tendency, these studies, too, mainly focus on young Muslims. These are qualitative investigations that highlight *the will and the ability to keep together individual empowerment/success and care for the religious-spiritual dimension*, thus definitively disavowing the idea that there is incompatibility between (Islamic) religiosity and the lifestyles and values of modern European society.

Of great interested is the analysis provided by D. Bouzar and L. Bouzar [46] in the context of a collection of articles devoted to the relationship between religion(s) and organizations. Their article analyses the relationship between professional identity and Muslim identity, as it has been defined thanks to the reformulation of the relations between Islam and the French secular context which has resulted, through the action of Muslim associative movements, in a "social" declination of Islam. Unlike their fathers, young people born in Europe try to establish the modalities for "their Islam" to be translated into a participation in the society to which they feel they belong; this also implies the choice of no longer hiding one's Muslim references or one's "Muslim ethics" in the world of work, but to look for something in Islam that gives meaning to work and reasons to behave in an ethical and rigorous manner. Reversing the prejudice that has long shaped the reading of the relationship between religion and integration, the authors affirm that the visibility of their beliefs can be considered as proof of the integration and internalization of the democratic values embodied in European law. Moreover, based on the evidence gathered through interviews with Muslim workers and executives, they affirm that these young Muslims no longer place themselves in the spirit of claiming a right to difference, but want to live their modernity without the feeling of a conflict of loyalty towards their religion. These workers use Islamic symbolism not to oppose their non-Muslim colleagues, but to join them based on common values, inspired by the past experience of Christian faithful and intellectuals. In this context, not only does (Muslim) religiosity appear to be a factor supporting individual career and business' results; what

is more, the world of work has also proved to be a constitutive element of a new European Muslim theological production, which has been elaborating a sort of "Muslim social thought" open to pluralism.

Another emblematic example is provided by the study conducted by J. Rana [47], which examines the participation of young Muslim women in kickboxing courses in the Netherlands, highlighting how their sporting activity is a source of freedom which– contrary to what is commonly assumed by the public opinion– does not in any way imply a search for emancipation from their religious community. On the contrary, young women perceive this sporting activity as an opportunity to work on themselves: on the one hand, they contest the prevailing narrative that represents Muslim women as submissive; on the other hand, they find an opportunity to experiment with self-care and self-confidence practices. In other words, personal improvement through sports is not in contrast with improvement as a faithful, thanks to an intentional accommodation of the setting: women who chose to attend these courses reconfigured the gym as a *halal* space, ensuring that the environments were reserved for women only, darkening the windows and eliminating the music. In doing so, they challenged the secularized conception of kickboxing, transforming a secular space into a place to share information and advice on how to become better Muslims and achieve a new awareness of one's faith. As the author points out, these women break the stereotypes that represent the Muslim woman as submissive and passive and use sport to reflect on their being Muslim, thereby forging their own identity and renegotiating the link between gender, ethnicity, and religion.

A second group of studies understands the religion of migrant families as a "symbolic boundary", able to mark the borders between "us" –the mainstream and secularized European society– and "them" – the (religious) migrants, where religious is often synonymous of Muslim. However, differently from previous studies, which substantially tended to look at religion as an obstacle to integration (since being religious meant being distant from the culture and role models of European societies), todays' researchers tend to *interpret religiosity as an ethnic marker that activates discriminatory behaviours towards the descendants of some immigrant communities*. Therefore, religion is not in itself an obstacle to integration (and can indeed convey positive values and an orientation to the common good), but becomes one, "in spite of itself", every time it activates stereotypes and prejudices towards minority groups (and towards the members who are assumed, sometimes without any verification, to be part of these groups).

In the analysis of social scientists, these phenomena find reason in a process of "racialization" that has affected religious minorities, and especially the religious minority par excellence, made up of Muslims, especially following the phenomena of radicalization and terrorist attacks that have affected various European countries, leading to an accentuation of Islamophobia. Researchers denounce how, especially in those countries that repudiate the classification categories of race and ethnicity, Islamophobia –by associating ethnic-national origin to religion– allows us to re-propose these categories under other guises but with the same result: to paint Muslims –regardless of their actual level of religiosity– as a social problem and to support the practices of exclusion against them [48, 49].

It is above all in field of the labour market that young people with a migrant background have to face such processes, when they meet the prejudicial and negative attitude of employers, with the consequence of performing worse than their peers. Suffice it to remember that, in today's "progressive" Europe, wearing the headscarf exposes young Muslim women to high risks of discrimination in hiring processes. As for all young people, that between school and the world of work is the most delicate transition,

which can jeopardize their professional future in many ways. Among the several studies on the topic we can mention that of T. Roth [50], which investigates the condition of young people with a migrant background born and educated in Germany. Although the initial hypothesis contemplated the probability of a negative influence of religious belonging on the resources useful for finding a job (in particular, on the social capital that can be activated to get in touch with companies), the results of the study identify the employers' prejudices as the main penalizing factor. What is more, while the private dimension of religiosity seems to have no influence, it is the public one that produces discriminatory responses; the paradoxical result is that even a pro-active engagement in a voluntary faith-based association has the effect of reinforcing exclusionary barriers to job opportunities, since it makes the religious belongings of migrant youths visible.

Together with employers' prejudicial attitude, another penalising variable is represented by residential concentration/segregation. The influence of the latter on academic performance and professional careers has been highlighted by many studies (albeit with the cautions suggested by the segmented assimilation theory). In the study conducted by S. Carol and B. Schultz [51], the residential factor helps to understand the non-linear relationship that binds religious affiliation to academic performance. On the one hand, religiosity seems to favour commitment and scholastic results; on the other hand, it seems to cushion the negative influence of residential segregation, especially for those who take part in devotional and community practices; furthermore, religious identity can be a source of comfort –but also of reactive identification– for those who experience setbacks and failures.

Here, again, it is possible to grasp a less prejudicial posture with respect to religion than in the past. Alongside a conceptualization of family religiosity as potentially able to crystallize reactive identification strategies and anti-social behaviours, *family religiosity is now also seen as a factor of resilience*. A good example is the study conducted by T. Sohel [52] who found that, even in a country like France –the paradigm of a secularized nation– for those who grow up in religious Muslim families, it is precisely the family environment that constitutes a protective factor against negative experiences suffered in the school context. Although equally exposed to discrimination –according to what was declared during the interviews– compared to peers living in unreligious families, young people raised in observant families are less likely to be discouraged in the face of unfair treatment. From another point of view, this study confirms how, for those who live in France, being Muslim continues to constitute a strong social boundary regardless of the level of individual and family religiosity. As the author himself points out, it is Islam as such –not "religion"– that constitutes a significant symbolic boundary and a marker of social distance, and this speaks volumes about the link between religiosity and the success in the adaptation process.

In this regard, of particular interest are those studies that aim to *deconstruct the salience of ethnic-religious markers and the stereotypes associated with them*. Paradigmatic, in this sense, is the study by K. Van den Bogert [53] dedicated to Muslim girls who play football in Dutch parks. The author's purpose is to abandon religion as a prism through which to read the Muslim presence in Europe, emphasizing the very insignificance of the veil worn by footballers. The latter, in fact, aim to exhibit their sporting skills, and not their religiosity. In the same vein, a study by E. Ekström, P. Bülow and M. Wilinska [54] discusses the practices of renegotiation of one's religious affiliation by a rather singular group such as that of unaccompanied minors.

Finally, a very interesting set of recent contributions is devoted to the *various forms of religious-based public engagement, at political and economic level*. Regarding the

political field, a suggestive example is provided by the study of E. Degli Esposti [55]. It investigates the activism of the Shiite minority in Europe and the discourse on the "rights of the Shiites" as a way to convey a new Muslim identity, more akin to the European context, intertwining its own religious tradition with the Western concept of the universality of inalienable rights. This discourse is an example of the way in which the governance of religious pluralism by European States has produced new and strengthened Muslim identities capable of combining two apparently competing discursive systems. Therefore, the themes of the discourse of secularism –equality, justice, representation of minorities, human rights– have entered the discourse of European Shiite Islam which claims the recognition of its own space and shows that it has internalized and shared European values.

Equally interesting is the research conducted in London by W. Barylo [56], which investigates the motivations behind the voluntary commitment of young people involved in the Muslim Youth Helpline, a mental health service born in response to the lack of capable public services to consider the different cultural and religious sensitivities. Regardless of the level of individual religiosity and the prevailing motivations (which may be, from time to time, purely religious or altruistic), the commitment to serve the community and particularly the most fragile takes on a religious significance and corresponds to the duty of the "good Muslim". Therefore, a different image of Islam emerges from the prevailing one and denies the discourse on volunteering as a secular practice, inspired by liberal principles and as such incompatible with Islamic values. On the contrary, the commitment in favour of the most vulnerable, in addition to allowing the acquisition of specific skills, has triggered active citizenship practices and strengthened the motivation to support the needs of the community, possibly even through their own professional choices.

As can be easily guessed, the forms of individual and associative commitment and their objectives strongly depend on the structure of opportunities. For example, it is a question of ascertaining how the recognition of the religious and spiritual dimension in the workplace is by no means taken for granted: precisely the transformation in a multi-religious sense of the company staff can indeed encourage (or at least should encourage) the recognition of this constitutive dimension of the human being and its strategic potential for individual well-being and the achievement of collective objectives [57]. Concerning opportunities for civic and political involvement, a crucial factor is represented by the attitude of local administrations, which can significantly affect the opportunities for inclusion and the ways in which religious origin can shape the civic activism. As can be inferred from a comparison between cities, a different degree of openness to the requests of a religious (Muslim) community determines dissimilar opportunities for participation, contributing to a different construction and self-construction of the group of young Muslims [58]. This leads to understanding how religious-minority identities are continually constructed and reconfigured also by virtue of interactions with local institutions. In more general terms, the ability of the context to manage religious pluralism is an extremely important trait, even in smoothing out any incompatibility between the values in which individuals recognize themselves.

In this regard, a further line of study concerns *the processes of identification of young people with a migratory background with the country of residence within which religion is often considered by scholars as a crucial variable*. In the line of the suggestive contribution of R. Alba and N. Foner that dates back few years ago [23], we can point out the study by L. Leszczensky, M. Rahsaan and E. Bleich [59] aimed at investigating the sense of national identification of young resident Muslims in England, Germany, the

Netherlands, and Sweden. Religiosity is counted –together with citizenship, contacts with the native majority and perceived discrimination– among the factors that influence the sense of identification; however, there are no significant differences between Muslims and other young people with a migratory background, a circumstance that leads the authors to predict that the degree of identification will increase not so much through the abandonment of religion, but thanks to improvements on the other variables.

Finally, a set of research focuses on the *intergenerational transmission of religious values and on the differences between parents (the first generation of immigrants) and children about religious beliefs and practices* and their relationship with the main indicators of integration. Among the many examples we can quote the study conducted by M. Beek and F. Fleischmann [60] in the Netherlands. In the intergenerational transition, belonging to Islam does not weaken, but takes on a more symbolic dimension linked to the community. Furthermore, both for the first and for the second generation, a greater degree of religiosity is related to a more traditional view of couple relationships. In a previous study, two of the authors of this volume carried out a comparative analysis of the patterns of religious transmission of the three largest immigrant groups in Italy – Romanians, Albanians, and Moroccans– [61]. The starting hypothesis, substantially confirmed, is that these models are influenced by the interaction between the contexts of origin and those of destination. Although "more religious" than others in all dimensions considered (religious practice, personal prayer and the importance accorded to religion), Muslim parents (from both Morocco and Albania) are less inclined to pass on to their children public practice, probably because they fear that the public manifestation of their faith could expose them to discrimination. Regarding the transmission of the private dimension of religion and the belief in its importance, Moroccans prove to be much more effective than Albanian Muslims, probably driven by the desire to preserve their religious identity in a Christian country (while this identity is weakened among Albanians, coming from a secular country). Also in Italy, the study by L. Bossi and G. Marroccoli [62] allows us to grasp the changing character of family religiosity, in relation to a multiplicity of aspects –cultural, psychological, relational, and social– that influence the process of intergenerational transmission. Furthermore, religion responds to the needs of the different phases of the migration project and can correspond to the need for connection with the country of origin (in the initial phases), the search of a "refuge" in the stabilization phase, or even to a means to establish stable relationships in the new context when return expectations fade. Moreover, efforts to transmit religion can fail precisely because of excessive attachment to tradition. The figures of grandparents are also crucial, whether they are also present in the country of immigration or whether they live in the country of origin. Religious leaders and friendly circles play an essential role too. Finally, achieving a certain level of well-being can lead to a withdrawal from religion, as well as from the community in which it is practiced. Contrary to a rather stereotyped view, parents are not the only agents of religious socialization. Just as for their native peers, extra-family relationships and the types of acquaintances are very important in influencing religious feelings and practices of adolescents with a migrant background [63].

Lastly, while research on these issues has tended to be hegemonized by the attention to the Muslim component, more recently several studies have investigated the religious experience of young descendants from immigrant families of Christian (and Catholic) religion. Like those concerning at Muslims, these studies are very rarely based on numerically relevant samples, so that their results cannot be considered statistically significant. However, they make it possible to appreciate the different "functions" carried

out by religion and the possible differences between first and second generation, as well as to deepen our knowledge about the role of faith-based organizations and, in the case of Catholic migrants, of the so-called "ethnic chaplaincies". The latter, as is well known, are privileged places of aggregation and points of reference for many first-generation migrants. However, the study by R. Ricucci [64] on a sample of migrants' descendants of Filipino, Romanian, and Peruvian origin, documents how some of them choose to distance themselves from these places –possibly limiting themselves to cultivating the private dimension of religion– because they feel their negative influence on the ways in which Italian society perceives them, or because they no longer consider them adequate to their needs, when they are well integrated into the immigration society. At the same time, the least integrated among these youths, both from the linguistic point of view and from the point of view of friendship networks, are those who constantly attend their ethnic churches and remain strongly anchored to the community of compatriots. Even more significant are the in-depth studies dedicated to young Copts of Egyptian origin contained in the afore-mentioned research on religion in migration processes [36]. In the experience of this group, which has a completely unique history, religion plays a crucial role in all phases of the migration process, in forging their collective identity, in configuring their relations with the host society, conditioning their daily behaviours and the relationships between parents and children [65, 66]. Consistent with what is suggested by international literature [67] about socially disadvantaged religious minorities, the maintenance of a strong religious identity and assiduous religious practice can be interpreted as a response to marginalization. In the case in question, however, these characteristics also respond to a strong desire for identity recognition, forged by the experience of discrimination suffered in the country of origin –a discrimination that assumes the traits of martyrdom– and disregarded in the everyday life of a country of destination, plagued by a sort of "religious illiteracy". As this analysis demonstrates in an emblematic way, *it is precisely through the filter of the family and intergenerational relationships that it is possible to grasp the reasons and meanings of living religiosity, but also of its outcomes –not always positive– in terms of individual well-being and social cohesion.*

5. Book Content

Adopting the same approach tested in a previous and already mentioned study [36], we encouraged the authors of the present book to investigate the religion of migrants through the lens of the family. A selection of essays mainly focused on integration processes has emerged, with a special attention to the experience of migrants' offspring which reflects the contemporary focus of European social research.

More in detail, the book is composed by this introductory chapter and four thematic sections.

The First Section discusses the typical topic represented by the role of religion in the process of adaptation. The issues under observation concern the "compatibility" of migrants' values and behaviours –as based on their religious belongings– with the cultural context of the destination society.

Giuseppe Gabrielli, Germana Carobene and Salvatore Strozza (chapter 2) illustrate the results of a quantitative analysis using the data from the multipurpose "Social Condition and Integration of Foreign citizens survey" conducted by the Italian National Institute of Statistic in 2011-12. Although the data date back to a few years ago, the study

still maintains an interest, also from a methodological point of view. The size of the sample allowed the researchers to investigate the heterogeneous composition of the Muslim migratory universe –on which the analysis focuses–, due to the variety of countries of origin, migratory histories, versions of Islam to which one adheres. The study has also the advantage of focusing on one of the most critical and crucial issues in the analysis of the integration/assimilation processes of migrants from countries with a Muslim majority: gender equality in family-related attitudes and behaviours among first-generation adult migrants. Indeed, according to the reported results, gender equality attitudes widely differ depending on the country of origin: they are highest among migrants coming from Albania and former Yugoslavia (regions which represent an example of the "European Islam", more open to Western values linked to modernization and gender equality); middle among Moroccans, Tunisians, Algerians, Senegalese, and Burkinabe; and minimal (that is characterized by the higher gender disparity attitudes) among migrants coming from Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh (particularly linked to patriarchal codes). As could be expected, there are higher gender-egalitarian behavioural levels among migrants coming from urban areas, who bring with them a more modern cultural heritage. Migratory seniority –intended as a proxy as the distance of migrants to the values and beliefs of their origin country– and the acquisition of Italian citizenship allow to highlight the role played by the acculturation process, which is however weakened by the individual migrant's level of religiosity. For our present purposes, the most interesting results are exactly those that indicate that the more religious people are opposed to gender equality in family-related attitudes; however, the gradient of religious communal integration on this issue is more strongly significant than that of subjective religiosity. This result is in line to the international literature. Beyond the limits recognized by the authors themselves –in particular the size of the sample, which does not allow for a breakdown by gender– the results of the study help to understand why the gender issue continues to represent one of the most "insidious" variables in the construction of interethnic and interreligious coexistence. As clearly suggested by the authors, Islamic cultures usually show a strong gender inequality, legally structured, codified and defined at the social level, albeit to varying degrees. However, by opposing the tendency to understand Islam as a monolithic block, the authors assumed that Islamic community in Italy is significantly diversified and gender roles in the Muslim couples are heterogeneous according to the origin and selected characteristics. Therefore, they contextualise the analysis according to the socio-normative schemes of the origin countries. Understanding these dynamics is very important also for the Italian society since Muslim migrants increased significantly during the last decades (and they will continue to grow over the next few years).

In chapter 3, Lorenzo Ferrante illustrates the results of a study on immigrants' integration in Palermo, the capital of Sicily. By combining qualitative data and ethnographic observation, the author analyses the role of religion in the construction of the sense of belonging through the phenomenon of "doing family" in the local community, choosing as independent variable the degree of freedom enjoyed by immigrants in the public expression of their differences. Considering the impact of religion and family as origin cultural values on public and private expression of differences, the contribution focuses on their role in the integration process and reports the emergence of specific forms of "multiculturalism" through religious syncretism, new models of family migration, the genesis of transcultural, interreligious, and mixed families, the reconfiguration of religious practices in the identity system of immigrants.

The analysis centres on the most numerous immigrant communities at territorial level: the Islamic *Ummah* and the Indian *Dharma*. The focus is placed on the factors that influence family habits and the public and private religious practices, with a particular attention to changing roles and family hierarchical relationships, which are guided and inspired by religious values, in the land of origin. What emerges is a process of integration which has been declining through syncretism and cultural contagions. In this frame, family is the place of behavioural contradictions in which individuals find subjective answers to the tensions of integration: innovation and preservation of identity traits coagulate in a symbolic space that is strongly subject to change. Striking a balance between cultural coherence and the redefinition of identities puts a strain on family roles and the degree of family cohesion.

Discussing the results, the author observes that immigrants, while expressing their religious and cultural differences, tend to reduce their perception of minority and take part in the construction of a local integration model. As a matter of fact, the role of religion is decisive in the reconstruction of a moral order and social practices that gradually give meaning to daily life. These results support the hypothesis that immigrants tend to lean toward faster integration when there are wide spaces in the expression of religious and cultural differences. Finally, migrants' (segmented) assimilation process has reshaped cultural and religious differences, no longer connoted by their divergence from Western tradition: this brings the author to conclude that in a socio-political climate of low pressure to integration and a substantial freedom of expression of differences – such that of Palermo– immigrants do not need to claim their identity spaces.

In the Second Section of the book, the attention is focused on two different institutions –forced marriages and the kafala system of child foster care– both rooted (or perceived as such) in the religious belonging of the families with a migrant background. The analyses provided by the authors –both law scholars– illustrate the need to "accommodate" the legislative framework of destination countries to the new realities posed by migrant families and their transnational links.

In chapter 4, Germana Carobene develops an analysis of the phenomenon of forced marriages. The starting point is the observation that, in the genesis of this phenomenon, religious affiliation can play a role, although not exclusive: marriage can be seen as a tool to maintain a strong link with the culture of the country of origin, or even as a way to "protect" girls from certain open lifestyles, especially in relation to sexuality.

In line with the Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe (2011), Italian law considers forced marriages an illegal act, made so by the imposition on the spouses and above all on the bride. The reference legislation is represented by the art. 7 of the so-called "Red code", approved in 2019 and dedicated to the protection of victims of domestic and gender-based violence. However, a regulatory intervention limited to the qualification of the case as a crime based on some external morphological aspects runs the risk of not grasping, in a truly inclusive and intercultural dimension, the plurality of meanings that behaviours could assume, in compliance with the law constitutional and the variety of values they contain. This question, from a strictly legal-positive point of view, must be correctly framed among the limits to the freedom of individuals, in particular of women, determined by habits, customs, systems of collective and relational values that overshadow subjectivity.

This phenomenon involves many aspects of interest in the analysis of intercultural dynamics, not only with reference to the juridical concept of free consent and dignity of the person, but also in consideration of the philosophical and juridical elaborations on the concept of "gender" and its relationship with intrafamily relationships. Forced

marriages can be understood in terms of intercultural conflict, i.e., highlighting the process of reworking and reinterpreting gender roles following migration experiences and the profound divergence between external marriage dynamics (of the host society) and the logic adopted by the group of belonging. Just to give an example, the adoption of an intercultural approach could lead to a different categorization of the behaviour of the actors involved (such as the girl's parents) who could be convinced that they are acting for her good.

This repositioning of formal profiles could provide useful tools for a regulatory qualification/translation that best contextualizes these practices, tracing "other" meanings and, in relation to them, emancipatory solutions that do not bring into play the subjectivity of the "victim" and his isolation from social groups to which he belongs. In this perspective, the new rights can become translation interfaces between traditions renewed in their potential sense, so as to promote processes of intercultural redefinition of subjectivity. A true intercultural right must not, therefore, be dedicated exclusively to penal protection (even if this is absolutely necessary) but must be more integrated into an articulated system of support and prevention. It is therefore necessary to rethink and recontextualize the theme of respect for human rights, not as a theoretical entity assumed in an abstract universalistic key, and to focus attention on the theme and on the dignity of choice. In the dialectic between universally valid rights, in all contexts and/or space-time coordinates, and an absolute relativism of human rights, the author concludes that we must find a *modus operandi* able to mediate between these opposites.

In chapter 5, Alessandra Abis provides an interesting analysis of the Islamic child foster care called *Kafala*, investigating how domestic legal systems of Western States (particularly European ones) deal with it –principally with reference to the right of family reunification and to intercountry adoption. The analysis constitutes a good example to grasp the concept of family as a social construction and a moral order discussed above, as well as the transformative potential of migratory flows, which bring with them also institutions mostly obscure in the destination country in terms of marriage schemes, parenting affiliations, forms of cohabitation. As a consequence, not only does immigration produce the circulation of different models of family shaped by religious tenets; what is more, it implies the need to deal with the new institutions transplanted by people with a foreign background, since immigrants often claim for the recognition of relationships and obligations born under the legal system of their country of origin.

In the case under examination, the most recurring issue in hosting States has concerned the right to family reunification since the child under Kafala is not considered as a family member of the *Kafil* (that is the person who looks after him or her). Indeed, Kafala is consonant with the religious prohibition to establish a parental relationship beyond the biological filiation (as it happens in the case of adoption) and with the religious obligation to educate in Islamic religion the child in custody. Jurists are thus called upon to find a legal accommodation for these unusual family structures through dynamic solutions –able to reconcile this institute with the principles deriving from the values of the host society, thereby meeting the needs of a multicultural society. The essay reviews the solutions adopted in different countries which demonstrate how this institution is going to become a part of Western legal system.

Furthermore, this contribution highlights the consequences of a possible recognition of the Kafala institution on the religious education of children in the host country. Since Kafala is not just a simple custody, but involves a deep religious dimension, it is necessary to investigate its consequences in the field of the right to religious freedom, about both the child and the adult caretaker. As suggested by the author –following the

international literature on the topic– even if today there is a lack of agreement over what constitutes the best interest of the child (an issue which ultimately evokes the same aims and values of life), it is possible to identify a core of the concept in the rejection of any forms of abuse and violence. In this way, the special guardianship of kafala may be able to find an accommodation among the values of the western legal orders.

The Third Section of the volume explores the process of intergenerational transmission (and negotiation) of the religious identity from different disciplinary perspectives.

Chapter 6, authored by Elisabetta Musi and Alessandra Augelli, provides the results of their study based on focus groups and interviews to women who experienced migration with their families. This choice is motivated by the intimate connection between the maternal role and the transmission of religious values belonging to the culture of origin.

In line with the results of the other studies presented in this volume, they found continuity in the importance of religion from one generation to another. However, the non-Islamic context in which young Muslims grow up inevitably influences the way they inherit their faith, thus leading to transformations and original re-elaborations, which also reflect contemporary tendencies privileging self-expression of consciously chosen identities.

Especially during their adolescence, many second-generation youths go through the complex process of reinterpreting and making sense out of the religious norms of their family or completely give up their religious affiliation. More often, they come up with progressive visions of synthesis, where the conflictual cultural elements are contaminated in various ways, up to the point of creating a personal vision of the world. This can result in a growing gap between the practice and the real sharing of their meaning, but also in an "essentialization" of the religious practice.

Finally, an interesting aspect of this study is the focus on the relationship that migrant families keep with relatives abroad: these may amplify cultural distances and cause intercultural misunderstandings, especially as far as emotions, sense of belonging and identities are concerned.

In chapter 7, Cristina Giuliani and Camillo Regalia, further developing the analysis carried out in a previous study cited above, discuss the results of their research on Coptic families living in Milan. In the first section of the chapter the authors describe the factors which have contributed, particularly within psychological research, to neglect the role played by religion in the integration of the migrant families. Subsequently, they provide the results of an inquiry which has explicitly adopted a family perspective, by collecting and comparing narratives of both first-generation parents and second-generation adolescent children.

For the purposes of our present reflection, the main merit of this contribution consists in focusing attention on a non-Muslim religious minority, that often gets confused with Muslims in the common perception, due to the circumstance that the families involved in the research come from a country with an Islamic majority. As a matter of fact, Christian Copts can be viewed as an emblematic example of "double minority", since they were a minority in their origin country and continue to be such even in the country they migrated to. This condition influences their process of integration and feeds a diasporic identity intentionally transmitted to the second generation.

Independently from their age and generation of immigration, interviewees consider religious faith and religious experience as an essential part of their private and social life. The two latter dimensions are deeply intertwined: the families involved in the study

acknowledge the centrality of the faith as a personal resource, and the salience of their attachment to the Churches and clergy (perceived as guide and point of reference, also involved in family decision-making), as well as the fundamental role they play. Intergenerational religious transmission emerges as shared responsibility of adults – parents, priests, bishop– toward younger generations, also in order to ensure loyalty to a sacred tradition and obedience to what the Mother Church preaches to diasporic Churches.

For both generations, self-identification as migrant Egyptian Copts and the belonging to the Coptic community are central elements of the personal and family identity. However, for the parents the main contents of their religious identity concern the themes of diaspora and of martyrdom –thus proudly underlying the continuity with their origin and the history of their Church–, and religious identity is closely intertwined with the ethnic identity. For their offspring, religious identity draws on a comparison with the Italian society: stressing the relevance of religion in everyday life, they highlight the contrast with the outside secularized world and their Italian peers. At the same time, both parents and children represent the Italian society as a monolithic, threatening, and negative context, and describe the Church as a safe and quiet refuge. Hence, even if it is based on a selected sample composed of families highly involved in religious activities, the study raises questions on the risks that could result from such a juxtaposition to the Italian society, depicted as anomic and dangerous. The marginalization of the community appears, at the same time, a "choice" aimed at reaffirming its distinctiveness, and the consequence of the "invisibility" suffered by Orthodox Copts, despite being Christians in a "Christian" country. In the end, to achieve the goal of a full and "loyal" integration, both the Coptic community and the Italian society must accept the challenge of crossing their respective borders.

In chapter 8, Iraklis Dimitriadis and Francesco Molteni develop an interesting analysis on Greece, chosen because it differs from other Western European countries due both to its historical background and its geographic/cultural position (between East and West), but above all due to the role of the Orthodox Church in the construction of the national identity and its politics. Moreover, some social, institutional, and political characteristics have contributed to a different evolution than the secularization widely occurred in other European countries.

In general terms, as noticed above, Muslim migrant families and their offspring show higher level of stability in religiosity, whereas Christian migrants report a decline across generations. On the contrary, in Greece the empirical evidence discussed by the authors illustrates a different trend: due to the higher religiosity of natives (compared to the majority of immigrants), but also to the strong link between Orthodox religiosity and Greek identity, religion serves as a potential resource that immigrants can mobilize to facilitate their integration.

Relying on data from the *European Social Survey*, the authors compare first generation immigrants, second generations and natives and find that Greece is the only country in which higher levels of religiosity for the second generation are observed, if compared with the first generation. Furthermore, even second-generation immigrants coming from a non-Christian country tend to declare an Orthodox denomination according to what previous research [68] called a "strategic assimilation": a sort of "functional conversion", which probably does not translate into practices and beliefs, but that is considered instrumental for integration and social acceptance.

The large presence of migrants originating from Albania (a secularized society) among those coming from an "Islamic" country must be considered in order to explain

the "exceptional" case of Greece. Having said this, the study is interesting above all in giving an account of how there are no deterministic laws: beyond the religiosity of individual families, many different variables affect the ways in which religion is transmitted (or not transmitted) to new generations. Therefore, while most studies corroborate the continuity in religious values and practices across generations – particularly in religious (Muslim) minority families–, broadening the spectrum of the analysis allows to find unexpected results.

Focusing more closely on the experience of migrants' descendants, the Fourth Section of the volume illustrates the results emerged from three studies, two of them addressed to the experience of young Muslims living in Italy, and the third one to the dramatic phenomena of (religious) radicalization.

In chapter 9, Giulia Mezzetti and Roberta Ricucci illustrate the process of "becoming" Muslim in a country traditionally represented as the cradle of Catholicism. Their study offers an overview of religious socialization within Muslim families in Italy, from the perspective of the parents (the first generation) and the children, on the base of more than 80 interviews. In line with what has been described above, these young descendants from Muslim immigrant families have some characteristics common to their native peers and others specific to them. On the one hand, they are equally exposed to globalizing influences and open to experimentation with a view to the search for the "true self". On the other hand, they have parents who often feel a heightened responsibility in educating them on religious values and behaviours.

Growing up in a non-Islamic context, these young people are therefore driven to find their own way to appropriate the family religion. In this process, their behaviours sometimes display a positive contamination with the host context: for example, when they undertake to create places of faith more like Catholic parishes, that is more open to the organization of social and philanthropic activities. In a specular way, faith communities may succeed in attracting young people when they speak the language of youths, by offering activities centred on the social, relational, and material dimensions of religious life. As a matter of fact, while the parents attend the place of worship but prefer to be less visible in the public sphere and are less interested in structured forms of participation, their offspring take the mosque and its activities as a springboard to claim recognition for Islam and for themselves as citizens. Moreover, they show a typically post-modern search for "authenticity" in the manner of living their faith and for vowed identities, thus demonstrating a crucial role played by the post-modern and globalized cultural context.

Furthermore, in their attempt to not to be reduced to their religious identification, they strategically adapt their behaviour and their "Muslimness" to varying degrees, depending on contexts and situations (for example by accommodating the dress to the employer requests and by "switching the code" and resorting to different repertories of actions, according to the situation and to the interlocutor). Parents, for their part, are very sensitive to the judgment of their compatriots and of the extended family that has remained in the country of origin, so that they demand more traditional and observant behaviours when they feel the pressure of social control (for example, during holidays in the country of origin). These are just some examples, among those discussed in the chapter, which tell us of the changing, negotiable, constantly evolving character of the ways in which migrants and their children experience religiosity.

Similarly, the analysis presented in chapter 10 by Paolo Branca and Antonio Cuciniello on the experience of Muslim youths is based on a non-conventional methodology which has also included the researchers' participation in the periodical

meetings of these young people and informal conversations with them. According to what they affirm, this approach has allowed the emergence of aspects that rarely come to light with more conventional methodological choices, and even more so in the media debate.

The interest of the study lies in having highlighted what we could define a condition of "embeddedness" in the immigrant community and, in certain respects, in the same society of origin, which continues to influence the young people from Muslim countries intercepted by the authors. Although they were born or raised in Italy, second generation Muslims may maintain a very structured relationship with their identity of origin, through the mediation of the family. As a consequence, their transition to adulthood is influenced by parental concerns to preserve the boundaries of the in-group also –for example– by encouraging intra-community marriages. Emblematically, it is not uncommon that, when they establish a relationship with a partner of the same community, they are pushed to marry as soon as possible, even before having concluded their educational career. Another illuminating example is provided by the praxis of the Egyptian government to send commissions to Italy in charge of examining students of Egyptian origin through tests in Arabic, useful for a possible –but quite unlikely– return. This practice translates into significant costs for students of Egyptian origin and their families (even for private lessons) and is sometimes experienced with a sense of rejection.

In more general terms, particularly in coincidence with the most delicate transitions (such as the choice of the partner or the decision to wear the veil), youths have to come to terms with the expectation of their parents –frequently experiencing conflicts and divergences of opinions– by adopting strategies to succeed in pursuing their goals without losing the confidence of the adults. Taking on attitudes of defiance or addressing adults with disrespectful expressions is simply unconceivable within a system of relations, inside and outside the family, based on a clear hierarchy where the group comes before the single individual, as well as the man before the woman and the adult before the young.

The last section of the chapter is devoted to describing the artistic production of some emerging names in the field of fiction and music, young –and not so young– members of the second generation.

Finally, the analysis provided in chapter 11 by Giovanni Giulio Valtolina on the issue of radicalization can be inserted within the context of growing concern for the role of Islam in second-generation cultural isolationism. In this context, the originality of this contribution lies in focusing attention exactly on the role of the family, both as an agent of prevention and protection, as well as a driving factor that leads an individual to become radicalized.

Until now, these two sides of the same coin have been largely disregarded by both social research and initiatives to contrast this phenomenon. Despite a growing number of research on radicalization, as well as a higher awareness of the complexity of factors under this phenomenon, studies focusing on family's incidence are still at their initial stage. After giving an account of the main bibliographic reviews dedicated to this topic –and of their limits– the author discusses the most interesting results of the studies carried out so far. As pointed out by this review, family members can have both a direct and an indirect influence on the process, in strict connection with other risk factors. However, families can also be a protective environment against radicalization and enhance the rehabilitation of individuals who have been radicalized. Persons reconnecting with their family are more likely to be successful in the de-radicalization

process, and in some countries de-radicalization programs have started to give a special support to the families involved.

6. Concluding remarks

In the current European landscape, marked by a dramatic decline of "native" Europeans who define themselves as Christians, a new equilibrium in the religious composition of the resident population has been arising. In this context, as we have discussed, the concept of religious identity risks to be reduced to a cultural construct and to an instrumental argument used to endorse security responses in the governance of the flows of migrants and asylum seekers, both represented as an "identity threat". What is more, the "culturalization" of (majority) religion, or the tendency to resort to the "state religion" as a bulwark of identity in the face of the challenge represented by Muslim minorities is impacting on the very foundations of liberal secularism [14].

It is precisely in conjunctures like these that scientific researchers are called upon to offer their contribution to the knowledge and understanding of social phenomena, to dilute prejudices and weaken the "moral panic" that winds its way through an easily exploited public opinion, but also to identify critical situations and open problems, encouraging the search for equitable and sustainable solutions.

According to some scholars, the theme of the governance of inter-ethnic coexistence has even become largely superimposed on that of the governance of inter-religious coexistence (if not on that of coexistence with the Muslim minority). Governing a clearly plural society from the religious point of view implies a radical revision of the consolidated models based on a separation between State and Church(s) –and also dealing with their criticalities and the questions that have remained historically open. At the same time, it implies rethinking the role of religion in the public sphere, if only because it is prompted by the requests for "visibility" coming from minority communities but also, for example, by the theme of religious education in public schools and by that, even thornier, of the recognition of "special" rights (so-called ethnic rights) to (religious) minorities. All this calls into question not only State authorities, but the majority Church itself, urged to rethink its role within a more plural society. Finally, governing a society made more heterogeneous by the migratory flows that have followed one another over time implies dealing with the limits of methodological nationalism, recognizing the importance of transnational ties and practices, as well as the influence that States and communities of origin of migrants continue to exercise over their lives and decisions. Once again, all these issues are reflected in an exemplary way in the experience of families with a migratory background and it is certainly not accidental that these issues emerged after the transformation of an immigration of (single) workers into an immigration made by families.

In Europe, a widespread ideological bias has traditionally inhibited the possibility to adequately analyse and grasp the role of religion within migration and interethnic coexistence, despite its relevance, thus contributing (unconsciously?) to a stereotyped representation of migrants' religiosity and to its instrumentalization at political level as well as by the media-system. However, in recent years, the religion of migrants has finally begun to gain a growing space in the research agenda and above all it started to be analysed through approaches less influenced by the ideology of secularization. European scholars are more and more involved in the investigation of the multiple ways

though which migrants and their offspring give meaning to their religious affiliations and live their religiosity in daily life, dealing with a (post) secularized society and often also with the stigmatization that affects members of minority religions, especially if Muslims.

By joining this promising line of study, this collection of essays looks at the religion of migrants through the filter of the family, acknowledging the challenging and exploratory meaning of the immigration-family-religion nexus. Following the suggestions coming from a previous ample study on the role of religion in migratory and integration processes [36], the following chapters are based on a clear option toward both the de-instrumentalization of migrants' religion and the re-humanization of migrants. In analysing the concept of religious identity, they systematically deconstruct religious markers and ascribed religious belonging –as in the emblematic example of "converted" Orthodox analysed in chapter 8– and point out the risks and costs (at individual, familial, and societal level) of both their *invisibility* –as in the case of Christian Coptic teenagers presented in chapter 7– and their *hyper-visibility* –as occurs to the offspring of Muslim families who are the object of chapter 10. At the same time, these contributions allow to grasp the limits of the *neutralization* of religious differences (possibly in the name of "political correctness", in line with a radical understanding of the principle of secularization) that prevents us from grasping cultural distance on critical aspects –such as the principle of gender equity, as the analysis proposed in chapter 2 shows. Moreover, they show the limits of *hyper-emphasis*, which leads to reducing every other difference and individual specificity to religious ones –as in the case of the people who experience to be restricted to his/her "Muslimness", discussed in chapter 9, thus neglecting the relevance of many other variables [69].

To take religious differences seriously also implies recognizing the conflictual dimension inevitably present in the confrontation between "differences" and renouncing the temptation to reduce religious values to an identity banner. In this regard, the analyses proposed in chapters 4 and 5 indicate the way of a dialogic approach capable of finding a legislative arrangement for the requests for recognition of institutions embedded in the juridical and religious tradition of immigrant communities. This approach is in line with the one suggested by T. Modood and T. Sealy [21] who encourage the adoption of a "multi-culturalized secularism" to address and accommodate the demands of different religious groups, negotiating and cooperating with transnational actors. All this implies the willingness to recognize the public value of religion and religiosity as a necessary pre-condition [36].

As a matter of fact, the governance of religious diversity in a liberal democratic State entails the adoption of inclusive and accommodative, not oppressive, attitudes towards religion(s) and religious practices in public spaces [32]. As suggested in chapter 3, guaranteeing religious minorities the freedom to express their differences also in the public sphere encourages a process of "reshaping" of the same cultural and religious differences, in line with the democratic values of the hosting society. It is in this way that Europe will be able to complete the metabolization of its transformation into a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society: a task that certainly calls into question political authorities, but also the many civil society organizations that, through their daily practices, are drawing the future of a pluralistic Europe. In this process, a crucial role belongs –as underlined in chapter 6– to the educational system, called upon to create spaces and opportunities aimed at nurturing interest in (other) religious expressions and at overcoming any misunderstanding and intolerance. Finally, as strongly stressed in chapter 11, even a phenomenon like (religious) radicalization could be to some extent

prevented, by raising the awareness of both parents and professional operators towards the risk factors, particularly those related to the long-time young people spend online, but also, by recognizing how the very family of origin can play a pivotal role in the recruitment of young people into terroristic cells. The prevention of the radicalization process does not necessarily entail repressive policies, but they surely require a better understanding of the causes and contexts in which this phenomenon could develop - the migrant family is one of these contexts.

However, far more than the episodes of radicalization –on which spotlights are usually focused– examples of "bottom-up" accommodation are widespread in contemporary Europe. Their main protagonists of such examples are second-generation young people (especially Muslims) who, through their daily practices, invent ways to "hold together" the respect for one's own religious tradition, the search for a more authentic experience of faith, the commitment to individual success and the construction of the common good. But it is a process –it must be emphasized– that unites them to the millions of faithful of the still majority religion in Europe who, despite culturalist tendencies, understand their faith as a religion "embodied" in the places of life and work, as well as in the spaces where a better future is planned and built.

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Gender Equality in Family-Related Attitudes and Behaviours Among Muslim Migrants in Italy

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Abstract. The chapter aims to observe gender equality in family-related attitudes and behaviours among Muslim first-generation migrants aged 18-64 years old at interview and residing in Italy. We use data coming from the multipurpose "Social Condition and Integration of Foreign citizens survey" conducted in 2011-2012, estimate a synthetic index of gender equality, and perform regression models. Results show that migrants coming from Albania and former Yugoslavia have the highest gender equality attitudes among Muslims in Italy, while those coming from Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh have the highest gender disparity attitudes. The years since migration and the acquisition of Italian citizenship depict the acculturation process in the destination country which favor gender equality attitudes. Conversely, the more religious people are the more they are opposed to gender equality in family-related attitudes. However, the gradient of religious communal integration on this issue is more strongly significant than that of subjective religiosity.

Keywords. immigration, gender equality, family, religion, integration, Italy

1. Introduction

The challenges of social integration and the question of diversity imply the need for a full understanding of the cultures that migratory phenomena are entering Italian tissues, which for a long period of time have been culturally homogeneous. It is particularly interesting in this sense to focus specific attention on the Islamic religion which, in an all-encompassing way, also generally involves the lifestyles of the faithful. In the approach to Islam, it is therefore necessary to start from a fundamental methodological assumption: it cannot be reduced to the simple idea of religion, according to the classical approach, but one must contemplate both the religious and the political profile, since it is the rule of life, the law [1]. Furthermore, it must be said that Islam as such does not exist, Islamic states may exist, but there is a different adhesion depending not only on the classic Sunni-Shiite partition (with a clear preponderance of the former) but on the legal schools of reference. As it is known, the first characteristic of Islam is that of the absorption of theology into law: the first juridical source is the Koran, which follows the Muhammadis imitation collected in the Sunna; we therefore have *iğmā*

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(consensus) and *qiyās* (analogical reasoning). Sharia, the positive law, integrally regulates human activity and, in particular, contains the rules that regulate the life of Muslims, in their most personal sphere and regulate marriage, family, inheritance, etc. These rules apply to the *umma* (community of believers) from birth and followed by the faithful, regardless of their residence.

Generally speaking, Islamic cultures show usually a strong gender inequality, legally structured, codified and defined at the social level. Women do not enjoy full citizenship but second class, their subordination is nothing more than the consequence of the application of Muslim family law, which derives from patriarchal and cultural norms. Among Muslims, the man-woman biological complementary has been embraced by traditional cultures [2] and has resulted in a legal complementarity, inspired by the principle of equity/*insāf* (and not the principle of equality/*musāwā*): women do not perceive themselves as heads of families; instead receive protection and in return must obey their husbands). This principle has remained unchanged, despite the processes of colonization and modernization, with evident repercussions on gender identity. Understanding these dynamics can therefore provide us with the terms and tools to provide the new challenges that are imposed on Italian legislator. It is also possible to note that in contemporary Islam, few issues are as highly controversial as gender inequalities [3]. The more traditional interpretation still supports the principle of gender complementarity/*takāmul* and conceives a clear division of social roles by gender that establish the division of employment and domestic work, responsibilities in the private environment and in family decisions and relationships in society [4]. Obviously, it is not possible to establish an archetype of Muslim woman, since an important factor is the social and legal status which depends on the social and cultural policies of the contexts concerned.

However, the process of globalization, which has taken various forms in different parts of the Muslim world, has undermined traditional conceptions of appropriate gender roles. As a result of these factors, progressive Islamic discourses on gender equality and cultural dynamics are evident in the significant changes in the traditional expectations of Muslim families. The most recent movement of the so-called "Islamic feminism", which emerged in multiple Islamic states, as a cultural, political and social reflection (obviously with different outcomes depending on the context of reference) has promoted "equality and justice in the Muslim family" through a renewed reading of the founding texts of Islam and the use of critical *iğtihād* (reasoning) [5, 6, 7, 8, 9]. In more recent years, the struggle for the so-called gender/*ğihād* has continued, always in the wake of the Koranic law, provoking a heated debate in some Islamic states more sensitive to the processes of "modernization".

When considering immigration to Europe, Muslims represent the largest (non-indigenous) group perceived as a major challenge of the nature of ethnic, cultural and religious diversity [10, 11]. Despite these multilevel contexts, the difference within the Muslim communities of Europe is often described in media discourse as a single typology that can be managed by the same kind of policies. In Southern European countries, Muslim immigrants have increased especially in the last two decades as these destination countries have become poles of attraction for economic migrants [12, 13]. According to the methodological strategy adopted in the Report yearbook titled "Dossier Statistico Immigrazione" (Statistical Immigration Dossier), the Muslim foreigners living in Italy were estimated about 500 thousand at the beginning of the new Millennium [14], approximately 1,650,000 foreign residents ten years later (2011) and at the most recent data (early 2020), corresponding more or less to one third of

foreign citizens residing in the country [15]. At the most recent date, the figure certainly exceeds 2 million if we also consider the residents who have acquired Italian citizenship. However, Muslim migrants cannot in any way be considered a homogeneous group, as they come from different countries (the majority of them come from Morocco and Albania), speak different languages, adhere to different versions of Islam (the majority of them are Sunni, with a Shi'ite minority). Therefore, Muslim migrants do not fit well into a monolithic conception of Islam that takes on different connotations in time and space.

In the empirical analyzes on migrants and gender roles, little space has so far been dedicated, also due to a lack of data, to the gender attitudes of Muslims in Italy [4, 16, 17]. The comparison of migrants according to their religion demonstrates that Muslims, with high degrees of religiosity, hold more conservative gender role orientations than religious Christians [18]. However, this comparison between religions reduces the heterogeneity within the Muslim group.

Providing an empirical contribute to the scarce existing literature on this topic, we aim to observe gender equality in family-related attitudes and behaviours among Muslim first-generation migrants aged 18-64 years old at interview and residing in Italy. Our main assumption is that Islamic community in Italy is significantly diversified, and gender roles in the Muslim couple are heterogeneous according to the origin and selected characteristics. We figure out a descriptive picture of the variegated Islamic universe existing in Italy by contextualizing the analysis on the socio-normative schemes of the origin countries.

Using data coming from the multipurpose "Social Condition and Integration of Foreign citizens survey" (SCIF), conducted by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) in 2011-2012, we consider a number of family-related attitudes and behaviours (e.g., division of household tasks and hierarchies of power within the couple, couples' money arrangements, or extra-familial socialization) to estimate a synthetic index of gender equality in family related attitudes and behaviours. Among the other factors, origin context, different dimensions of religiosity, and acculturation process have been considered for the first time, best to our knowledge, in analyzing their association to gender roles.

2. Theoretical Background

According to Islamic law, marriage (*nikâh*) is, in the first place, a legal institution aimed at regulating the social order. It has as its main objectives the care of legitimate offspring and the legalization of sexual relations. The marriage contract has different purposes for the two spouses. For the husband, it concerns the rights conferred on the person of the wife: sexual enjoyment and marital authority, with particular attention to the protection of the integrity of the nucleus. Let us not forget that the penal codes provide for absolution or reduction of the sentence for men who commit "crimes of honour". For women, however, the subject of the contract is the right to the obligatory nuptial gift and to the satisfaction of other material and emotional needs. Let us not forget that even in the case of inheritance rights, women are entitled to lower quotas than those reserved for male relatives. The violation of rights is also highlighted by depriving women of the opportunity to express their will, reducing marriage to an agreement between families rather than between individuals with equal rights and obligations.

Relationships between spouses within marriage are certainly marked by the supremacy of the husband over the wife. The roles of the spouses are also clearly defined within the education of children. The mother is entitled to custody (*hadanâh*). She has the task of raising, caring for and supervising the child. Instead, the father has the *wilâyah*, that is the power to decide on the education of children, on his education, the start of work, marriage, and the administration of his goods. Children acquire citizenship and religious status only through their fathers. Polygamy is an important institution of Islamic family law. Within the Qur'an there is a single verse that authorizes polygamy, very complex and difficult to interpret. Polygamy has long been the subject of profound criticism from the Muslim world. The juridical inequality between spouses within marriage is still manifested at dissolution event: Muslim law grants the husband the exclusive right to divorce, that is, the right to terminate the marriage by means of a simple verbal statement.

2.1. The origin context

If this is, in general, the Koranic context of configuration of social relations, it is however important to emphasize the plurality of Islam present in the different socio-political contexts, linked to cultural factors, adherence to certain legal schools but also to the historical evolution of many countries, to the phenomena of colonization, revolutions, economic backwardness etc.

The common colonial destiny of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia with the submission to “western” laws, has favoured the construction of a more modern Islam although, in the post-colonial period, Islam has acquired an important identity factor [19]. The comparison between the principle of equality and that of gender complementarity has encouraged a rewriting of the rules, especially in the areas of personal status and family law. On the other hand, the geopolitical situation of Egypt is different as, although geographically in Africa, it has always been Asian from a cultural standpoint. The Asian dimension has provided it with civilization – culture and religion. If the control by the State of the clergy is very strong in other North African countries, this has not yet happened in Egypt and this tends to leave room for the most conservative and traditionalist currents [20].

In Western Africa, religious expansion has been linked not only to the activity of merchants, but also to that of the confraternities, which here have played a decisive role in the process of Islamization, mediating, and seeking a dialogue between local pre-Islamic cultures, with ancient traditions, including the worship of ancestors and forces of nature, and helping to generate syncretic forms [21]. This has also led to particularly violent forms of female submission (just think of female genital mutilation). The context of reference, especially on our example centred on Senegal and Burkina Faso, highlights a rural area, characterized by a low literacy rate that certainly does not favour the empowerment of women.

Completely different is, instead, the “European” Islam, that endogenous nature characteristic of areas of Eastern Europe that had to live with the decades of “severe” State atheism and communist repression, becoming a religion more open to secularity and Western values linked to gender equality. After the collapse of the communist regime, religious sentiment flourished again, but this has never eradicated the much deeper sense of belonging to the nation. Religious belonging is now considered secondary to belonging to the nation [22].

There are very different situations in Asian Islam. The Middle Eastern area is particularly heterogeneous within it and does not allow its reading as a single cultural block [23]. Still different is the Islamic accession in the countries of the Persian Gulf area that have levels of female subordination difficult to explain (from a Western point of view) with the high economic level reached. Strongly traditionalist is the area of Pakistan and Bangladesh that we can describe as deeply backward cultures also from the economic point of view, more linked to patriarchal codes. Unicum in the Asian landscape is the legal condition of Turkey, one of the few countries constitutionally secular, in which the construction of the State, at the beginning of the twentieth century was outlined as rejection of religious codes from public life (although Islam is currently forcefully reclaiming such spaces).

In migratory paths, the contact with Western cultures therefore highlights a legal paradox in the dualism between equality, established at the constitutional level in the host country, and female subordination, that follows the subject as belonging to the Umma/Muslim community, regardless of its geographical location [24].

Scholars also observed significant differences in their attitudes and behaviours between urban and rural populations in many countries [18, 25]: migrants who lived in rural areas generally expressed more conservative values, traditional religious beliefs, and assume less gender-egalitarian behavioural patterns than those living in urban areas. Economic and cultural globalizations affected gender roles attitudes more in urban than in rural areas: the increasing of dual-earner family type and of women education has weakened traditional gender roles and stereotypes in urban families, even though women are still facing inequalities also in these contexts [26]. However, the migration flows from rural to urban areas and vice versa may reduce the distinction of gender role in family-related attitudes and behaviours between the two populations. Nevertheless, differential cultural heritage may persist and affect familial gender-roles even after migration in the destination country.

Bearing in mind the theoretical framework cited above, we formulate two research hypotheses for our analyses:

H1 - We expect different levels of gender equality in family-related attitudes and behaviours according to the origin country, even after accounting for compositional differences;

H2 - We expect higher gender-egalitarian behavioural levels among migrants coming from urban areas.

2.2. The acculturation process

The destination context is expected to influence first-generation immigrants' attitudes and behaviours (as well as second-generation's ones) as the length of residence at the destination increases [27]. According to the theory of assimilation [28], migrants who end up in a secular host society tend to assume more gender-egalitarian attitudes and behaviours over time (and generations) by re-evaluating and changing their positions. The length of stay proxies the distance of migrants to the values and beliefs of the origin country and the impact on how much exposed a migrant is to the destination country values and beliefs. The acquisition of the citizenship, as the resultant of integration in the destination context, may also predict an acculturation process.

Existing findings on immigrants' gender attitudes and behaviour suggest that the influence of the country of origin weakens the more the acculturation process occurs. Norris and Inglehart [29] found that Muslims who move to Western countries gradually

absorb much of the host culture, including support for gender equality. Thus, once considering the time since migration, the factor on origin country tests how far origin context matters for gender-equality attitudes. We expect that the length of stay at destination countries will moderate the influence of cultural attitudes from the origin on immigrants' gender attitudes.

It is debatable in the literature if acculturation process to the host society is the resultant of an increased secularization of migrants and means dissimilation about religious beliefs [30]: Muslim migrants become less religious to develop gender-equalitarian attitudes. Standard theories of secularization assert that modernization contributes among migrants to both a decline in religiosity and a decrease in the practical relevance of religion and, in both ways, facilitates more egalitarian gender relations [31, 32]. Hence, it may be that considering religiosity in the analyses weaken the proxies of acculturation process (e.g., length of stay or citizenship), because part of the acculturation process is due to the falling levels of religiosity amongst migrants. Röder [33] finds religiosity is no longer, or less strongly negatively, connected to gender equality attitudes among migrants who have resided in Western-European countries longer.

Bearing in mind the above cited literature, we formulate the following research hypotheses:

H3 - Longer residence overall should be associated with more gender egalitarian attitudes;

H4 - Having the Italian citizenship should have a positive effect on support for gender equality.

2.3. Religiosity

The association between religiosity and gender related attitudes has attracted attention among scholars. Within the specific context of migration, researchers have focused on the role of gender in religious identity construction among migrants [33, 34] and on the influence of religious socialization process on the transmission of gender-role values in migrant families [35].

Scholars consider two core dimensions of religiosity [36, 37]: individual religiosity and religious communal integration. The secularization process in the modern European society brought to a "privatization" of religion [38, 39] and consequently to a decline of religion in political and private life [40, 41].

Individual or subjective religiosity in the literature concerns how individual defines oneself as religious and acts accordingly in private life stye (e.g., observing fasts or the private practice of prayer). Individual religiosity proxies the cultural heritage, which allows for more diverse, personal, and deviating interpretations of Islam [36]. While religious communal integration or public religiosity refers to the connection of individual to their religious community and considers the religious commitments, the participation at religious groups or associations and the attendance of places of worship (e.g., mosque). It proxies the socialization process in a religious community and the exposure to religious norms and values [36, 42, 43].

Individual religiosity and religious communal integration may encounter a differential association to gender equality roles in family related attitudes and behaviours. On this issue scholars do not provide a unique result. Generally speaking, it is observed that religious migrants are less likely than secular individuals to hold egalitarian gender role attitudes and that religious communal integration has a stronger

effect on opposition to gender equality than individual religiosity [31]. However, Röder [44] asserted also that migration causes a weakening of the influence of religion on gender equality attitudes among Muslim migrants (decoupling process). Moreover, the association of religiosity with family related attitudes and behaviours may became more weaker among Muslim migrants in Italy, where Islam is a minority religion, and the number of mosques is minute in comparison to other European countries.

We formulate two adding research hypotheses bearing in mind the discussion above:

H5 - More religious migrants have less gender-egalitarian attitudes and behaviours;

H6 - Religious communal integration has a stronger gradient to gender equality than individual religiosity.

3. Data and methods

Data was taken from the "Social Condition and Integration of Foreign citizens survey" (SCIF), conducted by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) in 2011-2012. Further information on used data is reported by Perez [45] and in the Istat web-link: https://www.istat.it/en/archivio/191097. It is the unique and the most recent survey in the Italian system of multipurpose household surveys designed to collect data on families with at least one foreign citizen and to provide original information on foreign nationals living in Italy. The cross-sectional survey covers a random sample of about 9,500 households and provides information on the living conditions, behaviours, characteristics, attitudes, and opinions of the foreign citizens in Italy including information on gender roles. Although dated, the research retains its interest at least from original collected information and from a methodological point of view.

We considered the net sub-sample of men and women who arrived at adult ages in Italy (first generation migrants), who were aged 18-64 years old at interview, and who declared to be Muslim at interview. Among these, we selected 3,974 migrants coming from those countries of origin that had a sufficient sample size (more than 100 cases). The country of origin has been defined by the country of citizenship at birth.

All the analyses used weighted data to provide results which are representative for the migrant population residing in Italy.

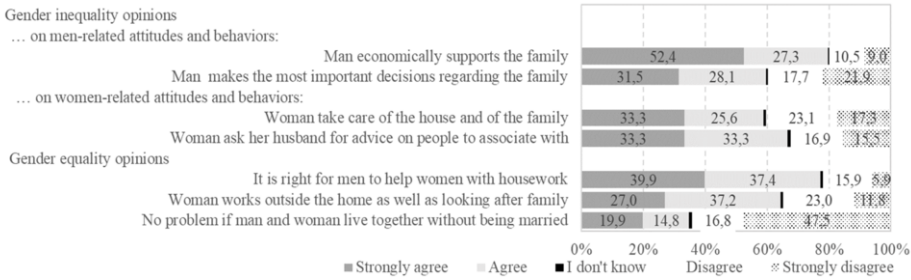
Gender role attitudes can be defined as "ideas about the goals, expectations, and actions associated with a particular gender" [46]. They can be presented on a spectrum from egalitarian to traditional gender role attitudes. The data include seven 5-point Likert scale items on the support for gender equality/inequality in family-related attitudes and behaviours:

1. "it must be the man who economically supports the family";
2. "it must be the man who makes the most important decisions regarding the family";
3. "the woman has to take care only of the house and the care of the family";
4. "the woman should ask her husband for advice on people to associate with";
5. "it is right for men to help women with housework";
6. "family life can work if the woman works outside the home as well as looking after the house and children";
7. "there is nothing wrong with a man and a woman living together without being married".

The distributions according to the degree of agreement (from strongly agree to strongly disagree) of respondents with each of the seven statements are shown in Figure 1. Nearly 80% of Muslim migrants agree that "it must be the man who economically supports the family". Less large but still the majority (about 60%) is the proportion of migrants who believes that "must be the man to make important decisions for the family". Regarding women attitudes and behaviours, almost 60% of migrants agree with the statement that "women should only take care of the house and families" and exactly two thirds approve that "the woman should ask her husband for advice on people to associate with". The openness towards de facto unions appears to be contained (just over a third of respondents agree) while the availability of the hypothesis that "women can carry out extra-domestic work activities" appears wider (almost two thirds). Only with regard to domestic activities, however, a more modern position prevails: over three quarters of migrants agree that "it is right for men to help women with housework".

These seven items are similar to those commonly contained in the literature concerning gender equality issues, tapping the gender roles in the decision-making, the domestic economy, the workforce, the childcare, and the family [18, 47, 48, 49, 50]. They help to define the gender equality in family related attitudes and behaviours in contrast with traditional heritage and patriarchal norms and values. Two of them concern the roles of man within the family, two the roles of woman, and three opinions on family and couple life.

Figure 1. Items on gender equality/inequality in family-related attitudes and behaviours. First generation Muslim adult migrants in Italy. Weighted percentage values (%).



Source: our elaboration on SCIF data, 2011-2012.

A synthetic index of gender equality attitudes was adopted to measure the gender disparities in the attitudes that we described so far. According to the literature [51], it assumes continuous scores that range from -1 (max gender disparity) to +1 (max gender equality) and total mean value equals to 0. These scores are determined starting from the relative frequency distributions of the seven items, appropriately ordering the categories from the worst to the best situation of gender equality.

The score, assigned to each category of each variable, is obtained through the difference between the sum of the relative frequencies that belong to the previous modalities minus the sum of the relative frequencies that belong to the following modalities. All scores (as well as their arithmetic mean) are assigned to migrants according to their given answers. The answers of the last three items were reversed to achieve the same direction of the others.

This creates a metric that presents a characteristic of undoubted interest: it reflects the criterion according to which the top (or tail) positions among the modalities of an ordinal variable are as rewarding (or penalizing), the more such positions are "exclusive" [52].

Table 1 illustrates the process of determining the scores relative to the modalities of answer to the first of the seven variables considered, that relating to the statement "it must be the man who economically supports the family". In this case, being in "strong agreement" means not having gender equality attitudes. The score is negative and equal to minus the sum of the relative frequencies of the subsequent modalities (-0.472).

Table 1. *Calculation of the scores corresponding to the answer modalities on the agreement with the affirmation "it must be the man who economically supports the family"*

Level of agreement	Absolute values	Relative frequences (f_i)	Scores (s_i)	Calculation formulas of scores
Strongly agree	2,082	0.528	-0,472	$s_1 = -f_2-f_3-f_4$
Agree	1,086	0.276	0,32	$s_2 = +f_1-f_3-f_4$
Disagree	415	0.105	0,713	$s_3 = +f_1+f_2-f_4$
Strongly disagree	357	0.091	0,99	$s_4 = +f_1+f_2+f_3$
I don't know	33		0,000	
Total	3,974	1.000		

Source: our elaboration on SCIF data, 2011-2012

Those who answer "I don't know" are excluded from the calculations and get a score of zero which is equal to the average. Respondents who declare agreement obtain a score equal to the relative frequency of the previous modality (0.528) minus the sum of the relative frequencies of the two subsequent modalities (-0.196). The score is therefore equal to +0.332. Those who replied that they strongly disagree with the statement obtained a score resulting from the sum of the relative frequencies of the three previous modalities. This is a very high score (0.909), close to the maximum value (+1), because it refers to an extremely small group of interviewees.

Once the scores that correspond to the modalities of each of the seven statements belonging to him/her have been introduced, each individual will be associated (in accordance with the modalities that distinguish him/her) a series of scores on gender equality attitudes whose average will to be taken as a synthetic measure of individual gender equality attitudes. It should also be noted that, since for each variable date the sum of the scores assigned to the entire population is always zero (by construction), the overall average of the synthetic scores will also be zero, both at the level of single statement and of the synthetic index [52].

To avoid compositional effects, we used the index of gender equality attitudes as dependent variable of three nested linear regression models in order to consider those individual characteristics and behaviours associated to gender attitudes. Table 2 presents the descriptive characteristics and behaviours of the sample considered in our analyses.

Among the target variables we consider two variables that concern the origin context (country of citizenship at birth and Municipality dimension in the country of origin), two variables related to the acculturation process (years since migration and having Italian citizenship), and three variables related to religiosity (importance of religion, observing fasts, and religious attendance). We also control for a number of

standard factors associated gender-related attitudes and behaviours in the literature: gender, age at interview, educational level, employment, marital status, number of children.

According to citizenship at birth, Moroccans are the largest group (38.4%), followed by that of Albanians (16.7%) and therefore by all the Muslim migrants originating from the former Yugoslavia (9.3%). Egyptians are 6% of the total and for this reason they are considered individually. The other nationalities of origin, as done for the former Yugoslavia, were aggregated using the criterion of geographical proximity. Persons with passports at birth from Pakistan and Bangladesh together represent 11.8% of the collective considered. Slightly lower is the weight of Tunisians and Algerians considered jointly (11%), while the importance of Senegalese and Burkinabe is less relevant (6.8%).

The 39.7% of Muslim migrants is women who on average are significantly younger (34.9 years old) and arrived in more recent years than the men counterpart. All Muslim migrants have on average an heterogenous educational level (23.3% up to primary, 37.4 lower secondary, 32.7 upper secondary and 6.5 tertiary education) and come from different places of origin according to the municipality dimension (more than 40% lived in middle and small cities, almost 33% in towns and the remaining 27% in villages and countryside). Only 7.8% acquired the Italian citizenship, with a higher percentage among men (9.5%) than among women (5.3%). The employed are 72% with significant gender differences: almost all men have paid work at interview (93.5%), while less than half of women have the same condition (39.2%).

Almost two thirds of the Muslim migrants are married (64.2%), with non-negligible differences in marital status by gender: in particular, only 13.4% of women is single at interview, while this percentage is more than double among men (29.1%). Interestingly, a quarter of Muslim migrants has three or more children (27.0%) and another quarter of them has two children (25.4%).

When considering individual religiosity, we analyse both the subjective religiosity and the religious communal integration [49]. The former is measured through the self-evaluation score of the importance of religion (in a range from 0 to 10) and the habit of fasting, as individual religious act. On average, both men and women give significant importance to religion (the mean scores are equal to 8.1 and 8.4 respectively) and almost three quarters of them observe fasts (72.7%). The religious communal integration is measured by looking at religious attendance. Interestingly, in this case migrants are divided among those who attend a place of worship (e.g., mosque) frequently (at least once a week, 31.9%), those who sometimes do it (monthly or yearly, 28.4%), and those who never do it (39.7%). In the latter group the percentage of women is significantly higher (46.0%) than the one of men (35.6%).

Table 2. *Sample characteristics. First generation Muslim adult migrants in Italy. Weighted absolute (abs. val.) and percentage values (%).*

Variables	Modalities	ab	%
Target variables:			
Citizenship at birth	Albania	66	1
	Former	37	9
	Morocco	1,5	3
	Tunisia and Algeria	43	1
	Egypt	23	6
	Senegal and Burkina	27	6
	Pakistan and	46	1
Municipality dimension	Town	1,3	3
in the country of origin	Middle or small city	1,5	4
	Village or	1,0	2
Years since migration in	*(mean value)*	3,9	1
Italian citizenship	Yes	30	7
	No	3,6	9
Importance of religion[(b)]	*(mean value)*	3,9	8
Observing fasts	No	1,0	2
	Yes	2,8	7
Religious attendance	At least once a week	1,2	3
	At least once in a	48	1
	At least once in a	64	1
	Never	1,5	3
Control variables:			
Gender	Men	2,3	6
	Women	1,5	3
Age at interview	*(mean value)*	3,9	3
Educational level	No Educ. or primary	92	2
	Lower secondary	1,4	3
	Upper secondary	1,3	3
	Tertiary	25	6
Italian citizenship	Yes	30	7
	No	3,6	9
Employed (paid job)	Yes	2,8	7
	No	1,1	2
Marital status	Single	90	2
	Married	2,5	6
	Divorced or	47	1
	Widow	43	1
Number of children	None	1,2	3
	One child	67	1
	Two children	1,0	2
	Three children	65	1
	Four and more	41	1
N		*3,9*	1

Notes: (a) Former Yugoslavia: Bosnia, Croazia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Kosovo; (b) Self-evaluation score of the importance of religion in a range from 0 to 10.

Source: our elaboration on SCIF data, 2011-2012.

4.Results

Moving the attention on gender equality attitudes and the context of origin (Table 3), the estimated synthetic index show, as we can expect, that migrants coming from Albania and from former Yugoslavia have the highest values (i.e. the highest gender equality among Muslims, 0.216 and 0.045 respectively), while Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria occupy a somehow middle ground position (-0.027 and -0.036 respectively), and Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh have the lowest values (i.e. the highest gender disparity, -0.105 and -0.137 respectively). Interestingly, Senegal and Burkina Faso assume a value (-0.049) closer to the ones observed for Northern African countries than

to the ones observed for the two South-Asian countries. Looking at municipality dimension, migrants coming from urban areas have an average positive synthetic index value (0.058) against a negative mean value of those coming from village or countryside (-0.074).

As signal of acculturation process, the average value of the synthetic indicator increases as the years since immigration increase (from -0.048 among those who arrived for less than 5 years before interview to 0.034 among those who arrived 10-14 years, respectively). Moreover, the average value of the index is also higher among migrants who have Italian citizenship (0.075) than among those who have not (-0.006).

The link between individual religiosity and gender equality attitudes also appears confirmed in this first analysis. The more important religion is evaluated, the lower the average value of the index that measures gender equality attitudes (from 0.170 in the case of vote below 6 to -0.065 in the case of maximum vote, respectively). Moreover, the more traditional and conservative attitudes are among the migrants who declared observing fasts (-0.045 against 0.120).

Concerning the religious communal integration, the average value of the synthetic index decreases as the frequency of religious attendance increases (from -0.111 among migrants who went to mosque at least once a week to 0.103 among migrants who never went there), signalling decreasing attitudes towards gender equality.

Among control variables, women hold more gender-egalitarian attitudes than men do (0.068 and -0.045 respectively). According to a sociological approach [53], gender roles for women have been altered and are much more flexible than the ones for men counterpart. Thus, women re-interpret their religious identity and family roles more strongly than men do, because of their strong motivation provided by the limitations of religious norms.

Not surprisingly, gender egalitarian attitudes and behaviours decrease with increasing age and increases with increasing level of education. Gender equality is observed more frequently among migrants who are employed than among those who are unemployed, among singles than among divorced and widowers. While it significantly decreases among migrants with three and more children.

The use of linear regression models allows us to verify the importance of the target variables avoiding compositional effects (Table 4). After controlling for gender and age at interview, the heterogeneities of gender egalitarian attitudes by country of citizenship at birth and by municipality dimension in the country of origin (M1) are statistically significant (see p-values). The same emerges when considering the statistical significance of years since migration and the acquisition of Italian citizenship (M2), as well as the importance of religion, observing fasts, and religious attendance (M3).

Also including the other control variables in the model (M4), target variables remain significant, although the magnitude of their coefficients partially reduces. One important exception is represented by the variable on “observing fasts” that results no more significant after controlling for the other characteristics and behaviours.

Table 3. *Index of gender equality attitudes by sample characteristics. First generation Muslim adult migrants in Italy. Mean values and standard errors (std. er.)*

Variables	Modalities	M	Std-
Target variables:			
Citisenship at birth	Albania	0	0.31
	Former Yugoslavia[(a)]	0	0.32
	Morocco	-	0.34
	Tunisia and Algeria	-	0.32
	Egypt	-	0.25
	Senegal and Burkina	-	0.30
	Pakistan and	-	0.28
Municipality dimension	Town	0	0.33
in the country of origin	Middle or small city	0	0.33
	Village or countryside	-	0.34
Years since migration	Less than 5	-	0.33
	5-9	0	0.33
	10-14	0	0.35
	15 and more	0	0.34
Italian citizenship	Yes	0	0.32
	No	-	0.34
Importance of religion[(b)]	Vote less than 6	0	0.34
	Vote 6 or 7	0	0.34
	Vote 8 or 9	0	0.33
	Vote 10	-	0.32
Observing fasts	Yes	-	0.33
	No	0	0.35
Religious attendance	At least once a week	-	0.30
	At least once in a	-	0.31
	At least once in a year	0	0.35
	Never	0	0.34
Control variables:			
Gender	Men	-	0.33
	Women	0	0.34
Age at interview	Less than 30 yrs. old	0	0.34
	Between 30 and 36	-	0.34
	Between 37 and 44	-	0.34
	45 and more yrs. old	-	0.33
Educational level	No Educ. or primary	-	0.30
	Lower secondary	-	0.33
	Upper secondary	0	0.35
	Tertiary	0	0.37
Employed (paid job)	Yes	0	0.34
	No	-	0.32
Marital status	Single	0	0.34
	Married	0	0.34
	Divorced or separated	-	0.34
	Widow	-	0.27
Number of children	None	0	0.35
	One child	0	0.31
	Two children	0	0.35
	Three children	-	0.32
	Four and more	-	0.30
Total		0	0.34

Notes: (a) Former Yugoslavia: Bosnia, Croazia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Kosovo; (b) Self-evaluation score of the importance of religion in a range from 0 to 10.

Source: our elaboration on SCIF data, 2011-2012.

Table 4. *Determinants of index of gender equality attitudes. First generation Muslim adult migrants in Italy. Linear regression models[(a) (b)]. Coefficients and p-values.*

Varriables	Modalities	Co	p-	C	p-
		M1		M4	
Citizenship at birth	Albania	0,2	**	0	**
(ref. Morocco)	Former	0,1	**	0	**
	Tunisia and Algeria	-		-	
	Egypt	-	**	-	**
	Senegal and Burkina	0,0		0	*
	Pakistan and	-	**	-	**
Municipality dimension	Middle or small city	-	**	-	**
in the country of origin (ref.	Village or	-	**	-	**
		M2			
Years since migration	*(discrete values)*	0,0	**	0	**
Years since migration squared	*(discrete values)*	-	**	-	**
Italian citizenship (ref. No)	Yes	0,0	**	0	**
		M3			
Importance of religion[(d)]	*(discrete values)*	-	**	-	**
Observing fasts (ref. No)	Yes	-	**	0	
Religious attendance	At least once in a	0,0		-	
(ref. At least once a week)	At least once in a	0,1	**	0	**
	Never	0,1	**	0	**

Notes: (a) control variables in M1 – M3 - gender and age; control variables in M4 – gender, age, education, employment, marital status, number of children; (b) Adj R-squared: M1 = 0.146; M2 = 0.082; M3 = 0.127; M4 = 0.240; (c) Former Yugoslavia: Bosnia, Croazia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Kosovo; (d) Self-evaluation score of the importance of religion in a range from 0 to 10.

*Legend: * p<0.05; **p< 0.01; ***p<0.001*

Source: our elaboration on SCIF data, 2011-2012.

More in details, Muslim migrants coming from Albania (b= 0.153) and former Yugoslavia (b= 0.057) have more egalitarian attitudes than Moroccans (reference category), while those coming from Egypt, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have more conservative ones (b= -0.067 and -0.084 respectively). The gradient on municipality dimension on gender egalitarian attitudes is less important than the one on country of origin, although equally significant: the coefficients of Muslim migrants who lived in medium and small-size cities (b= -0.043), and of those who lived in village or countryside (b= -0.108) are negative compared to those migrants who lived in urban areas. The longer is the time since migration in Italy (b=0.016), the more attitudes (even if at a decreasing rate) are pro gender equality. Having Italian citizenship (b=0.078) is positively associated with pro gender equality attitudes. All other characteristics being considered, the coefficient decreases as the importance of religion increases (b= -0.010), while it is significantly higher among those who have little or no religious attendance (b= 0.079 and 0.105 respectively).

5. Discussion

The major contribution of this paper is to describe the main factors at the origin and destination that influence Muslim migrants' gender roles in family related attitudes and behaviours. To do so, we consider three main specific aspects (the origin context, the acculturation process, and the religiosity) and six main research hypotheses to guide our analyses.

According to our hypothesis, results showed different levels of gender equality by origin country, even after accounting for compositional effects (H1). The "European" Islam, represented in the analyses trough the Albanian and former Yugoslavia migrant groups, seems to be a religion more open to secularity and Western values linked to modernization and gender equality [19]. On the other hand, the Egyptian migrants are different and there is still room among them for conservative and traditionalist gender roles [20]. The attitudes and behaviours of Muslim migrants coming from Pakistan and Bangladesh are confirmed: they are more linked than the other ethnic groups to patriarchal codes [23].

Our results also observed significant differences in their attitudes and behaviours among migrants coming from different municipality dimensions: there are higher gender-egalitarian behavioural levels among migrants coming from urban areas (H2). According to the literature [18, 25], this is the result of the different levels of cultural globalization. Thus, the differential cultural heritage seems to persist and to affect familial gender-roles even after migration in the destination country.

Also, the acculturation process has a positive role among first generation migrants in reaching more gender egalitarian attitudes and behaviours [27, 29]. The years since migration and the acquisition of Italian citizenship proxy the distance of migrants to the values and beliefs of the origin country that weaken the more the acculturation process occurs: results showed that longer residence and acquiring Italian citizenship have a positive effect on support for gender equality (H3-H4). In our analyses, factors of acculturation process remained significant, although their magnitude reduced after controlling for the migrants' level of religiosity. Thus, our results provide support both for acculturation and for secularization processes [44].

Last three variables consider the effects of individual religiosity and of religious communal integration on attitudes about gender equality. The direction of both effects indicates that on average the more religious migrants are, the more they oppose gender equality (H5). Both individual religiosity and religious communal integration exert a significant role even if at different levels. According to the literature [30], the coefficient of religious communal integration is substantially larger and more strongly significant than that of individual religiosity (H6).

6. Conclusion

In this article, we have originally described to what extent migration and secularization undermined the traditional views of Islamic complementary gender roles and determined various forms of gender-related attitudes among migrants coming in Italy from diverse parts of the Islam context. This issue supports the necessity to consider both religion and origin country in the analyses and not to assume that belonging to specific religion, such as Islam, is associated with unique behaviours or attitudes. As

Röder [44] highlights, gender traditionalism is not synonymous with Muslim affiliation.

Even if relevant individual characteristics and behaviours are taken into account in the analyses, immigrants from a gender-egalitarian country hold attitudes that are more egalitarian. Origin country globalization and modernization have increased women's educational and social opportunities and eased their entry into paid employment, a role traditionally reserved for men. Empirical results suggest that the influence of the country of origin weakens the more the acculturation process occurs: Muslim migrants who live since longer time in Italy or acquired Italian citizenship tend to assume more egalitarian attitudes than the others. Our findings also suggest that religious Muslims hold less gender egalitarian attitudes than more secular individuals. However, according to the literature, the factual explanatory power of migrants' religiosity lags far behind its prominence in public debates: religious commitment is just one among several factors and not even a particularly important one.

However, our analyses suffer various limits. It has to be emphasized that our findings cannot be generalized to the whole Muslim population living in Italy. Data allowed us to consider only specific ethnic groups of firstgeneration migrants. The empirical evidence on the heterogeneities within Muslim residents in Italy may be even larger when considering also other minorities (such as migrants coming from the Middle East or the Persian Gulf). As well, it has not been possible for the characteristics of the sample size to analyse second generation migrants and the differences across migratory generation. This is mostly due to the relatively young age of descendants of immigrants who have arrived massively in Italy only during the past three decades, with a still consequent lack of exhaustive data at adult ages.

Second the sample size does not allow us to perform separate analyses by gender, but only to control the compositional effect of this important characteristic of Muslim migrants. According to the literature, our results show that women hold more gender-egalitarian roles in family related attitudes and behaviours [47]. However, further analyses are needed to find empirical evidence on acculturation process and on religiosity's effects by gender. In the literature, adult migrant women, in particular those migrated for economic reasons, find more opportunities in the destination society with reduced familiar constraints and limitations [30, 36, 54]. Moreover, Muslim migrant women should acculturate more rapidly than men acquiring more gender-egalitarian behavioural patterns according to the length of stay in the destination society. Also, the association between (individual and communal) religiosity and gender equality in family related attitudes and behaviours differs between men and women [36]. Van Klingeren and Spierings [49] found that religious communal integration has the clearest negative association with gender equality attitudes among women, whereas individual religiosity has such an association among men. The religious attendance is linked to follow religious norms and traditions more for women than for men: the mosque attendance represents more a matter of religiosity for women and more a social event for men [55].

Third, we empirically analyzed gender related attitudes and behaviours by concentrating on family issues and by computing a specific synthetic indicator. Different results may emerge when using different methodological strategies (e.g., principal component analysis) or different research fields (women education, emancipation, employment, active participation).

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Migrant Families and Religious Belonging
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"Doing Family" and Religious Belonging of Immigrants. Case Studies in South Italy

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Abstract. This contribution is focused on the immigrant's re-shaping identity in the integration process through the phenomena of the "doing family" and religious belonging. It provides both theoretical analysis and empirical evidence of relationships between immigrants, the role of religion as a significant dimension of contemporary family migration and integration processes. What happens when people of diverse cultures, values, religion live together? Immigrants who "arrive" continue their life in a place where they do not passively participate over time but become actors. Pressed by the hegemonic culture of the host society, immigrants do not cease to practice their religious and origin cultural expressions. They do not renounce to constitute a family in a foreign contest in which they have to adapt, assimilate lifestyles, observe local laws. Considering the impact of religion and cultural origin values on public and private expression of differences, it is important to consider their role in the integration process. These dynamics have been analyzed in a research study on immigrants' integration process in Palermo. The analysis, focused on super-conformism and ethnic persistence of the most numerous immigrant communities in the context of analysis (Islamic *Ummah* and the Indian *Dharma)* delineated the integration declinations through syncretism and cultural contagions. Immigrants, participate in the construction of a local model of integration in which immigrants, free to express their religious and cultural differences, tend to reduce their perception of minority.

Keywords. family, religion, integration

1. Introduction

There has been an extraordinary surge in international migration in recent years. The 21st century will be the century of migrants. According to the International Organization on Migration [28] data at the end of the century there will be more regional and international migrants than ever recorded in history. Today there are about 1 billion migrants. Data highlights a trend in which every decade the percentage of migrants, as a share of the native population, continues to grow. In the next 25 years, the rate of migration is expected to be higher than in the last 25 years. This poses a range of challenges in the governance of multicultural societies and in particular in integration policies inspired by the cultural model of multiculturalism. The latter has a social value on the political localisms that must organize and sometimes mediate the encounter between opposing

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instances of insiders and outsiders. Multiculturalism concerns "The recognition of group differences in the public sphere of laws, democratic discourses and the terms of shared citizenship and identity" [1].

Within this complex scenario, Europe has become the first destination in the world in terms of migrants' arrivals. In a more patent way than ever, newcomers are obliging Europe to confront with the multi-faceted religious landscape of migrants' sending countries. The attempts to purify the public gender behaviors and the religion from Western influence in Nigeria (Boko Haram), the violent orthodoxy of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the increasing intolerance towards Christians in Egypt or the upsurging of religious nationalism in India are now irrupting in European society, through the arrival of people claiming protection or, at times, accused of corrupting "our" –European– religious identity, or even of importing the virus of religious intolerance and religious radicalism to Europe [2]. European public opinion looks at current migration as something from which "to defend itself," and is worried about not only the economic, but also the cultural impact of incoming flows, particularly when they are composed of migrants with a religious belonging different from that prevailing in host societies.

The topic of the immigrants' meanings of religiosity and religious belonging in the integration processes is re-proposed in the scientific debate after a long phase between the 19th and 20th centuries in which from America to Europe it was not thought or desired that the cultural and **"**ethnic**"** diversity of immigrants could take root in host societies. However, in the creeping assimilative ideology of integration policies there was an illusion that social institutions (schools, factories) would have erased the identities of origin and traditional residues. The problem that has turned out, especially in the most marginal social strata, is that assimilationism has limited the breathing space of immigrants living in conditions exposed to vulnerability, precariousness, insecurity. It has pushed them to live separated lives by differences, (dis)integrated into a daily life whose projects are non-existent, time is immutable, destiny inevitable [3]. In the political and intellectual *mainstream*, ethnic differences were confined to the private sphere and implicitly considered to be being overcome. In the political and intellectual *mainstream*, ethnic differences were confined to the private sphere and implicitly considered to be being overcome.

For a considerable number of immigrants, not only ethnicity but also religion is one of the pillars on which they build their subjective and collective identity as immigrants. [4]. According to Ambrosini [5] the analyses on the economic motivations of migration have neglected the cultural contexts in which migration choices are decided and pursued. In cultural contexts, they must be remembered: the *spiritual resources* that religions offer at the time of the decision to migrate, or the psychological effects that generate on the migrant the tribal propitiatory rites that strengthen the bond with the community, protect against adversity, act as a deterrent for those who do not repay the debt to the community that financed the emigration project; the *material resources offered* by religious institutions (centers of worship, charitable organizations) that assist and support in the difficulties of first settlement; the *social resources* of the networks of relationships established according to religious belonging or ethnic affiliations, that protect and reconstitute cultural identity, but above all facilitate insertion into the new context. In this sense, religious adherence provides migrants to translate into reality the hopes of a better life, thanks to the resources that religion has provided them.

Migration flows change the social configurations of host societies. Immigrants push local government policies to reduce socio-cultural obstacles to the development of integration processes. They force to review cultural and religious coordinates of the local

mainstream (that is, of cultural hegemony) due to the growth of an unprecedented religious pluralism. Then, what happens when people of different cultures, values, religion live together?

Immigrants who "arrive" continue their life in a place where they do not passively participate over time but become actors. For them religion and family are the symbolic identity references, both subjective and collective, of belonging and recognition that satisfy spiritual, material, and affective instances. Pressed by the hegemonic culture of the host society, immigrants do not cease to practice their religious and origin cultural expressions and they do not renounce to constitute a family. Considering the impact of religion and origin cultural values on public and private expression of differences, it is important to consider their role in the integration process. Specific forms of multiculturalism are determined, through religious syncretism, new models of contemporary family migration, genesis of transcultural, interreligious, and mixed families, reconfiguration of religious practices in the identity system of immigrants, especially when it is linked to migration.

Immigrant families continue to be the essence of belonging to a place. The sense of belonging binds together people separated by space but united by feelings. In a foreign land they experience the laceration of the absence, and the discontinuity of care. They fight for the reunion of their own family that has remained in their homeland. New families are made up or transnational ones are managed, at the cost of sacrifices and economic and affective deprivations. Between hopes and expectations of integration, new visions and behaviors in everyday life are introjected in immigrants, in the effort of "doing" and "being" family.

Religion is the most solid root of a culture and a tradition that, at least at the beginning of their integration path, they protect with determination. If immigration separates individuals, and sometimes their families, from relatives and friends, religion intervenes to reconnect migrants with what they have left in the country of origin. Separated by many social and moral anchors of their previous life, many immigrants cling to religion as an element of continuity who survives to the transfer to an alien context. Religion helps facing the impact with new cultures and new behaviors. Religious culture and its symbols are goods that all migrants carry with them and that, often, emphasize in the host country. The history of migration processes teaches that religious communities can perform very different social functions and sometimes with opposite outcome. Sometimes they constitute the symbolic walls of *gated communities* that paradoxically slow down the paths of integration; closed communities, impermeable to the outside, self-centering, nourish a static identity. Always equal to itself, alien if not antagonistic to the surrounding society. So not only as a protection but also as isolation from the social context. When, on the other hand, they open up to the outside and establish positive relations with the corresponding indigenous realities, religious communities can also be a bridge, an important driving factor in integration paths. Struggling with serious disadvantages, immigrants seek in religious communities an answer to the desire to remain connected with the past, but also to project themselves into the future. Integrate but do not get lost, through adaptation they acquire new skills and mental habits. They do not renounce their cultural identity. They learn to confront with a secularized society but continue to find a spiritual refuge in their own religious community.

These dynamics have been analyzed in a study on immigrants' integration process in Palermo. The paper is focused on the sociological understanding of the factors that can influence public and private family and religious practices in host countries. It reports on

the strategies of intergenerational transmission of religious values in immigrant families. Particular attention was paid to changing gender roles and family hierarchical relationships, which are guided and inspired by religious values, in the land of origin. Data show how immigrant integrations oscillates between attitudes of rejection of the "new culture" and of defense of that of origin, through practices whose expression changes in the public and private familiar sphere. The analysis of the immigrant communities delineates the integration declinations also through syncretism and cultural contagions in the patterns of the *Islamic Ummah* and *the Indian Dharma.*

The debate on the role of the religious dimension in the cultural identity processes of the societies is complicated by the immigration flows and the effects of integration policies. To enhance both scientific and political debate about religious based identities, affecting both the family migration sphere and the development of integration processes, we present empirical evidence of the relations between immigrant families and religious belongings. This paper presents the main results from research carried out in Palermo, a city of South Italy where immigrants' integration process has effects on identities of ethnic communities who are self-perceived and are perceived by natives as "different" for language, religion, culture. The analysis of the research data is focused on a case study about immigrants' integration in which immigrants tend to assimilate easier and tend to lean towards faster integration when there are wide spaces in the expression of religious and cultural differences of origin. The case study presented shows this.

2. Religion, integration: defining the concepts

In sociology there is no univocal definition of religion. This discipline has used the theoretical and empirical tools to analyze the phenomenology. The effort was to approach the religious phenomenon to understand it its value-based nature and to guide subjective and collective behavior. Which certainly implies a contextualization. Religion extends to all the symbolic spheres of social life, the latter sensitive to the historical pressures of transformation of structures and adaptation to new social phenomena. The religious phenomenon is characterized to trace the references of the memory and destiny of homogeneous communities from the point of view of faith. Through the religious phenomenon, the individual projects himself out of his own sphere, sacralizing a social order and the interests of a group, a social organization, a social order, which is not necessarily the one in which he is born [6].

The religious phenomenon presupposes greater freedom of choice of the identity characteristics of ethnicity or nationality. The latter, cumulative aggregative forms of history and culture, condition belonging and recognition, that is, the constitutive elements of identity. But they control the values for social guidance. In general, the individual through religion elevates the human phenomenon to divine. This happens in a twofold path: a) through the sacralization of the community, in its relationship with the outside world; b) through its spiritualization. This path of elevation, when implemented with orthodoxy, feeds in the protagonists' feelings of social distance. Think of the case of Jehovah's Witnesses, or Muslims, respectively in their health practices or in those constitutive of family units.

In the scientific literature, the role of religion in migration processes has been associated with the functions of refuge, respect, and resources [7]. According to Ambrosini [5] these functions play a fundamental role in the cultural contexts in which migration choices are decided and pursued. Many scholars seem to converge on the idea

that religion is a vital component in collective experiences of migrants [8], from the decision to leave to the support in settlement process. According to these scholars, the role of religion and religious practices of migrants in international migration processes have been overlooked. It is a set of references, practices, aids, which sanction the pervasive role of religion and related institutions in the phases of the processes, from the decision of departure to its preparation, travel, arrival, settlement, development of transnational links. Subsequently, in the course of integration processes, religious institutions become cornerstones of the defense of cultural heritage and the re-elaboration of identity.

The recovery of the religious issue can be explained as an effect of changes in the common sense. This sometimes happens in anxious or reactive forms to terrorist events, supposed fears of invasions, fear of the loss of Western religious roots and the loosening of the identity values of the host societies. In the latter, religious difference is proof of the unsurpassed diversity of immigrant populations, and especially Islamic ones [9]. Attributing the recovery of the religious issue to migratory dynamics, however, is only one of the most general aspects on which this scientific interest is reconstituted.

Religion guides the migrant in the disorder of the migratory experience. In fact, although they have chosen more or less voluntarily to migrate, he lives an alienating, lacerating, painful experience. They leave his affective references at home, the system of social relations useful to orient himself in time and space. They struggle, in a foreign land, to solve the problems of self-identification and social placement. Often, they do not know the language and the codified structure of norms and values of the host society. In the effort to reconstruct their own vital map, they seek in religion the "theological" answers on the profound questions of life, on the reason for suffering, on the ways of "making it".

Places of worship are also places of socialization that offer educational activities, welfare services and mutual exchange of information. If faith preserves group identity, religious affiliation offers internal cohesion and social status to immigrants in the face of hostility and prejudice they encounter in the external environment [10]. In the separation from many aspects of his previous life, the migrant clings to religion as an element of continuity to make himself survive, in temporal and spatial continuity, from the context left to the alien one. «Struggling with heavy disadvantages to save something of the old ways of life, immigrants direct the entire weight of their desire to remain connected with their past towards faith» [11]. Ultimately, the migrant finds in religion both a spiritual and identarian refuge through the role of «construction of identity, in the production of meanings and the formation of values» [12].

In research concerning immigration, criticism of the use of concepts alternates with programmatic definitions for new analysis models. According to Alba and Nee (1997), [13], integration and assimilation are terms often used synonymously. Integration ideally refers to a state of social life considered desirable and such as to make it possible for individuals to pursue a "good" or "civilized" life. In this conception, the term is associated with others such as democracy, social cohesion, justice, equality, as if to amplify its reference to what a society should be. Defining integration is complicated. It does not mean to circumscribe the semantic field, but to give it a political intention and a social value. Integration is the daily experience of meeting between different entities. It is a process that should ideally lead to an important level of social cohesion and reciprocity. About integration as path, scholars [14] seem to agree in determining the degree of integration of immigrants. The focus should be placed on the importance of subjective and institutional variables (work, legal status, local immigration policies, etc.).

Penninx and Martiniello [15] define integration as *the process of becoming an accepted part of society*. In this definition the outcome is desired, but not certain. In immigration research, the use of the term integration is alternated with programmatic definitions for new analysis. For example, integration and assimilation are terms often used interchangeably.

The complex model of Portes and DeWind [16] describes the distinct roles played by religions in the immigrant' integration processes. In this model religion is a point of support for the processes of selective acculturation [17]. Moreover, «religion plays a crucial role in the construction of identity, in the reproduction of meanings and in the formation of values*»* (Levitt 2003:251) [19] This function is particularly important in the alienating experience of the migrant, far from the original context in which everything was familiar, usual, ordered, predictable tackles pressing existential and identity questions. If immigration separates men from their contest of origin, religion allows their reunion, through religious services, celebrations and, anniversaries. Separated from many aspects of previous life, immigrants often cling to religion as an element of continuity and connection to their own world.

3. Research, Methodology and Theoretical frame

The research illustrated in this section aims to analyse the role of religion and culture of origin in the construction of the sense of belonging through the phenomenon of "doing family" in the local community, in which the independent variable is the degree of freedom enjoyed by immigrants in the public expression of ethnic differences. This case study integrates qualitative data and ethnographic observation. The approach adapted to develop the research pattern is the Grounded Theory of Glaser and Strauss [20]. The non-participant observation and statistical data used complete the description of the investigated scenarios. The data collection was carried out in 2016/18, through 60 interviews to immigrants residing in Palermo, grouped by age, gender, and ethnicity. The ages of respondent's range between 20 and 60 years. All Maghrebian immigrants interviewed are Muslims, as are the members of the Bangladeshi community. Those from Eastern Europe are all Orthodox Christian. The sub-Saharans ethnic groups belong to Evangelist, Catholic, and Muslim cults. The Tamil interviewed are evenly distributed between the Hindu and Catholic faiths. Using a semi-structured format, the interviews investigated: immigration paths; faith and religious values; public and private daily practices; cultural and religious practices. The analysis examined moreover the experiences of subjective identity in the spheres of religion. Each of these areas, was analysed through content analysis. In the data analysis, a multi-theoretical framework was used to broaden the perspectives of understanding the phenomena. Among these the theory of Status passage, in which society is considered as a network of dynamic and changing relationships, pushing to reflect on the new representations and configurations in which the social decomposes and recomposes. In the following analysis, we report extracts of the interviews we consider most relevant to the description and understanding of the phenomena investigated. The theoretical perspective of the "differential adaptation" has qualitatively outlined the analysis of the innovation/ethnic-persistence dialectics [21].

The refer to ethnicity rather than nationality was due to the sociological relevance of the factors that constitute and distinguish ethnic groups: a name, myths of descendancy, a shared history, a shared culture, a sense of solidarity among the members, and the reference to a territory, even if it is different from that in which you live [22]. These

factors define the differences among individuals of the research target population. The research excluded native Palermitans, choosing to focus on the perception of difference by immigrants. That is, on those who express their identity through distinctive factors in a foreign world. Background research gave shape to the hypothesis that to greater freedom enjoyed by immigrants in the expression of public differences would correspond the reduction in their being perceived as a cultural minority in multicultural contexts where adaptation is declined through syncretism, cultural contagions, and assimilation.

4. The research scenario

Palermo is one of the largest cities in South Italy. It is a city with a strong multi-ethnic historical, architectural, and religious identity. Today Palermo is one of the main landing and reception points of immigrants rescued through humanitarian missions in the Mediterranean Sea. The latest statistics by the National Institute of Statistic reported a total population of 647.422 residents in the Municipality of Palermo; 25,552 are foreigners. They represent about the 4% of the resident population, which is about half of the average Italian value, with a demographic growing annual trend of 2%. Palermo can be thought of as a multi-ethnic puzzle containing at least 128 different ethnic groups, if one considers, for example, that the Mauritian community in Palermo is comprised of 4 different ethnic groups (Hindu, Tamil, Telegu, and Marahati). The data reveal that in the foreign population residing in Palermo the female component prevails slightly, higher among foreigners from Central-Eastern Europe, Central and South America and East Africa. The male component, on the other hand, is more different among foreigners from the countries of Central south Asia, West Africa, and North Africa. The fertility rate is 2.3. The contribution to the city birth rate of foreign births is 19%. The average age of mothers at first birth is 28.4. In the last 5 years the fertility rate has decreased and the age of the first birth has increased. These data are close to those of the native population where the fertility rate is 1.4 and the age of mothers is 31 years. In general, the employment sector in which immigrants from Southeast Asian countries and Eastern Europe find their place in Palermo is the private care (domestic workers and caregivers). Commerce for those coming from the countries of the Maghreb. The Chinese mainly occupies the restaurant sector. For many years, the historical centre of the city was the primary residential neighbourhood of immigrants. Today, immigrants are distributed throughout the city, except in the wealthiest neighbourhoods, although distributed by community in some areas, according to the criteria of the cost of rents, the contiguity to places of worship and work, and the greater concentration of the community of origin.

5. Religious factors and familiar strategies in the choice of destination

The interviewees explain why immigrants chose Palermo and Italy as their destination. The interviewees reveal that these places have a strong appeal for some categories of immigrants. In many cases, Italy and Palermo are chosen because there is already a relative or an acquaintance who lives there, which can facilitate reception and integration. The origin religious factor is another of the reasons for choosing Palermo and Italy, especially for Catholic immigrants, who do not seem to face the differences in religious values related to lifestyle.

> I have been in Italy for over 15 years. I immediately came to live in Palermo. My sister was already living here, and so I decided to come and to find a job in Italy. I chose Italy because it is the seat of the Vatican and of the Catholic Church. [Vietnamese woman, 37 y. old].

Interviews indicate that for immigrants from Indian continent, therefore prevalently Hindu, their acculturation process is retained by differentiation of certain characteristics of the Western culture, such as: individualism, stress, or the lack of respect for the environment. Among these ethnic groups, Tamil and Sinhalese escaped from war and inter-ethnic conflicts. It is inevitable that the contact between the two hostile ethnic groups in their country of origin is different in the host city. They have no certainty of the final purpose of their journey, living with nostalgia and fear the return because it would mean going back to what they escaped from. This consciously transitory condition is only ideal because they know that they cannot return to their country of origin, at least until a solution to the conflict is reached. This constraint, on the one hand, has accelerated the integration process; on the other hand, it has generated feelings of strong attachment to one's own land and to traditions even in a foreign land.

As regards the decisions to migrate, the interviews did not exclusively lead back to subjective initiatives, but family strategies for maximizing income and increase in welfare opportunities for the entire family unit. These strategies usually coincide with the paths of upward social mobility, according to the models of the places of destination. Sometimes these strategies are in open contradiction with the religious values and the family hierarchy of the origin country. In these cases, it happens that the professional and family role of immigrant ethnic groups, traditionally linked to the restrictions of the roles of women, oscillates between persistence and innovation. As in the case of the extra-domestic work of Muslim women.

At the same time, the man reorganizes his social and family role also in the domestic context, both in work that he shares with his partner, either with limitations in terms of his own power or authority, tending to a greater symmetry with the partner. These role changes in the private sphere are identity bifurcations in the biographical path of individuals, which renegotiate with themselves and their own cultural world the fidelity values and the cost of identity treason.

> Since I have been in Palermo, the life I have with my wife has changed. She works out of home to earn more. Maybe we were westernized. In fact, I do not feel the property owner. Now there are two. [Tunisian man, Muslim, 44 y. old].

6. The cultural implications of the receiving society in immigrant families.

In the research the presence of minors, and even more so of adolescent cohorts, influences, by modifying them, the intra-family balances. The knowledge of the Italian language of immigrants is one of the main factors of integration that coagulates the difficulties of adaptation to a social and economic reality on which immigrants build their immigrant project. Knowing and expressing oneself correctly in the language of the host society means accrediting oneself in the cultural *mainstream* of social relations in which a position is sought. It means eliminating the sociolinguistic discrimination of the natives who in order to establish an effective understanding, use the verbs conjugating

them in the infinitive or recall the meaning through gestures. In the economic sphere it means increasing reliability and credibility.

In the case of some ethnic groups such as Filipinos and others of Southeast Asia, the maintenance of the origin's language is constant. Sometimes, even the refusal to speak Italian at home should not be considered as a refusal of integration, but as an essential requirement, to maintain family relationships and conduct family practices "with the same language as always".

These practices of ethnic persistence and cultural protection of origins are accompanied by attitudes and behaviors of remarkable integration, choosing to speak fluently in Italian, especially if among the family members there are minors, or adolescents.

It is above all through the knowledge and expression of the language of the natives that young people represent the driving family factor in the paths of integration. They are the first familiar linguistic-cultural mediators. They mediate between two cultural universes often very different from each other. They learn the language of the natives earlier, better, and faster than their parents, thanks to daily interaction with peers.

If children have more linguistic and formative resources than their parents, embarrassment is generated compared to the incapacities of the adults, weakening the authoritarian and pedagogical role. In the migration process the family unit is at risk. The risks are of self-exclusion of parents from the pedagogical guiding role. There is a real risk that the hierarchical potential of family power that the cultural tradition of origin entrusts above all to the male head of the family will be reduced. The latter faces these crises through renegotiations of its subjective and collective identity through strategies of adaptation and maximization of the emigration project. These strategies usually coincide with the paths of upward social mobility, according to the models of the places of destination. Sometimes such strategies are in open contradiction with the values and family hierarchies of the country of origin. In these cases, the professional and family roles of immigrants act in a field in which persistence and adaptation are intertwined making their emigration project more effective. This project plays the material and symbolic characteristics of a real investment.

The fear of (reciprocal) diversity between immigrants and natives has been confused in the daily life of the presences, occupying the interstices of professional, educational, and religious relations, acquiring greater visibility as neighbors, parents of their children's schoolmates who accompany and pick up their children every day when they leave school, participate in school or sports activities. On these occasions they entertain and socialize with the natives. We start to say hello, we participate in the same group chats. They exchange information and small utilities or services with each other. Frequenters of the same urban and social spaces, their extraneousness previously unusual, becomes daily, routine, predictable and risk-free. Entry into these networks of proximity elevates immigrants to legitimate components of the social environment of reference.

> My wife, who decided to be a housewife is very expansive and has many friendships with the mothers of the boys who do school with my children, and with them every now and then she goes out in the afternoon. [Mauritian man, hinduist, 50 y. old].

7. Emotive compensatory emotional trap of immigrant's families

Moving to a new country can be an arduous experience for anyone. The family shares and divides the stress of change equally among the members. The migration experience is lived differently among family members of different ages. Children live the immigration experience differently than their parents, especially if children are not involved in the discussion of immigrating to a new country. They are brought to an unfamiliar environment with little preparation. Children may feel powerless on a journey they did not even want to take. Newcomer children often struggle with feelings of loneliness as they miss their friends and extended family back home and may feel pressured to juggle traditional values and customs of parents with the local practices of their peers.

The presence of second-generation immigrants born in Palermo has a significant effect on the change of parents and families to which they belong, according to the model of the *downword assimilation*. Younger cohorts of immigrants are the main actors in the processes of adaptation and assimilation. They, through relationships with native peers, in classrooms and places of socialization, experience change in practices between the sexes, clothing, leisure time and food. From participation in the public dimension, they introject innovative roles and behaviors with respect to the cultural and religious values of origin that inevitably drag into the private family dimension. Sometimes it conflicts with intra-family resistance to contagions or emulations of the daily practices of the host society.

If young minors and adolescents reveal themselves as stimulating subjects in the processes of assimilation and adaptation, the analysis reveals that young immigrants experience an ambivalent identity condition. In comparison with their roots, they feel "squeezed between two worlds" [23; 24], oscillating between them. Adhering to both the cultural models of origin and those of the host society, they run the risk of non-recognition in either context, remaining prisoners of the "double absence". The changes in the family dynamics in question are not linear or coherent with respect to the search for a balance between the two cultural and value contexts. In practice, one can be accompanied by a nostalgic idealization of the country of origin, often supported by parents not satisfied of migratory experience. Or on the contrary, by doubts and denial of the cultural and family models of origin country through a strong push towards assimilation.

The problems that families initially face concern the satisfaction of basic needs: a job, a home adapted to family needs, effective communication with the local context through a language that is sometimes not known. These issues are addressed and managed by adults who bear the emotional burden of the migration experience as a whole. with the perspective of compensating for suffering and healing trauma, as evidenced by the research data. Sadness over separation from grandparents and friends, anxiety over uprooting caused by moving, and frustration over learning a new language, were among the challenges the parents identified.

> When we decided to leave, I did not imagine that my children would become sad, who would have suffered the lack of their grandparents. They missed their friends. Now I want their sufferings to be repaid with a better life. I want to give them everything I have not had in my life. [Bengalese man, 45 y. old].

The priority in the solution of basic needs, in the first phase of emigration projects, puts in the background the children's settlement issues as well. It is only in the later stages that all members of the family find a wider satisfaction. Socialization and adaptation of children to the new context, guaranteed by attendance at school, is further driven by participation in sports clubs and cultural projects of the belonging's community that allow children to interact with the larger community and improve their social interactions. If the path of integration, for younger cohorts, starts at school, it is complicated by the fact that, especially the second generations of immigrants, they wish to recover the essential components of their identity.

In these scenarios, religious affiliations also acquire a renewed strength and a role of legitimization of individual and family behaviors that if amplified in fundamentalisms, can be transformed into identity revenge on the hegemonic presences on the same territory. The amount of immigrant parents who give birth to their children in the places of origin is significant, to reduce the risk (or feeling) of loss of identity. Almost always perched within their own community and often within the territorial boundaries of the neighborhood of first settlement, they perceive and amplify the hostility that surrounds them. Frightened by the failures of so many of their compatriots and without hope for the future, they tend to exercise stringent control over their children. Worried that the latter emulate the immoral behavior of their Italian peers, and especially of their Italian peers, they limit their relationship life through prohibitions and impositions, exacerbating family control to the limit of the semi-imprisonment of female daughters.

8. The selective adaptation of immigrant's families

The sharing of spaces between people who at other times would not have had any contact with each other, has partly modified the forms of social relationship, which have reverberated in other city spaces where subjectivity is expressed: from work to the consumption of free time. But especially at school. Interviews reveal that adaptation proceeds selectively among immigrants, when choosing to grow their children in better areas, also bearing a higher cost of rent, and make the children feel more integrated and good citizen. Women's public roles change to suit those of new residentiality.

> I care about the environment where to bring up my children. I decided to pay a monthly rent of 600 euros because I am sure that the external environment of the area in which we live is more appropriate for my children so that they can feel integrated and above all good Palermitans. [Mauritian man, Hindu, 50 y. old].

> I have Palermitans friends because they are open people, especially those of the popular neighborhoods. For an immigrant it is a beautiful thing to have a Palermitan friend. On the other hand, the Palermitans of the higher social classes, such as those who live in the most elegant neighborhoods, are more closed and more reluctant to have contact with immigrants. Unfortunately, even here in Palermo there is the division into social classes. [Mauritian man, 38 y. old].

Belonging to the same faith does not seem to be an integration factor among Muslim immigrants of different ethnicity. The attendance of the mosques of Islamic devotees is divided by ethnicity. The "Grande Moschea" is attended exclusively by North Africans, while Muslim immigrants who come from sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia prefer

other mosques, all located within the Historical Town. The same division happens for other religions: Orthodox, Hindu, Pentecostal, etcetera. North African immigrants are Muslims, Africans, Asians, even of different ethnicities who speak different languages and dialects. About the ethnic fragmentation of worship places, the most plausible explanation is that being often cramped places, these are unable to accommodate all the faithful who in fact are divided according to the proximity factor of identity and housing. The difference and the social distance that immigrants articulate in reference to religious practices and frequency, generate a state of disintegration among immigrants, not strictly religious, that accentuates the "ethnic" criterion as a "discriminative" social category to establish new identities on which to base the social order.

9. Faith and Religious values. Re-Shaping Identity

Religion and values of origin constitute strong elements of guidance to action. Such behaviors (both the prohibited and permitted) do not appear to be factors impeding integration. In fact, they are actual spiritual and emotional supports that help immigrants to compensate the cultural stress of uprooting. The analyzed data confirm the value of religion for immigrants: *a)* as a medium to transmit values and cultural elements; *b)* as a spiritual, material, and social resource, that intervenes at various stages of the migration process, as shown by Ambrosini [5]. The analyzed data showed that for some categories of immigrants the universe of values coincides with that of the religious sphere. There is an overlap in these dimensions, especially in the older cohorts of men and women of North African and Southeast Asian Muslims. Moral values related to good and evil continue to run parallel to what is permitted or forbidden by their faith, especially in the private sphere. Religious prohibitions are expressions of ethnic values onto which difference is radicalized. The clothing of Western women is judged by such immigrants as proof of the sexual objectification of women and the devaluation of their moral integrity.

> In Palermo, women are too free, they dress uncovered and are more social than men: for example, they kiss to say goodbye. I do not accept that my wife goes to work alone, or that she behaves and dresses like the Italian women. My daughter will be free to choose whom to marry, but the important thing is that he is a man who works, honest, and Muslim Bangladeshi. [Muslim man, married, 40 y. old].

Religion as an identity refuge and protective shield against the cultural contagions of the host country, the elevation to sacred of the rules of behavior in public, imply a regression in the field of women's rights and condition, often interpreted as an opposition to the Western model of life. Data also shows that younger cohorts, more educated, and more recently come to reside in Palermo, exhibit a critical attitude towards traditional values, regarding behavior in both the public and private spheres. This includes the cases of premarital sex, abortion, or homosexuality.

> Although my religion would lead me to express another kind of thought, I believe that we are all modern now. So, I consider prohibition of sex before marriage to be an outdated concept. About homosexuality: I have nothing against homosexuals. [Ghanaian man, Muslim, 25 y. old].

In these cases, an elevated level of education seems to activate in people a critical reflection of the complex relationship between daily reality and the secularization of values. In our opinion, cultural adaptation is the deciding factor in the emotional changes among these individuals which have been exposed to confusion and disorder during a life that has lost its linearity, from country of origin to country of arrival. These alterations require an adaptation process forged through the autonomy of choices.

10. The Islamic *Ummah*. Being *Dharma*

The dynamic nature of culture and values, and their interweaving, reproduces and finds out points of contact with the social reality faced for the first time. Culture and religious values guide individuals in shaping a sense of belonging to the community. The comparative focus on the Islamic *Umma* and Hindu *Dharma* reveals how religion intervenes in assimilation processes weaving significant interactions with the host community, to the point that minorities reduce the self-perception of the minority. As we shall see, Islam and Hinduism are not considered *strictu sensu* religions. Both are considered by the faithful to be a stile of life in relationship with the "creation". Religious belonging is concretized in respect for norms, values, and rules of life as elevation to divine of earthly existence. If Islam and Hinduism are considered by the faithful as not religions but lifestyle, a way of being and interpreting one's life, it seems evident that in these cases religion is constituted in individuals as a factor of irreducible difference. Being and declaring oneself Islamic or Hinduist is not comparable to the spiritual dimensions that can unite other communities in which religion is only one of the dimensions that creates belonging. Rather, it is worth circumscribing an identity dimension that paradoxically is strengthened in religion.

The term Islam derives from three-letter Arabic which generates words with interrelated meanings, including "surrender", "submission", "commitment" and "peace". Beyond belief in specific doctrines and performance of important ritual acts. For Muslims men and women are the same but being equal does not mean being the same. According to the sacred scriptures Allah explains how, regardless of the gender of the person who does a good action, their reward is the same.

The relationship between Islam and the concept of gender equality (or more precisely the woman condition) is currently intended as problematic, anchored to an archaic but nevertheless evolving condition. According to a common Western perspective, Islamic countries are characterized by patriarchal gender norms, to the point of making their women in need "to be saved," exactly because they are supposed to be deprived of their personal freedom. Gender, product of a process of social construction, emerge as a variable social organization. In a cultural context, the mainstreaming ideas about masculinity and femininity as well the prevailing family model determine what in a society can be considered an appropriate role for a man and for a woman. Such gender norms impact on people's life at individual, domestic and social level. Even in family practices woman is subordinate to man. The traditional [2] divorce practices are a declination of the contradiction between the sacred enunciation of equality between man and woman and the reality of practices[3].

[2] The stages of divorce are beatings to the wife, summoning of her relatives, "repudiation" pronounced three times by the man.

[3] Today, however, partially reorganized on a legal level of greater equality, in modern cultural contexts.

Ummah is a common Arabic word meaning "people, group", or "nation." The concept of *Ummah* might seem to correspond to the western understanding of a nation, but there are significant differences. In the Muslim way of thinking, the only *Ummah* that counts is the *Ummah Islamiyyah*, the Islamic Community, an entity that theoretically comprises all Muslims throughout the world, whatever their national origin. Muslims throughout the world share the same essential beliefs, values, and God-centered approach to the world.

In Italy, Islam is the second religion professed. Islam is an "immigrant" religion. In perspective, it will be a "resident" religion. Over the years, Islam will become a "transplanted" religion, not only because immigrants will continue to arrive, as for the second and third generations that are living and growing in Italy. The traditions and values of origin for Muslim immigrants, are not an obstacle to integration, but tensions in the effort to adaptation, including super-conformism and apparent contradictions, which evaporates when the family welfare becomes an element of self-realization and change of status. It is mostly those Muslim residents for a long time in Palermo to be interested in these typically Western paths of upward social mobility.

> In Italy I am very good, no lack of work and one earns well compared to our country. We have managed to have our girls graduated, to buy some apartments in Tunisia, that we rent as a bed & breakfast. My husband is a very traditional guy. He always decides what is to be done. In a few years we plan to go back to Tunisia, where we won't be as poor as in the past. [Tunisian woman, Muslim, 42 y. old].

Hinduism too is not just a religion, understood in the Western sense, related to dogma, church, clergy, divine revelation, but it is a set of beliefs, practices, cults, and rites that articulate all aspects of a man's life. For Hindus, *dharma* is a way of living in which the religious component is inseparable from the socio-cultural one. It is a way of living and being in agreement with society and its culture. More into orthodox Indian culture, the meaning of *dharma* is implicit in the word itself. *Dharma* (law, justice, duty) is the religion. It is the eternal immutable law, order, balance of creation, the moral law imprinted in the conscience of every individual to which the human being must conform. In the case of Hinduism, the identifying element is the *dharma*, which distinguishes Hindu from those who are not. *Dharma* is to the Hindu what makes a man Hindu. Only those who were born on Indian soil are Hindu. Membership in the Hindu religion absorbs the class membership.

From a sociological point of view, religious values are deeply nestled in social organization characterized by the respect of tradition that becomes a defensive instrument against the processes of transformation and gender inequality. In the analysis, for the Hindu Tamil and Mauritian communities, the religious belonging and the collective identity reinforce each other. In these communities, the wish (or need) to develop and strengthen their own cultural identity emphasizes the religious dimension of membership. The Sinhalese are mostly Buddhist, the rest Christians. Most of Sri Lankan Tamils are Hindu or Christians. In Sri Lanka, among Tamils and Sinhalese, there are many caste divisions as the effect of Hindu influence coming from the subcontinent. Castes are rigid and unchanging. The transition from one caste to another is virtually impossible.

Emigration phenomena have mitigated the rigidity of the obligations connected to religion and the social order of caste. In the analysis of the interviews, it is evident how

the concept of caste survives only in the memory of the adult generations. With emigration the need to adapt to any type of work has caused the break of the link between caste and job, flattening social distinctions. Only for the occasion of weddings a trace of social distinctions emerges, in those cases in which a young Hindu marries a Hindu of different caste or a native Catholic. In these cases, marriage is not forbidden, but only hindered. This family organization is therefore guided by values which guide the actions of the subjects also in the wider society. Rather, they constitute an identity marker. This could hypothesize an essentialist vision of difference, in which individuals are unaware reproducers in traditions and rituals that postmodernity recedes to a frozen world, always equal to itself, while the rest of their world keeps running, but far.

> My family has been in Italy for over 20 years. In Palermo we feel perfectly integrated. I study at the university. I dress like Italian girls, but some traditions are unchanged. Last year my brother got married. My father addressed an intermediary who deals with combining marriages. He was looking for the best combination of people and families. We, Tamils, have a booklet of our profile that is done with the help of the stars. The intermediary with this booklet seeks the most suitable person, even with the economic level and the status of the families because we still have the castes that differentiate people. When he finds the right person, check the dowry that the woman brings. Usually the dowry consists of land, house, money. [Tamil woman, Hindu, 22 y. old].

When it comes to gender differences, in the context of origin, women tend to lean towards a natural "sobriety" even in the private sphere. In public, they are careful with their behavior. They avoid showing off, attracting attention. Within the family, a woman is totally subordinated to her husband, her mother, and older sisters of her husband. Women must obey and please the men of the family and are very silent in the presence of their husbands and, if asked, they limit themselves to intervening with small nods of the head. Some of them leave the room when the husband enters. Men are ascribed the tasks to provide for the family's livelihood, the household expenses, clothing for their wives and children. The freedom of the woman's spending is limited to food. In the case of non-essential purchases or greater expense, man returns to be a decision-maker.

Emigration has however diminished the rigor that characterized the status of women in the concept of *Dharma*.

This family organization is therefore guided by values that guide the actions of the subjects even in the wider society. Indeed, they constitute an identity marker. The consequence is that sometimes such value is the expression of a difference that is reified not only in behavior but in a vision of the world, a philosophy of life, from which one does not distance oneself. Thus, leaving its authenticity unchanged. These considerations would lead to hypothesize an essentialist vision of difference, in which individuals are unconscious reproducers of traditions and rites, that post-modernity retreats to a frozen world, always equal to itself, while the other world runs but far away.

11. Syncretism, cultural hybridization, and identity reconfigurations

The hybridization and the religious syncretism phenomena represent the creative spirit that resides in every culture, activated by the need to redefine the inclusion or exclusion coordinates. As in the case of the Catholic Tamil community that in Palermo is

protagonist of religious syncretism between the symbols of their culture and the local one. The syncretism process goes appropriating of practices and places dedicated to the cult of St. Rosalia patroness saint of Palermo (such as the Feast, and the pilgrimage to the sanctuary). These dynamics have a strong impact in the symbolic identity complex of natives who feel as stripped of a non-material identity resource that they must share with discomfort.

The Hinduism of the communities from Sri Lanka and Mauritius found in Palermo a wide space for expression, in which a syncretism of symbols and rites was created, aimed at maintaining the values and social organization of origin. A dedicated prayer space can be found in all houses, decorated with images of the Hindu pantheon, and with a place reserved for the image of St. Rosalia, venerated by Tamils for formal connections with an original cult from the homeland. This gets on to the annexation of the saint into the Hindu pantheon. In short, the syncretism of the Hindu cult of St. Rosalia is a religious expression perpetrated into the logic of ethnic persistence. If the identity markers, such as religious ones, can be factors of social distance in host societies, a strong sense of religious belonging makes the elements of distinction more meaningful. Sometimes, an immigrant community in the effort to accelerate the process of social integration in the new society assumes a more detached attitude towards cultural and religious traditions. This does not seem to occur in the Tamil community in Palermo. The saint is venerated devoutly according to the syncretism realized between the Christian religious cult and the Hindu one. The veneration of St. Rosalia tends to defeat the daily difficulties, and at the same time to re-establish the community's sense of identity. The Tamil syncretism of St. Rosalia is a coherent expression of patterns of action differentiated from the faith, but also chosen according to the aims of the people and within the environmental situations in which they live.

In conclusion, the two communities follow paths of integration in diverse ways. Muslim and Hindu immigrants, in the private sphere shall implement conservation in practices of their cultural identity by food, clothing, religious practices. Among these communities, immigrants seem to be adapt to conservative identity modes when "forced" by the visibility in public to be distinguished and recognized, primarily by their own community. If the public dimension of religious differences does not emerge as an identity marker, it does not emerge nor even the difference *tout court* as an evocative political value of a comparison (or antagonism) to be composed on a cultural level. The Islamic community seems to swing between super-conformism and apparent contradictions. The Hinduist seems more oriented to ethnic persistence and to tradition. The two paths are expressions of a differential adaptation expressed in some areas of life and not in others. The degree of difference is expressed by different groups of immigrants when they use different tactics and different paths towards integration. Even when religion is an essentialist factor of intense cultural and value alterity, however, it does not prevent integration.

12. Conclusions

When the migration experience changes the connotations of collective identity, culture and religious values are a set of granite traditions and rituals that individuals express. But origin's culture and values are not immutable. The dynamic nature of their interweaving reproduces and finds out points of contact with the reality of social interactions faced for the first time. It creates a balancing in the social distance between natives and immigrants.

Culture and religious values guide individuals in shaping a sense of belonging to the community. According to Bruce [22], this interpretation underestimates the deepest convictions that guide individuals in shaping a sense of belonging to the one's own community, in relation to religion. Two examples of this hypothesis were analyzed in the research in a comparative key: the Islamic *ummah* and Hindu *dharma*.

For these communities, religious diversity, rediscovered as an identity and oppositional trait, can become the catalyst for a condition of exclusion, a sort of rationalization and subjective reappropriation of marginality. In a positive sense it can be the place of formation of new identities and social practices that help to withstand discrimination and to recover a positive vision of oneself.

More generally, for the various immigrant communities analyzed in the research religion and family are the symbolic identity references, both subjective and collective, of belonging and recognition that satisfy spiritual, material, and affective instances. Religion, especially in its more traditional and collective forms, assume significant characteristics in relation to the immigration path, since for many immigrants' religions belonging is not a secondary dimension of their identity. Religion influences distinct phases of the emigration project, from the decision to leave to the first settlement and the subsequent phases of the process of familiar acculturation, involving potentially the process of identity redefinition.

In the separation from many aspects of the previous life the immigrants cling to religion as an element of continuity that survives the transfer to a foreign context and satisfy the desire to remain connected with the past. Religious activities celebrated in the communities to which they belong satisfy the "need for community." Emigration is separation from families, from friends. Periodic religious meetings are an opportunity to meet other compatriots with whom to weave relationships of mutual professional help, exchange information on health services, bureaucratic, etc.

The hegemonic culture of the host society does not prevent immigrants to practice their religious and cultural expression of origin and they do not renounce to constitute a family even interreligious. Considering the impact of religion and cultural origin values on public and private expression of differences, it is important to consider their role in the integration process. Specific forms of multiculturalism are determined, through religious syncretism, new models of contemporary family migration, genesis of transcultural, interreligious, and mixed families, reconfiguration of religious practices in the identity system of immigrants, especially when it is linked to migration.

The data collected lead to a type of multiculturalism in which social production and identity areas are the product of both cultural hybridization and a change in the process of preserving one's origins. New cultural traits are incorporated, harmonizing them with the traditional, certainly with obvious contradictions, but without repudiating them or abandoning them altogether. The analysis of the interviews reports these methods immigrants' acculturation through the adoption of patterns of behavior, roles, nutrition, clothing, Italian culture, and in several cases, more properly locals.

We presented the "doing family" as a complex phenomenon which interweaves religious references, adaptation to local culture, reconfiguration of identity. For some ethnic groups, especially Asians, the phenomenon of arranged marriages is still present. The combination of unions is affected by the echoes of the difference between castes in which sometimes superstition has the role of rationalizing values and elevating them to guarantee the bond to be decreed between strangers. Fatalistic attitude and inevitability of destiny are not a renunciation of self-determination. They are an integral part of a set of traditions and religious rituals that trust in the values of the context of origin to

strengthen the identity of their community, when confronted with the diversity that can require the change. This in the dual effort to interpret the world, and to give a Weberian meaning to events. Ambiguity and Conflict [23, 25], with which cultural changes are determined within a community, cannot be read, as often happens in multiculturalist rhetoric, only in the integrative logics of assimilation or super conformism. It must be considered as a resource available to individuals, rather than a structure of ideas irreducible to change that limit their action.

Family is the place of life of behavioral contradictions in which individuals find subjective answers to the tensions of integration. In the family, innovation and preservation of identity traits coagulate in a symbolic space strongly subject to change. The discrepancies between cultural coherence and the redefinition of identities are a balancing play that puts a strain on family roles and the degree of family unity.

Analysis reveals both the modification of family hierarchies and the modification of ethnic persistence practices due to the degree of family integration. Adaptation and assimilation, conveyed in the single semantic container of integration, oscillate between persistence and innovation of the religious and family spheres. In the research, the degree of integration can be circumscribed in levels between those who are a) remarkably, b) moderately and c) badly integrated. With regard to the analytical categories, exhaustively described in Ferrante [26], the profiles of them are defined as follows: a) *interdependents participatory*, b) *marginal reluctants*, c) *prudent immatures*.

Finally, in the framework of the integration policies, the general theoretical elements deduced from the analysis, reveals that the integration process comes close to segmented assimilation, in which immigrants are assimilated in some areas of life and not in others, according to the model proposed by Portes and Zhou [27] in which different groups of immigrants follow different paths towards non-assimilation through modes of preservation of their identity. The tensions of adaptation are influenced by migration dynamics, when in the same territory resident immigrants of different faiths coexist. In these cases, it determines a competition between cultural minorities in which religion is a determining variable. In scenarios such as those described, religious affiliation also gains a renewed strength and legitimacy of the role of individual and social behavior.

The role of religion is decisive in the reconstruction of a moral order and social practices that gradually give back meaning to daily life. It acting as a factor of reaggregation of uprooted and dispersed populations of individuals from countries with totalitarian domination, at war, persecuted for their sexual orientation or religious affiliation.

The different degrees of integration involve immigrants' active critical reflections towards religion that bring them closer to those typical of secularized countries. This consideration is particularly evident among Muslim women when reveal to themselves that religious leaders may wrong in their interpretation because motivated by nonreligious aims. Thus, the choice to take a distance from religious radicalism is a way to rediscover and affirm one's religiosity.

The presence of a family pushes to weave relationships of proximity with the local context. In the latter, the socializing spheres of the school or of the daily purchases open the components to the confrontation with lifestyles that are assimilated even the risk of revisiting the intra-family hierarchical organization. The phenomena of retro-socialization in which parents learn from their children risk calling into question the pedagogical role of parents. We move from a minority condition to that accepted part of society in which the difference is no longer such. The comparison with the lifestyle, food, clothing of the host society, peer relationships, although they can generate resistance to

innovation support the empowerment of people who mainly risk being excluded and fueled by participative practices oriented toward the common good and active citizenship practices. The family context seems to play a decisive role in the integration paths of young people who can receive stimuli or slowdowns from the family to this process (especially if female) from the most traditional families and faithful to the religious-cultural values.

The public dimension of religious differences does not emerge as an identity factor. Neither does emerge when the difference is an evocative political value of a comparison (or antagonism) to be composed on a cultural level.

In conclusion, hypothesis is that in Palermo immigrants act in a public sphere where the assimilation process has reshaped the cultural and religious differences, no longer connoted by their divergence from Western tradition. This does not mean that Palermo has realized a perfect integration. To be more accurate, it means that in a socio-political climate of low pressure to integration, and instead of a place of substantial freedom of expression of differences, immigrants in Palermo do not need to claim their identity spaces.

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Forced Marriages. Cross-Cultural Implications and Legal Connections

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Abstract. Marriage represents the oldest custom of the status of individuals, covering different situations and being at the crossroads of multiple regulatory systems: the positive law of States, religious and moral standards, but also customary rules. Historically and culturally, the contractual conception of marriage and its modalities, violating women's freedom, have been some of the elements supporting patriarchy and a "gendered" subjugation: suffice it to consider its configuration in some of the main religious conceptions (canonical, Islamic and Hindu). The revaluation of the female role and the need for its legal protection have recently come to the legal attention of the "Western" world, which has attempted to curb the practice of forced marriages through ad hoc legislative interventions. In Europe, a very important role has been played by the Istanbul Convention of 2011, which prompted many States, not only European, to intervene to counter the phenomenon, starting to use the concept of "gender" as an analytical tool to question the "natural" foundation of many cultural and institutional constructions. With regard to how to prevent forced marriage, possible responses must necessarily be based on four fundamental points: self-determination; the ability to rebel; strict laws; and increased awareness.

Keywords. forced marriages, gender equality, inter-cultural dimension

1. Marriage in Canon, Islamic and Hindu law

Familial covenant or the primacy of the couple, called to fulfil a divine or secular commitment, marriage represents the oldest habit of individuals, covering very different situations and being at the crossroads of multiple regulatory systems: the positive law of states, religious and moral standards, but also customary rules. Before having a legal relevance, it is a human and social phenomenon, from which moral and affective relationships descend. A phenomenon, therefore, in which law is concerned, but which it pre-exists to it being its source. It represents a lexeme of great semantic relevance, as much in modern conception as in older ones: it was regarded by the Romans as a social fact, rather than a legal quid. Recognition of the metagiuridical nature of the institution is already discernible in the terminology in use by the ancients, which seems to emphasize the essential function of marriage in procreation and in the care of children and its foundation in natural law [1].

In Roman culture, marriage, given the absence of a free individual choice of the persons involved, was the expression of a social factor almost exclusively directed to the transmission of name and patrimony. The term "marriage" derives etymologically from

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the Latin word *matrimonium*, formed from the genitive of *mater* combined with the suffix -*monium*, linked to the noun *munus* duty, task. Marriage was, therefore, a juridical act by which a woman, *sui* or *alieni iuris*, separated from her family of origin to form a new family, in a subordinate condition and with the function of procreating legitimate offspring. In this context, it entailed the acquisition of the woman by her husband, through the samerituals of property acquisition, the husband could exercise a power of subjection over her. The family was not, therefore, founded on the legal bond, but on the exercise of *patria potestas*. As economic and social conditions changed, the need for greater attention to the issue of *consensus* was felt. Given, therefore, the lack of solemn forms, the Roman matrimonial structure could be summed up with the well-known brocade "*consensus facit nuptias*".

Catholic doctrine subsequently made use of the Roman concept, based on consent, while giving it a mark of solemnity. In 1215, at the Fourth Lateran Council, the Church regulated the marriage liturgy and its legal aspects, although it was not until 1439, at the Council of Florence, with the Bull *Pro Armenis, that* marriage was given its sacramental value. The concept of freedom of consent, in this context, has been affirmed since St. Thomas, as the expression of an ordered and legally relevant will. From that moment marriage was qualified as a sacrament and a contract, in which consent became its fundamental pillar. Luther, instead, reinserted marriage into civil law, which thus became established in Protestant countries. The dogmatic profile was, subsequently, sanctioned by the Council of Trent (1545-1563) in which the expression of free consent by the spouses was canonized as an essential feature, requiring its manifestation in a public and solemn form. The Council also established the definitive affirmation of the sacramentality and indissolubility of marriage, the provision of publications as an element of validity and the formal obligation of the stipulation in *facie Ecclesiae*.

The diffusion of Christian doctrines in the European civilization has determined, therefore, are-dimensioning of *patria potestas* and the introduction of primordial forms of minor's protection. In European culture, over a long period of time, the exchange of consent, generative of a bond, has led to the identification and inseparability of contract and sacrament. Theology and Canon Law have laid the foundations for the recognition of the necessity of the spouses' free will, contributing to affirming the illegitimacy of arranged/imposed marriage, making it clear the affirmation ofthe right to freedom of choice. In Catholic countries, matrimonial competencewas entirely entrusted to canon law, until the French Revolution.

The current *codex juris canonici* of 1983 defines the pact between a man and a woman, based on the free consent of the two, as a contract, elevated to the dignity of a sacrament (can. 1055 codex juris canonici). Given the importance of consent, there are many cases of nullityof the bond, which involve defects/flaws in the bond itself or which may be linked to incapacity, a voluntary defect (total or partial simulation) or a vice of freedom (violence, error, fraud, condition). Very interesting is the personalist approach, typical of modern canonical doctrine, strongly centered on the dignity of the person. The protection of the person must prevail over the protection of the institution of matrimony, as highlighted in the evangelical message of *Familiaris consortio* of Pope John Paul II.

In the modern perspective of "Western" codes, the autonomy of the spouses is the value around which the regulation of marriage is built, under two aspects: as an act and as a relationship. In marriage as an act, autonomy consists in the free manifestation of consent and is limited by the public interest relating to the certainty of the conjugal relationship. In the second meaning, privileged by the current discipline, instead, autonomy is greater and is limited only by the protection of fundamental rights: the aim

is to endorse the conception of marriage as the fruit of an equal agreement. A fracture emerges between the formal act and the substantial relationship, attributing to the latter the natureof a parameter by which to assess the persistence of the moral, rather than legal, element of the institution. Marital freedom has thus become the bulwark of a new way of seeing the conjugal relationship.

In the secular legal structure of the "Western" type of Christian matrix, the conception of the family as a body bearing super-individual interests has been definitively superseded, in favour of the recognition of the function of developing the personality of its members, and this has made possible, in the most up-to-date codes, the full unfolding of the principle of consent. Jurists bring the marriage contract back to the figure of the so-called personal, typical, and legitimate acts, and matrimonial freedom represents the most vivid image of the spouses' freedom of choice.

In the Islamic culture, on the other hand, marriage is a contract between the future husband and the bride's father/guardian, in return for an obligatory *mahr/dote* from the former. This does not imply that the object of exchange is the woman herself, but that the marriage contract is regulated within specific rules, common to contracts of sale and purchase, and this act is not sacramental in nature. The manifestation of will on the part of the woman is completely absent, who, even if not subject to the power of constraint, still needs the marriage guardian/*walī* to manifest consent as she cannot conclude the marriage directly [2]. Only jurists of the "Hanafi school" reckon that the woman may personally conclude such a contract, the other Islamic schools reject this possibility because marriage is seen as an alliance between two families.

As any valid contract, it must be concluded with the manifest will of both parties, who do not necessarily coincide with bride and groom. Based on *Shari'a* provisions, any individual may be the holder of a marriage relationship, even a newborn child. Obviously, in the latter case, there will be someone who will compulsorily do it for him, i.e. the matrimonial/*wali* guardian (usually the father, paternal grandfather, older brother, paternal uncle, some of their descendants) who, as such, has the right to exercise the so-called power of constraint (*wilayat al- igbar*), which as a rule ceases when the child becomes of age.

In this respect, it is necessary to distinguish between the capacity to be the holder of a matrimonial relationship, which is acquired at birth, and the capacity to contract a marriage, whichis reached at puberty, normally set at 15 years for men and 9 years for women, presuming them to be puberty at 15 and 12 years of age respectively. This indication has remained so in the legal systems of those countries that refer to tradition in the strict sense (including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Somalia, and Mauritania). In most Islamic law states, however, the age of marriage has been raised to 18 for men and 16 for women, excluding the application of religious law. Before reaching the legal age, the *wali*'s consent is required. In the absence of male relatives, the judge may give consent to the marriage [3]. In some States, however, according to the traditional "Malikite system", the *wali* can give his daughter in marriage even in the absence of her consent. This condition is understandable in a patriarchal society, where the very low marriage age requires some protection and where marriage is considered more a social act between two families or two tribes, than a personal choice. Even where the woman is recognized as having the right to contract the marriage in person, the relative contract may, however, be challenged by the *wali* on the grounds of the unsuitability of the groom or the meagerness of the nuptial gift and dissolved judicially, to protect an alleged incapacity of judgement that is considered detrimental to the woman.

Currently, most Arab States prohibit both early marriages and coercion into marriage,according to the provisions of the Koran. Unlike marriage in Roman law, which is considered a *consortium omnis vitae*, and Christian law, which is a sacrament, the marriage bond is, therefore, first and foremost an open-ended civil-law contract, which may be marked by religious aspects (such as reading the Koran or invoking Allah). Although marriage is not considered a sacrament, it is undoubtedly, however, a "praiseworthy" act, viewed with great favor because it makes the woman "lawful to the man", considering the illicitness of sexual relations outside the marriage bond, and aimed at procreation. It is also a solemn act, since it enables the faithful to live in peaceby respecting Allah's commandments, and a religious one, since it is outlined in the Koran (Sura XXX, verse 21).

The bond celebrated in countries governed by Islamic principles is, therefore, simultaneously a civil and religious union, even if pronounced with the formula "in the name of God". It fully falls within the legal contracts between private individuals, signed in the presence of an adoul/notary with Islamic legal functions, tasked of ascertaining the validity of the act, its compliance with the regulations in force and, subsequently, that of registering it with the competent judicial authorities [4, 5].

Hindu marriage is also, like the canonical rite, a religious ceremony; on the basis of all texts,it is a *samskaram*, i.e. a sacrament, the only one prescribed for women and one of the main religiousrites established for the purification of the soul. It is binding for eternity, and, as sealed by the *saptapadi* or the seven steps around the consecrated fire, creates a bond that is impossible to dissolve [6]. It is a religious duty that transforms *status*, individuals' "cosmic" role and position (in the caste system), rather than a free choice exercised by two consenting people.What is important for the validity of marriage is that the rituals are duly performed; it is not, therefore, among those contracts in which a consenting mind is indispensable, but the bride and groom could be a minor or even an insane person. In Hindu culture, the bride and groom lose the role of protagonists and the marriage is managed by the family.

Consent is seen as a purely "physical" capacity of the woman, a mere biological category, corresponding only to the stage when the female body is ready for motherhood, without serious risks of a physical nature, completely ignoring other issues such as the free choice of the partner, sexual, mental, or emotional capacity, or other social considerations such as the girl's personal development. If duly solemnized, it will be considered a valid marriage, which, in Indian law (with a Hindu majority), does not necessarily correspond to a legal bond: think typically of the early, child marriage, which has characterized Hindu cultural tradition for centuries and which is not considered illegal, at least not in the sense that such a term has in "Western" legal culture. The widely accepted definition of "early marriage" refers to a marriage whose protagonists have not yet reached the age of 18. Although India, in most of its laws, has adopted the definition of a child as "a person up to the age of 18", in the *Prohibition of Child Marriage Act* of 2006, this definition differs according to gender: a man ceases to be considered a child at 21, a woman is no longer a child at 18. Tendentially, this gender gap is also considered the legal parameter for contracting marriage. This document, for the first time, established that marriages of minors are annullable or null and void in certain particularly serious cases. But, from a religious point of view, the belief that an early marriage produces spiritual merit and that a family has a duty to find a suitable husband for a daughter is still widespread. Equally, the implications related to the control of female sexuality remain topical. The marriage of children is, moreover, an institution linked to the rules for marriage that define, along with others –e.g., those relatingto

monogamy or polygamy– the conditions that must be there for two individuals to enter into a matrimonial relationship and provide many important indications on the general conception of marriage and the roles culturally and legally assigned to spouses.

In such a context, forced marriage is difficult to eradicate since it is part of the *Dharma*/the practice of law, the social and cosmic order, on which Hinduism is based, a complex relationship between human rights and socio-legal concepts. Prevalent, therefore, is the idea that early marriage is considered a duty, as an "appropriate" form. In this conception, therefore, child marriages have positive effects regarding the maintenance of cosmic order, the preservation of society and the spiritual merits of those involved. From a sociological perspective, several theories have been proposed to explain the prevalence of child marriages. Probably, the main function can be identified in the need to ensure the control of female sexuality and to limit illicit sexual relations outside the institutionalized context of marriage. Another explanation can be identified in the caste logic.

The set of *Dharmic* conceptions surrounding the practice of child marriage continue to be significant for Hindus, but since the colonial period, Hindu law has interacted with new conceptions and legal norms with different characters. This can only be understood within the more general processes of standardization and pluralization of Hindu and Indian laws, since, especially the country's family law, it is historically very pluralist, derived from the coexistence of different social groups and cultures since ever. Many of the problems plaguing Indian society stem from the rigidity of its traditional regulatory system, which is at the root of its blatant human rights violations [6, 7].The *Child Marriage Prohibition Act* of 2006 has, unfortunately, not succeeded in eradicating this phenomenon, even though official Indian family law does not recognize its validity, such marriages continue to be performed because many Hindus live under traditional, unofficial law, following rules that conflict with state law.

2. Forced marriage between international law and criminal offences

Historically, the contractual conception of marriage and its modalities, violating women's freedom, have been some of the features supporting patriarchy and a "gendered" subjugation, to which, in addition, numerous other factors have contributed, mainly linked to social norms and family structures, derived from patriarchal forms of control over women's sexuality and reproductive life. [8] Three main elements characterize forced marriages: coercion; family environment; transnationality. Coercion may be of a physical nature, but no less serious are the religious forms (defense of honor, morality), psychological (control of behaviour), economic (interruption of family support), emotional or affective (social ostracism) ones. With reference to the second aspect, it is observed that it is almost always exercised, in the family context, by the victim's parents and relatives, generating what has been defined as a conflict of loyalty: a feeling of respect towards one's family, in contrast with one's own interests, in which the person feels trapped, unable to take "self-protection" actions, for fear of causing trouble [9]. What girls and young women may experience is a form of domestic violence and pressure exerted as much by the original parental group as by the entire "community", to which the family feels they belong and to which they "have to account" for their conduct, both in the host country and in their home country. These are mostly cultural or religious influences implying emotional and social pressure: it is on women, in fact, that the "honour" of the family and sometimes that of the entire community is

entirely based. Transnationality is given by the fact that most forced marriages take place abroad, following the victim's transfer or detention in her country of origin. This makes the repression of the phenomenon more difficult, also by virtue of the territoriality principle of criminal law. Currently, this phenomenon is geographically localised mainly in Chad, Bangladesh, Mali, Guinea, Central African Republic, Nepal, Mozambique, Egypt, Uganda, Burkina Faso, India, Ethiopia, Liberia, Yemen, Cameroon, Eritrea, Malawi, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Zambia, Saudi Arabia, and Afghanistan.

Although the highest prevalence rates are recorded in Middle East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, more recent investigations have revealed an increasing presence of this practice in the "western" context as well, linked to migration flows.There are, however, no official statistics that highlight the proportions of the problem; many NGOs intervene in an attempt to culturally eradicate such practices, which also interrupt the schooling of girls/boys, relegating them to the domestic sphere and in fact impeding the path of female empowerment, in many geographical areas.

A different matter is, of course, arranged marriages, which do not represent a problem from the point of view of human rights. In this context, in fact, the determining factor is the subjective feeling/consensus of the person who feels that he or she has or has not been forced into marriage. The distinction between the two practices –arranged and forced– h as a certain relevance, both in terms of public and legal action. Consider that even in the West, until a few decades ago, it was customary for the family to present the girl with possible fiancées. Although combined marriage is a tolerated practice in different cultures, when families emigrate,and try to reproduce their habits in the host country, a sort of "short circuit" takes place; with second generations, born in "Western" host countries, combined marriage turnsinto "forced marriage" and, therefore, violence on the person, since from the simple proposition of the partner, it has passed to coercion, threats and violence.

Again, different is the marriage of minors, the phenomenon of so-called child brides, which fits as a specialty within the broader category of forced marriages, and which raises greater social alarm given the very young age of the girls and its widespread diffusion in many geographical areas, linked to traditional practices, but also in today's war zones, used by parents to protect their daughters' honour.

Forced marriage, according to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, the so-called Istanbul Convention of 2011, is constituted by «the intentional act of forcing an adult or a child to enter into marriage... the fact of intentionally drawing an adult or a child by deception into the territory of a party or a State other than the one where he resides, in order to force him to enter into marriage» (Article 37). Basically, in such hypotheses, the act is perfectly lawful, but acquires elements of unlawfulness as certain religious customs/traditions practically impose it on women (often, but not necessarily, at a very young age). Religious affiliation may play a role, but it is not the main cause: marriage may be seen, in migratory contexts, as a means to maintain a strong bond with the culture of the country of origin; as a way to "protect" girls from more open lifestyles (especially in relation to sexuality); sometimes they are instruments of compensation or acts of solidarity.

The Istanbul Convention of 2011 was, as it is well known, the most important international treaty dedicated to gender-based violence, with the aim of preventing violence, protecting victims, and prosecuting aggressors; in addition, of course, to urging and monitoring the signatory States to adapt their laws and provide for new criminal offences, identified by the Convention, which concern not only physical violence but

also violence related to social habits. This document has been signed by 45 Countries, but ratified by only 19, not only by States that are members of the Council of Europe, but by others that, in various capacities, participated in the drafting of the text (e.g., the United States, Canada, Japan and the Holy See). It therefore represents the first international, legally binding instrument to create a comprehensive legal framework to protect the "female gender" against all forms of violence. Moreover, the indication to consider early marriages as closely related, but obviously not overlapping, with forced marriages was accepted.

The concept of violence thus delineated is gradable and can take a plurality of forms, be it a crime, or situations that are criminally irrelevant,but not devoid of legal significance. Particularly important was the express recognition of the latter as a violation of human rights, as well as a form of specific discrimination against women (Article 3). The text also established a clear link between the objective of gender equality and that of the elimination of violence against the "female" gender, and intervened directly on the issue of forced marriages, requiring States to adopt measures to combat this practice. This Convention also began to use the concept of "gender" as an analytical tool to question the "natural" foundation of many cultural and institutional constructions, defining it as the set of «socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men» (Art. 3C). This path had been initiated since the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted in 1993 by the United Nations General Assembly, which defined violence against women as any form of «gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion orarbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life», but it is only the Istanbul document that has given it a stronger theoretical foundation. In a 2012 European Union Directive it was emphasised that «gender-based violence means violence directed against a person on account of gender, gender identity or gender expression, or which disproportionately affects persons of a particular gender», specifying that it is «a form of discrimination and a violation of the victim's fundamental freedoms». It is emphasised that it includes violence in close relationships, sexual violence (including rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment), human trafficking, slavery and various forms of harmful practices, such as forced marriages, female genitalmutilation and so-called "honour crimes". The Directive, *inter alia*, urged EU Member States to ensure measures to protect victims and their families from secondary and repeated victimization, as well as from intimidation and retaliation, by guaranteeing their physical protection.The decision to combat such violence by recognising its social, and therefore cultural and religious, roots is important for at least two reasons. The first is that it makes it possible to consider domestic and gender-based violence no longer as a "private matter" but as a political and social problem. The second is that it delegitimizes attempts to circumscribe the phenomenon withinthe sphere of deviance and/or pathology, bringing out the connection between discrimination and violence, within a social model in which the construction of gender rolesresponds to asymmetrical power logics. This innovative hermeneutic approach has thus made itpossible not only to impose a mere ban on forced marriages, but to consider them, directly and in a broader sense, as a form of "gender" discrimination.

The penal legislation in various countries had not, however, succeeded in providing, over a long period of time, an *ad hoc* hypothesis to criminalise them. The interpreter was therefore obliged to use different cases in point: induction to marriage by deception; consensual abduction of minors, which, however, often provides an attenuating

circumstance where the offence was committed "for the purpose of marriage"; abduction of incapacitated persons; kidnapping; abduction and detention of minors abroad; private violence (which, however, identifies a subsidiary case); up to persons trafficking, for most serious cases. Another fundamental criminal reference was anchored in the offence of ill-treatment in the family, which punishes any violent or non-violent action that represses or prevents the development of the human personality. With regard to possible civil provisions, it should be noted that the marriage may be challenged by the spouse whose consent has been extorted by violence or determined by fear of exceptional gravity, resulting from external causes. Coercion into an unwanted marriage is a serious violation of dignity and constitutes harm that is also relevant for the purposes of recognising international protection measures.

The legal good to be protected, also taking into account its supranational genesis, would not be identifiable with the mere protection of the institution of marriage, but centred on the protection of individual freedom, "of gender". It is not, therefore, a crime against personal liberty, centred on the protection of the legal asset of the passive subject, to be seen in its widest meaning, as an inviolable right, but to be treated as a common offence, since it may be committed by anyone, with a generic intent (the will to compel or induce the celebration of a marriage), whatever the underlying purposes (cultural, religious, traditional); the consent of the bride or groom is excludedas a discriminating factor, and there is no reference to age, but to foresee an increase in the penalty if committed against minors. It is interesting to note the omission of any reference to compliance with religious precepts, which makes clear the determination to shift the centre of gravity of the provision from culturally motivated crimes to "gender" crimes. This responds to the strong influence of this innovative theoretical approach.

The provision must, therefore, penalise unconditionally any coercion, carried out by means of violence and threats, re-proposing the scheme of the crime of private violence, of which it seems to constitute a special rule, in which the element of specificity is constituted by the purpose of the same (coercion to marry). Another interesting profile is represented by the derogation to the principle of territoriality of criminal law (Article 44 of the Istanbul Convention), which takes into account the cross-border nature of these criminal offences.

3. Legal profiles of forced marriage as a cultural offence. Need for integrated protection

Such practices constitute, therefore, a very archaic practice, endorsed by different religious cultures, especially with a view to the control of the "female gender" [10], and they are a clear violation of human rights: Article 16 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights had established, in fact, that «marriage can only be concluded with the free and full consent of the future spouses» until the 2014 UN Resolution on child, early and forced marriage. A 2012 UN Report included this type of marriage in the concept of "slavery".

In terms of the correct legal framing, this cultural offence varies, ambivalently, between a perspective that includes it as one of a large number of unlawful conducts, belonging to the macro-category of private violence, and another that leads it back to sexual exploitation and enslavement. The legal schemes normally used refer to all these areas, since it is not always easy to set the boundaries.

The approach adopted when drafting the Istanbul Convention seems to be between two complementary readings of the problem: on one hand, the "positive" dimension of protection and the need for immediate legal reactions, through *ad hoc* legislative production, of both a substantive and procedural nature and, on the other hand, the "political" dimension of the gender law/gender-sensitive approach, linked to the need to counter violence against women. In Europe, awareness of these forced marriages has arisen because of an increasing number of media cases, but none of the Council member States has conduct a quantitative survey providing an insight into the sociological reality. In the UK, forced marriage, within the meaning of the *Forced Marriage Unit*, is «where one or both people do not ... consent to the marriage as they are pressurized, or abuse is used, to force them to do so. It is recognized in the UK as a form of domestic or child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights»: this formula is the one that is now unanimously adopted.

It may be pointed out that approximately sixty million forced marriages take place in the world every year, and that the number of Countries in which women may marry before coming of age still stands at one hundred and forty-six. This situation is no longer attributable to a legislative *vacuum*, either on the part of international/supranational bodies or the States concerned, but to the fact that the rules laid down are systematically disregarded, in deference to cultural/religious customs and traditions. Considering the geographical spread of this practice, the difficulty of its precise localisation in "Western" contexts must also be noted; as with what happens with almost all cultural crimes, its extension is indeed influenced by (and directly proportional to) the increase and flows of the migration phenomenon.

Amongst the national and international objectives, a first, fundamental step was to guarantee women a regulatory protection, imposing, first of all, the obligation to be of age, except in special cases. It was observed that child marriages must automatically be considered as forced and that it is regrettable that 144 countries out of 193 still do not have laws prohibiting child marriages. One possible strategy could be to classify it among the forms of human trafficking (cf. Art. 2 of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims) and to formulate a shared strategy and a common definition to enable a uniform application of the rules. Such practices, religious and cultural, although deep-rooted, cannot be considered simply as culturally oriented declinations of family law, but must be included among violations of fundamental human rights, among abuses of psychologically and legally more fragile subjects. "Western" cultural paradigms must, in such cases, embrace a universally valid value of justice.

While these considerations may be shareable from a purely positive point of view, it must nevertheless be considered that the categorical qualification of the fact, in the criminal sphere, cannot be carried out irrespective of the teleological scheme adopted by the person who committed it. In this view, the core of the theorisation of culturally motivated crimes is highlighted. In the different perspective, on the other hand, of the person subjected to the criminal action, it is necessary to consider the possible conflict of values at stake, which is not part of "Western" cultural paradigms, but which deserves attention and respect. If, in fact, the regulatory intervention is limited to framing the case as a crime based on a few external morphological aspects, it runs the risk of failing to grasp, in a truly inclusive and inter-cultural dimension, the plurality of meanings and the multiple relevance that individual conducts may assume, with respect to the constitutional rules and the variety of values it represents. Indeed, in some cases, the "perpetrators", often the girl's parents, are persuaded to be doing it "for her good".

The repositioning of formal profiles, in which the semantic and normative dimension of the cultures to which they belong is involved, could provide useful tools for a normative qualification/translation that better contextualises these practices, tracing "other" meanings and, in relation to them, emancipative solutions that do not bring into play the subjectivity of the "victim" and her isolation from the social groups to which she belongs. This process can only be the result of a progressive awareness aimed at building and strengthening a new autonomy for young women, which helps them to reposition themselves in the host societies, according to new cultural patterns, and which helps them in the difficult process of "pondered enfranchisement" and "reinterpretation" of their own cultural traditions, for the acquisition of an effective capacity of self-determination that does not result in an alternative choice between antagonistic and predefined cultural patterns.

The new rights can thus become translation interfaces between traditions renewed in their potential meaning, to promote processes of intercultural redefinition of subjectivity. A truly inter-cultural right must not, therefore, be dedicated solely to criminal protection (although necessary) but be more correctly integrated into an articulated system of support and prevention.

The legal debate re-proposes also in such cases, as for all those that fall within the macro-category of "culturally motivated offences", the alternative between the right of the people to their identity, culture, customs, and the freedom rights of the subject. It should, however, be clear that adopting the filter of this category cannot, for instance, lead to a reduction of the penalty/increased social "benevolence" with respect to behaviour that offends fundamental principles. Rereading legislation from a cross-cultural perspective brings about the emergence of a new perspective, based on the need to constantly rethink even the institution of marriage, in the most modern inputs. Forced marriages recall the idea that in modern, liberal societies, the reference to the feeling of love and respect for the individual will is a priority; the current tendency is no longer the transcendent birth of a couple, but the union of two individuals who consider themselves the two halves of a unity, continuing to constitute two autonomous wholes [11].

It is also interesting to emphasise that the concept of "gender" (as opposed to "sex") emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, in the context of cultural studies, to indicate socially determined superstructures, i.e. the way in which social roles, behaviour, modes of interaction and power, and the very identities of men and women are socially acquired, constructed, transmitted and change over time in relation to the socio-cultural, political and economic context. This implies the idea that while sex is an immutable biological datum, gender relations are historically, geographically, and culturally specific [12].

It is a matter of outlining a slow process of normative enfranchisement from traditional customs and traditions that are firmly anchored to religious precepts and "women's honour". It is important to reiterate that human dignity is not a fundamental right among others, nor does it override them. Rather, it is the principle that, placed within the framework of fundamental rights, allows them to be interpreted according to the free development of the person. Its pre-eminence offsets the risk of trivialising freedoms, brought about by the gradual expansion of the relative catalogues: their multiplication in fact risks weakening their significance. In this sense, the concept of dignity can act as a collector and guarantor of them. The syntagma "free and dignified existence" could then be correctly referred to every human being since the "natural" condition of every person is referrable to an existence that is not only free, but also dignified.

As to how to prevent forced marriage, possible answers must necessarily be based on four fundamental points: self-determination; the capacity to rebel; strict laws; increased awareness. What is needed are dedicated services, prevention and training activities for families and operators, awareness-raising for girls and women in the communities (to raise their awareness and desire to break away from customs and traditions that penalise them), but also means to protect them from family and community reprisals. The role of legal and social workers is therefore crucial in making women aware of their freedom of choice and self-determination. Critical issues in the work of preventing and combating forced marriages are, in fact, essentially linked to the lack of a key to understanding the phenomenon; guidelines and/or intervention protocols; prevention activities shared with resident foreign communities; specific protection measures.

Faced with a forced marriage, one factor preventing an effective protection of the victims is that its annulment, due to breach of consent, entails going through the normal judicial process, with long delays, significant costs and without adequate protection. This shows, therefore, that criminal law alone could even have an opposite/boomerang effect, dissuading victims from denouncing, for fear of incriminating members of their own family, sometimes unwitting accomplices (because they are convinced that they are acting for their own well-being). It would therefore be useful to provide, at the same time, but in a preventive manner, awareness-raising, and training measures to intercept situations at risk, as well as a monitoring of the phenomenon and build a protection network involving social services, schools, anti-violence centres and/or safe houses, the police and the judiciary.

Based on most recent international interventions, with repercussions in the individual national legislations, a renewed legal approach can be seen in which it is no longer the bond that is protected but the consent of the spouses; the law is concretely protective and deals directly with the individual [13]. The relationship between the State, the family and the individual has changed: while the former is interested in the family as a filter of public power, it increasingly intervenes to protect the individual from/in the family. The last piece, therefore, despite its incompleteness, nonetheless highlights an important semantic shift and a centralisation of the principle of respect for the dignity of women, which was unthinkable even in our country until a few decades ago, and for which the confrontation with different cultures, including religious ones, has once again forced to the attention of public opinion and the legislature.

4. Concluding remarks on intercultural dynamics and the marriage contract

A reading of these provisions highlights the need for a legal reflection, even before a jurisprudential reaction, that uses the parameters of interculturality to compose an overall analysis of the phenomenon, which involves the historical, philosophical, anthropological, sociological point of view. This, from a strictly legal-positive point of view, must be framed among the limitations to the freedom of individuals, especially women, determined by customs, traditions, that place subjectivity in second place [14]. It is a phenomenon profoundly characterised by religious and patriarchal cultures and power dynamics based on a gender (male/female) imbalance in which marital relations are managed by the family unit, guided by the *pater familias,* and parental and community dynamics override the desires of the individuals.

It therefore covers many aspects of interest in the analysis of intercultural dynamics, not only in reference to the legal concept of free consent and the dignity of persons, but also in consideration of philosophical and legal elaborations on the concept of "gender". It also highlights the contradictions in the conflict between two reference cultures, in the hypothesis of second generations, in immigration contexts, due to the internalisation of different educational paradigms [15]. Speaking of an intercultural conflict in relation to forced marriages means highlighting the process of re-elaboration and re-interpretation of gender roles following migratory experiences and the profound divergence between the external (host society) marriage dynamics and the logic adopted by the subject/group to which they belong. It is in such contexts that identity and "gender" repositionings are determined and that the phenomenon emerges at the moment of the cultural shock/exchange, in which the subject can perceive the contrast founded on the autonomy of consent as a "feeling" from that on the "value" it can assume in the culture of origin. And it is for this reason that the fight against such a form of imposition must be correctly inserted, more generally, in the patterns of "gender" violence, firmly structured in traditional cultures in which marriage is part of a system of parental relations strongly controlled by religion and social order. Respect for customary rules, with renunciation of the choice of partner, may in fact help to maintainties with the group of origin and its rules of family order, in compliance with a principle of "community" social bonding. This, on the contrary, is called into question by an affirmation of the principle of subjectivity, typical of our cultures, followed by the concept of free choice of marriage and, consequently, the breaking of "original" ties: it is at this point that the problem of forced marriages emerges [16, 17].

The 2002 UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) [18] guidelines emphasise how, in some contexts, religious affiliation is declined in the attribution of identities, roles, status, responsibilities and duties of conduct closely linked to gender, the non-observance of which may be sanctioned with the limitation of the enjoyment of certain rights. In such contexts, where roles and responsibilities are constructed on the basis of gender, religious/community membership entails a limitation of the freedom of individual group members, and this is particularly evident when the relationship between the sacred and secular orders is still unresolved. It is necessary to understand the potential of this specific criminal protection also as a safeguard against forms of cultural-religious persecution. It is therefore necessary to adopt an even more inclusive perspective, where the notion of religion is not only indicative of a belief, but also of an identity and a way of life: this opens up a space of relevance to dynamics involving the socio-cultural context, traditions, practices and family life of the individual, and to a dimension of religion that is not only related to the intimate sphere but in the public space and to the role played by the community component of confessional belonging. In 2004, the UNHCR clarified, in specific guidelines concerning persecution on religious grounds, that there is no universally accepted definition of the term "religion". It, in relation to persecution, should not be limited to traditional religions, beliefs with institutional characteristics or practices like those within the cults recognised by each State; those who do not believe, do not practise or refuse to adhere to a religion should also be protected. Ultimately, although the 1951 Geneva Convention in Article 1, A (2) speaks in a general sense of religious persecution, the violation of this right must be read in the dual perspective of freedom to believe or not to believe.

Lastly, we must reiterate that the annulment of an unwanted constraint, defined at the level of jurisprudence, could destabilise the individual's cultural and cultural ties and that the freedom obtained could lead to a definitive break from family, tribal or

community support. We must rethink and recontextualise the issue of respect for human rights, not as theoretical entities assumed in an abstractly universalist key, but with respect to social contexts and focus our attention on the subject and the dignity of choice. In the dialectic between universally valid rights, in all contexts and/or spatio-temporal coordinates, and an absolute relativism of human rights, we must find a *modus operandi* that succeeds in mediating between these opposites; "in short, the liberal polity which is tobe globalised is one which publicly respects the rights of the individual citizen to his own civil freedoms against cultural prejudices" [19].

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Child Fostering Care: Kafala in Western Countries

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Abstract. After a survey on the essential features of the Islamic child foster care called *kafala*, the present Chapter investigates how domestic legal systems of Western States have dealt with it, particularly concerning to the right of family reunification and to intercountry adoptions. The Chapter also is aimed at highlighting the consequences of the recognition of the *kafala* related to the religious freedom of the immigrant's family, with a special concern to intergenerational transmission of religious values and the religious education of children in host countries.

Keywords. foster care, adoption, freedom of religion, religious education

1. Introduction

In recent years, massive migration flows have arisen several issues regarding the cohabitation of different ethnicities, cultures and religions challenging in this way well established traditions in contemporary society. The multiculturalism that has thus interested western countries has greatly affected at different levels also the primary unit of the society, that is the family.[2]

It is known that family plays an essential role in life choices of individuals and in their migration plans, so that migrants who move primarily for family reason constitute the largest group in migration flows. According to the data collected by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) [1], among the Member Countries, family migration comprised 41 per cent –around 1.9 million migrants– of the total permanent migration flows in 2018. In the same year, the United States accounted for 40 per cent (768,300) of total family migration to OECD countries. According to the Eurostat, As for European Union, the records gathered by Eurostat, with a special focus on child migration, highlights that in 2020, 211,000 children (aged less than 15 years) were issued first residence permits in the EU for reasons related to family formation and reunification, which represents 68% of all first permits issued to children in the EU. These statistics offer a picture of the current global scenario of migratory flows and effectively demonstrate that migrant families are nowadays widespread in western countries, constituting an inescapable matter of fact.

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[2] Western countries are intended in the present work as countries characterized by a predominantly Judeo-Christian tradition, regardless of their geographical position.

The significant presence of cross-border families is carrying in western societies relevant transformations, particularly affecting consolidate family models. Indeed, their familiar systems, as cultural product, are characterised by roles and relationships for some extent different and far from the ones of the host countries. These models also comprise institutions that are mostly obscure in the foreign lands and that can alter marriage schemes, parenting affiliations, forms of cohabitation and even the ways of living together. Thus, migration flows are contributing to redefine the idea of family as traditionally perceived in our countries and, in the meanwhile, are rebuilding its structures. Given the strong intersection existing between identity and religion, this phenomenon is intensified by the move of people belonging to different faiths, which has produced the circulation of different models of family particularly shaped by religious tenets.

The pluralism that migration flows have provoked is deeply challenging western legal systems which have now to deal with new institutions transplanted by people coming from foreign backgrounds. In host nations, indeed, immigrants often claim for the recognition of their relationships born under the legal tradition of their countries of origin. Jurists are thus called upon to overcome such issues and to find a legal accommodation for these stranger family structures through flexible and dynamic solutions that can meet the demands of a multicultural society.

The diffusion of the Islamic institution called *kafala* represents an example of such phenomenon of circulation of different family models. It can be defined as a voluntary undertaking to provide for a child and take care of his or her welfare, education and protection[3]: it consists in a special guardianship with which an adult (the *kafil*) commits to take charge of the maintenance, protection and upbringing of an unaccompanied child (the *makful),* without creating any parental relationship. Indeed, this particular arrangement derives from the necessity to respect the Islamic prohibition to establish parental relationships beyond the biological filiation throughout an adoption, which, on the contrary, creates a legal relationship that is identical to that existing between parent and child.

Being this guardianship system unknown in western legal orders, the *kafala* has given rise to a number of concrete problems, principally related to its compatibility with the strict criteria imposed by domestic legislations for family reunification and intercountry adoption. The problems are exacerbated by two orders of circumstance that generally characterized Islamic Law.[4] The first relies on the fact that the Islamic law is strongly fragmentized due to the coexistence of different schools of thought and, as a consequence, inconsistent legislative texts and applications, depending on the State concerned. Therefore, the Shari'a Law appears as a multi-centric universe in front of the eyes of western scholars, who are unable to reduce to unity this multifaceted legal system. Notwithstanding, among the various interpretations and concrete applications, it is possible to find common features to use as reference. In addition to this demanding point, there is another aspect that challenges the western courts in recognizing the *kafala* placement. Indeed, the rules governing the *kafala* are part of a particular category of norms, which refer to "personal status" and thus go beyond national borders, affecting all Muslims regardless weather they are in their own country or not. This implies that a

[3] The same term "kafala" is often used also in relating a system of sponsorship migrant workers, very common in the countries of the Arab Gulf. As this form of *kafala* falls outside the sphere of family law, it will not be considered here.

[4] The term "Islamic law" refers to two related, yet distinct concepts, which are often conflated: *Sharia* and *Fiqh*.

Muslim cannot renounce to his/her personal law and, therefore, as a matter of principle, he/she cannot accept in host counties extensive interpretations of Islamic prohibitions, even if they are often the only way to ensure a recognition of certain institutions such as the *kafala*. On the other side, our legal panorama is based on secularism, so that it is quite reluctant to take into account regulatory models that are substantially religious.

Despite these difficulties, *kafala* is increasingly involving cross-border families, as well as administrative and judicial offices. However, it should be underlined that this institute is not affecting in equal way western countries. The most interested region is certainly Europe due to its geographical closeness to the majority of Muslim States or to States with a prevalence of Muslim believers. The presence of Muslim population in the EU is significant. In 2016, it was estimated at 25.8 million – 4.9% of the overall population – and it is continually growing. [2]. For this reason, the problems connected to the recognition of *kafala* are particularly significant in European States, where it constitutes a matter of particular concern and where the jurisprudence on this topic is copious. On the contrary, in other parts of the world, such as United States [3], Canada or Australia, the question is certainly well known by immigration authorities, but it does not reach the same appeal that it has in Europe.

However, the study of the Islamic *Kafala* cannot be simplistically reduced to a question of application of the rules governing private international law, but it involves several other challenging questions.

In particular, the movement of people belonging to different faiths, especially Islam, has created in Europe an overlapping of religious norms and secular legal norms which may produce not only misunderstanding in the cross-nationals practice, but also potentially violations of religious freedom. In this regard, *kafala* constitutes a particularly interesting case, since it does not simply represent a matter of care and maintenance of a child, but it is the expression of the traditional and religious values of the Islamic society.

After a survey on the essential features of the *kafala* as it is conceived in Islamic tradition, the present Chapter will first highlight how domestic legal system of Western States have dealt with *kafala* with the aim to find a possible accommodation of this institute in the internal law, specially concerning the right of family reunification and intercountry adoptions. A brief overview on the approaches undertook by different countries will shows how the *kafala* is slowly going to be a part of western host countries societies and legal systems.

Finally, the present study will investigate the consequences of the recognition of the *kafala* relating to religious freedom of the immigrant's family, with a special concern to intergenerational transmission of religious values and the religious education of children in host countries, examining both the prospective of the subjects involved: the child in custody and the adult caretakers.

The final aim of this contribution will be to evaluate how democratic and secularized societies can accept, integrate and translate into law new models of family which immigrants are bringing from their religious background.

2. Essential elements of the *kafala*

Among the means of protections and care for vulnerable children, like minor orphans or abandoned, the Islamic tradition does not include adoption.

According to the major opinion, indeed, adoption, is not admitted in Islam, being forbidden in the chapter of the Quran entitled "The Confederate Tribes":

> Allah has not made for a man two hearts in his interior. And He has not made your wives whom you declare unlawful your mothers. And he has not made your adopted sons your [true] sons. That is [merely] your saying by your mouths, but Allah says the truth, and He guides to the [right] way. Attribute them to their father: that is more just in the eyes of God, but if you know not the names of their fathers, then they are your brothers in faith and your dependents.[5]

As can be deduced from this passage, the basis of the prohibition relies on the need to preserve family-of-origin ties. This conception is strictly connected with the Islamic idea of family as an institution of holy origins in which filial bonds are a manifestation of Allah's will. Accordingly, man cannot establish by himself through artificial juridical bonds a new filial bond beyond the biological generation within marriage [4].

Due to the relevance of Allah's law as a source of legal duties, the prohibition of adoption is replaced in the national legislations of almost every Islamic Country.

Notwithstanding, the Koran also imposes a duty of brotherhood and solidarity towards orphans or abandoned children, which every Muslim must follow.

Because of the above-mentioned principles, Islamic tradition has created a special arrangement in order to ensure the care of unparented children, which does not break the links between the child and his/her biological parents and, thus, is consistent with the religious obligation. This is the *kafala,* a kind of particular guardianship or sponsorship where an adult takes charge of the needs, upbringing and protection of a minor without creating any family relationship.

Although the regulation of the *kafala* has specific characteristics in every single legal system of each Islamic country, it is possible to identify some common essential features of this institution in Islamic traditions.

In the *kafala* arrangement, the *kafil* (a married couple or an adult) commits him/herself to provide to the needs and to take care of an unparented child, the *makful*, until the reaching of the age of majority, in the same way as a good father would do.[6] In practice, through the *kafala*, the *kafil* obtains the custody of a child who was not given to the custody of his/her biological parents. It should be specified that, in accordance with the Islamic family law, parental roles are different between men and women: women have to take care of children's growth (*hadana*), while men have the duty of maintain, the custody and the parental authority [5].

Regarding the effects of the *kafala,* it does not produce a filiation with the minor, but just a responsibility over the child. The child does not interrupt the relationship with his/her biological family in a manner that he/she is not legally integrated in the new family*: makful* does not take the *kafil*'s surname and neither does obtain any inheritance rights [6].

To create a *kafala* arrangement, the *kafil* must sign a contract before a judge or a notary and some conditions are requested on procedural and also substantial grounds.

Regarding procedural obligations, Islamic law usually requires that the child is previously declared "abandoned" from the competent Court, and when biological parents are known, they are called upon to give their approval. Moreover, in different Islamic Countries, it is necessary to listen to the *makful*'s opinion and obtain his/her endorsement to *kafala*. Once *kafala* is allowed, the public competent authority keeps the task of surveillance the evolution of the child's integration in the extended family.

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[5] Quran 33:4-5.

[6] In several cases, if the foster child is a female, the *kafala* continues until she gets married.

Regarding the substantial conditions, the competent authority must ascertain the *kafil'*s suitability. In particular, he/she must be of age, be able to guarantee to the child an adequate care and a good growth, fulfil with dignity the parental role and responsibilities deriving from *kafala* and finally, but not least, he/she must believe in Islamic religion. The latter prerequisite of the belonging to Islam must be framed in a religious perspective: only a Muslim family can offer to the child the best environment which can guarantee a good education.

From this rapid analysis on the essential features of the *kafala,* clearly appears that this is an institution with a significant religious component. First, it derives from the necessity of the Islamic believers to obey a religious obligation, that is the prohibition of the adoption. Accordingly, its juridical effects are consonant with the religious prohibition to establish parental relationship beyond the biological filiation. Moreover, the suitability of the *kafil* is strictly related to his/her Islamic faith, being the *kafill* necessarily a Muslim who commits to educate in Muslim religion the child in custody. Thus, *Kafala* is not simply a matter of care and maintenance of an abandoned or orphan child, but it is the expression of the traditional social and religious values of the Islamic society.

2.1 The kafala in International Law

The Islamic institution of *kafala* has obtained a recognition in the principal international conventions relating to the protection of the child.

The 1989 New York United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the international document which first gave an explicit mention to the *kafala.* It affirms that State Parties shall ensure an alternative care for children who are permanently or temporarily deprived of their family environment and identifies the types of alternative care that these countries may provide to them. Among other tools such as adoption, family custody, or, in case of need, the placement in apposite institutions for children, the Convention includes the *kafalah* of Islamic law. It also specifies that, when countries are called upon to select among these solutions, they must consider the importance of a regular education of the child, as well as his ethnical, religious, cultural and linguistic origin.

On the contrary, *kafala* was not recognised by the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. The omission is well explained in the *Explanatory Report* which clarifies that the Convention covers all kinds of adoptions that bring about the creation of a permanent parent-child relationship, no matter whether the pre-existing legal relationship between the child and his/her mother or father is ended completely (full adoption) or only partially (simple adoption). Therefore, the Convention does not cover placement which do not establish a permanent parent-child relationship such as the *kafala* [7]. The approach of the 1993 Hague Convention reflects the main concerns of the delegates which was focused mostly on the experience of intercountry adoption among the western countries and not in the Islamic world.

This lack of recognition was filled by the 1996 Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for Protection of Children, which, after a very deliberate decision, ensures that *kafala* would be included among the measures of protection covered by the Convention. The including of the *kafala* was the result of the effort of Morocco, which previously had even asked for the redaction of an additional protocol of

the 1993 Hague Convention for the recognition of the Islamic institution. Article 3(e) specifically refers to "the placement of the child in a foster family or in institutional care, or the provision of care by *kafala*, or an analogous institution". The 1996 Hague Convention also seeks to give an appropriate regulatory structure for intercountry *kafala*. On this regard, Article 33 requires that, if a Contracting State contemplates the provision of care of a child by *kafala*, and this provision of care is to take place in another Contracting State, it shall first consult the authority of the latter State. It also requires the consent to the placement by the authority of the receiving state.

While the 1993 Hague Convention excludes *kafala* from its scope of application, providing that adoption may take place only if the competent authorities of the State of origin have established that the child is adoptable, the 1996 Hague Convention poses to all contracting States the obligation to recognise a *kafala* measure taken by the authorities of another contracting State.

Moreover, the co-operation mechanism set out in this Convention provides several guarantees, which should be promoted to ensure that a placement is carried out in compliance with the two laws in question and the best interests of the child. Anyway, the obligation to recognise the *kafala* does not imply, per se, any obligation of the States to admit the child to its territory, an issue that is determined on by the laws on migration applicable in that State.

3. The relevance of the kafala in Western Countries

Although its recognition in some international documents, the Islamic *kafala* has been until recently a concept almost unknown across western countries, both of civil and of common law. In this legal tradition, indeed, the typical tool aimed at protecting unaccompanied children is the adoption, which, on the contrary, is not admitted by Islamic law since it establishes a parental bond beyond the biological affiliation. The divergence between those countries whose legal system is based on or influenced by Sharia and those of civil-law and common-law has provoked a significant gap in the protection of children under a *kafala* placement. Thus, the unawareness about this Islamic institution has given rise in western countries to a series of questions related to its recognition and enforcement and also to the applicable law and jurisdiction.

The most concerning issues in receiving States has regarded the right of family reunification and intercountry adoption, since, in a nutshell, the child under *kafala* is not consider as a family member of the person who looks after him or her. As for family reunification, this means that a *kafil* who lives in Europe has not the right to remove the child subjected to *kafala* from the country of origin and bring him with the "*kafala* family". On the other side, as for intercountry adoptions, *kafala* rises problems in relation with the wish of western citizens to adopt orphan children from countries in which Shari'a Law is observed or also with the will of Islamic couples who want to form a family of their *makful* in the host country, but they are not allowed to adopt him/her because of the ban imposed by their personal religious status. Overall, it is problematic that the persons involved, who generally are used to live together and have strong emotional bonds, have no possibility to legally constitute a family unit with the child placed under *kafala*.

The question is of extreme importance since the lack of certainty in the implementation of the institution may lead to adverse consequences for the child (inability to know and access his or her origins, unstable legal status, limited access to

social services, obstacles to his or her rights and cultural and religious identity being respected, etc.) or even give rise to abuse and violations of children's rights.

In this context, national administrative authorities, as well as legislative bodies and national courts have dealt with *kafala* and the possible accommodation of this institute in domestic legal systems. Solutions in receiving States vary greatly and policies are strongly impacted by politic influences. Moreover, recognition and enforcement of *kafala* placements in another legal system is extremely complex as it involves various areas of law (civil law, family law, citizenship and immigration law, etc.). Nonetheless, it's possible to argue the existence of a general trend, for which national practices are striving to find possible solution in the view of the best interest of the child.

This study presents and examines the practices implemented in eight receiving States, chosen as examples due to their relevance for a high presence of immigrant population and in order to offer a global overview, taking into consideration different geographical areas.

Australian law is deemed fair in accommodating the needs of the Muslim population. It considers and recognizes the Islamic prohibition of adoption. At the same time, in Australia it may be possible for a child who has undergone a *kafala* arrangement to be taken into account in a permanent visa application as a member of the family unit of the person who has been awarded guardianship under the *kafala*.

In Belgium, *a kafala* cannot be equated with an adoption given that it does not create any parental relationship. Nonetheless, accordingly to the Code of International Private Law, a *kafala* decision may be recognised if it does not contravene some fundamental principle of Belgian law, such the public order. If recognised, the effects of a *kafala* are similar to unofficial guardianship. Furthermore, a law entered into force in 2005 has introduced in the Civil Code a specific regulation for the adoption of minors coming from States where the law applicable knows neither the adoption nor the placement with a view of adoption. Following this amendment, it became possible for individuals seeking to care for a child through *kafala* to adopt the child according to Belgian law. Thus, the removal of a child to Belgium with a view to adoption and the adoption itself are not prohibited, but are subject to a strict procedure, requiring in particular a report to be sent by the child's State of origin to the Belgian authorities, proof of consent if the child has reached the age of twelve, and an agreement between the authorities of both States (State of origin and Belgium) to entrust the child to its adoptive parents.

In Denmark, there a no domestic laws concerning *kafala* placements. Anyway, the *kafala* arrangement is never recognised as an adoption and, therefore, it cannot be automatically converted into an adoption upon the child entering Denmark. Nonetheless, an individual who has the guardianship of the child would use international private law including the 1996 Hague Convention. Indeed, such foreign placements can theoretically be recognised in Denmark under certain circumstances as a kinship care or guardianship placement. This means that the adults cannot have the same rights over the child, as if they are a biological parent. Moreover, the child may be granted only a temporary visa to reside in Denmark which does not assure that the child can stay permanently in Denmark. However, after a certain lapse of time, if a child enters through a guardianship placement and habitually resides in Denmark, there is the possibility that the guardians can make an application for a domestic adoption according to Danish laws.

A singular and different position has assumed France, where the Law on International Adoption of 2001 has introduced a norm which explicitly forbids the adoption of a minor under a *kafala* if the adopters (or even one of them) are from a country where the adoption is forbidden.[7] Adoption of a foreign minor also may not be ordered where his or her personal law prohibits that institution. The law provides also an exception of this general prohibition. Indeed, the adoption is permitted if some conditions are cumulatively met: the adopters must live in France, their union must be regulated by the French law and, last but not least, the minor must have been born and must have lived permanently in France. Despite the introduction of this norm, the jurisprudence has shown opposition and confusion and the judges has continued in many cases to recognize the adoption of children under *kafala*. Furthermore, in 2014 a ministerial circular stated that foreign *kafala* decisions introduce a *recueil légal*, that is a measure of protection that does not create parentage. This is a temporary measure which is equivalent to a guardianship for children who are orphaned or abandoned – with or without established parental ties – and may be revoked.

In Germany there are no specific legal provision ruling the recognition of the *kafala*. Anyway, there are other institution in German legal panorama that can be used to legitimise a placement of a child and give access and residence rights according to strict conditions. Specifically, the German law considers *kafala* placements as akin to a long-term foster care placement combined with the guardianship of the child. In some cases, *kafala* can also be comparable to kinship care if there is a kinship relationship between the persons involved.[8] After two years of taking care of the child, there is the possibility for *kafil* parents to file a request for a national adoption to the German Court. In such cases, the Court will take into account the opinion of the local Child and Youth Services.

In Italy the question about the recognition of the *kafala* seems intricate, due to the lack of any specific normative reference that addresses the issue. Moreover, it should be noted a significant delay of the country in ratifying the 1996 Hague Convention, entered into force in 2016. Over these years, the Italian case law has evolved in its ruling on immigration provisions regarding family reunification and their applicability to situations such as kafala, turning from a restrictive interpretation towards a larger interpretation. The focus was mainly on the article 29 of the *Decreto legislativo* 25 July 1998 (also called *Testo Unico sull'immigrazione*), which permits third country nationals, when they are Italian residents, to obtain family reunification with minor children, specifying that "children adopted or fostered or subject to guardianship are all equally qualified as children". The turning point in this scenario is represented by a decision of the United Sections of the Court of Cassation, the higher appeal judicial body, which in 2013 determined the principles and criteria to follow on the theme.[9] In its ruling the Italian Court admitted the entrance in the national territory of a child entrusted under kafala to an Italian citizen residing in Italy for the purpose of family reunification.

[7] Law no. 2001-111 of 6 February 2001 inserted new provisions in the Civil Code concerning intercountry adoption, including the new Article 370-3 in Chapter III (Choice-of-law rule concerning the legal parent child relationship established by adoption and the effect in France of adoptions granted abroad) in Title VIII on legal parent-child relationships by adoption.

[8] Section 33 SGB VIII Kinder – und Jugendhilfe.

[9] Court of Cassation, United Sections, n. 21108 of 9 September 2013. See also Cfr. Cass. 20 marzo 2008, n. 7472.

Indeed, the Italian Supreme Court's Joint Division has expressed that:

> The nihil obstat to the entry in Italy requested in the interest of a minor, non-EU citizen, in custody of an Italian citizen domiciled in Italy with a decision of kafalah placement pronounced by the foreign judge whenever the minor is in charge of or lives together in the State of origin with the Italian citizen or serious reasons of health impose that the minor should be personally assisted by the latter.

Spanish legal framework has addressed the recognition of *kafala* in the latest reforms to the Law on International Adoption.[10] On one hand Article 19 makes impossible to declare an adoption for children, when it is prohibited by their domestic law. On the other hand, Article 34 generally considers the question of the legal effects of decisions delivered by foreign authorities regarding child protection institutions that do not produce affiliation links or any form of parentage. Specifically, it states that foreign institutions aimed at protecting minors which, according to their domestic law, do not determine any affiliation relationship will be equated in Spain to foster care or, where appropriate, to a guardianship, as regulated in Spanish law. To this end, the law poses some conditions. In particular, the substantial effects of the foreign institution must be the same of those of Spanish foster care or those of a guardianship. Moreover, the effects of the foreign protection institution must not violate the Spanish public order and, at the same time, must fulfil the best interest of the minor. The norm thus can be referred also to the *kafala* placement, since the *kafil* and the *makful* are not in a parental relationship. In this way the Spanish Law carries out an equation based on the function of the *kafala*, that is similar with the one of the Spanish foster care. Once *kafala* is recognized, it will take exactly the typical effects of the Spanish institutions of foster care. Even if in Spain the *kafala* cannot be implemented as an adoption, its recognition as a foster care could facilitate a possible future constitution *ex novo* of an adoption of the child in custody [8].

The system gives relevance to the law of the country of origin of the child, in addition to the pertinent domestic law. Indeed, accordingly to the general prohibition of adoption typical of the Islamic States, the USA do not allow to US citizens to adopt a Muslim child overseas. Anyway, it is possible to obtain through a kafala the custody or guardianship in accordance with the law of the Muslim country of origin, and after that, claims the issuance of immigrant visas for orphans. Once arrived in US's territory as an orphan, the child can then be adopted in by the US citizens. For the purpose of emigration and adoption in the United States, the document giving legal custody must be valid under the law of the country in which it was obtained. This may take the form of a written consent from a Shari'a court or the competent authority, or a provision of law from the country where the child resides indicating the guardianship decree implies permission for the child to emigrate and be adopted in another country. To this end, the consular officer reviewing the case may even contact the Islamic court that issued the decree in order to have the confirmation of compliance with all relevant rules.

In US the recognition of the kafala seems effective, since the issuance of the immigrant visa in these cases essentially depends on demonstrating that the Shari'a law in force in the concerned country actually allows for the child to be adopted overseas.

Like the other western legal traditions, in the English legal system the main institution dedicated to the care of unparented children is the adoption, which, as it has

[10] Law 54/2007, of 28 December, on Intercountry Adoption, as amended by Law 26/2015, of 28 July, which reforms the child and adolescent protection system.

been said before, is forbidden for Islamic believers. To give Muslim residing in UK the possibility to take care of an abandoned child, the 2002 Adoption and Children Act has regulated the new institute of the special guardianship. Although there is no direct reference to *kafala* and there are no provisions that can specifically be applied to Muslim family [9], this new institute seems to answer to the needs of those who are not allowed to adopt a child because of the religious prohibition, but they want anyhow to take care of him/her. This intention was clearly expressed in 2000 by the then-Prime Minister Tony Blair, who, in the White Paper preceding the reform of the Adoption Law, had specified that the new institute of special guardianship was proposed because «some minority ethnic communities have religious and cultural difficulties with adoption as it is set out in law» [10]. The English law requires, to obtain a special guardianship order, that the special guardian must be aged eighteen or over and must not be a parent of the child in question. Regarding the effects of the special guardianship, a special guardian appointed by the order has parental responsibility for the child and is entitled to exercise parental responsibility to the exclusion of any other person with parental responsibility for the child. The special guardianship order does not affect the operation of any enactment or rule of law which requires the consent of more than one person with parental responsibility in a matter affecting the child; or any rights which a parent of the child has in relation to the child's adoption or placement for adoption.

In this way, the English special guardianship seems to reproduce the Islamic institution of *kafala*, insofar as it produces its main effect to simply create a parental responsibility over the child (until the reaching of the age of majority) and it does not dissolve the child's parental relationship.

From a global analysis of the implementation of the kafala in western countries has emerged an increasing relevance of this Islamic child placement, which is taken into account in different aspects. First, there is a clear position on the impossibility of treating a *kafala* as an adoption, respecting in this way the prohibition imposed by Sharia Law. Indeed, none of the examined States regard *kafala* established abroad as adoption. The relevance of the *kafala* in internal laws has proven to be effective especially in those States which require that the assessment of *kafil* candidates should be in accordance with the law of the Nation of the child (e.g., USA). In addition, some countries have introduced specific legal framework (e.g., France, Spain, Belgium). There are also cases of bilateral agreements between certain receiving States and States of origin (e.g., France, Spain). Cooperation among States is also promising, due to implementation of the 1996 Hague Convention or protocol applicable to the actors involved. However, every State is attentive to the interest of the child to have a family environment and to not remain without any protection. Therefore, legislations – or domestic courts where there is no specific legislation – have recognised the effects of *kafala* granted in a foreign country and have treated it as a form of guardianship or curatorship, or as placement with a view to adoption.

This brief overview on the approaches undertook by different States shows how this institute is going to be a part of Western legal systems.

4. Right to freedom of religion and *kafala*

The expansion of this institute in western legal systems poses several issues about the coexistence not only of different normative orders, but also of different religions. As it has been said before, the *kafala* is not just a simple custody, but it is an institute with a

deep religious nature, which necessary involves the Muslim faith. Thus, the necessity to investigate the consequences of the *kafala* in the field of the right to religious freedom is very strong, especially with regard to the subjects involved: the child e his/her adult caretakers (for convenience of reference and due to their substantial role of parents, they will be mentioned in the next paragraphs as parents).

From the moment the *kafala* is created, the child (*the makful*), even if he/she maintains every legal bond with the biological family, starts to belong to the *kafil*'s family environment.

From that moment, the life of the child will be totally immersed in the Muslim faith: the observance of certain practices of worship, a dietary regulation, the wearing of distinctive clothes or head covering, observance of holidays and days of rest are just some examples of this shaping. And the situation could be more meaningful if the *makful* is a girl, due to the widespread Islamic view of the woman as a subject under the authority of her father or her husband.

The strong involvement of the child in this religious environment may arise some questions on the impact on the possibility of the child to exercise his/her religious rights.

A special concern regards the Islamic legal tradition according to which a Muslim is not allowed to choose a religion other than his/her father. Thus, the *makful,* even if at age or with an advance level of maturity, has not the possibility to leave the family's religion and make a different religious decision. He/she has not the positive right to change religion and to choose another one. Moreover, he/she also has not the negative right to choose no religion at all.

Also the right of the child to be different from the religious belief of his/her family may be crashed when the child may arise the wish to integrate and enjoy the religious tradition of the host European Country [11]

In general, it has been stressed that for many children the right to freedom of religion may mean freedom from religious restrictions that impinge detrimentally on their lives.

Actually, because in most cases the child entrusted in custody is coming from another Muslim family, the risk of forced conversion is not so high. On the contrary in this case it should be taken into account the right to carry on in the religion his/her has practised or been brought into.

4.1. The child's right to religious freedom

Historically in international law the right of the child to freedom of religion has always been a contentious matter [11]. The struggle on this issue is due to several factors.

It has been noted that the right of the child is in relationship (and potential conflict) with the interest of several communities to which the child belongs: the parents, the family, the state and sometimes the religious community [12].

In this dispute about the child's religious freedom the rights-responsibility of the parents to educate their child have a special importance. The religion of children seems to have been brought within the realm of the rights of their adult caretakers, since several international provisions recognize the rights of parents to ensure the religious education of their children in conformity with their own convictions [13].

Moreover, unlike socio-economic rights, recognizing children's civil and political rights, such as the right to freedom of religion, requires an acknowledgment that children have rights exercisable independently of, or even in opposition to, their parents [14].

4.1.1. Legal Framework

The one binding instrument which explicitly recognizes the right of the child to religious freedom is the 1989 United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The treaty considers the children's rights in a comprehensive manner and all its provisions are informed by four guiding principles: non-discrimination (Article 2), the best interest of the child (Article 3), the right to life, survival, and development (Article 6), and the child's right to be heard and have his/her views taken into account in all matters in accordance with the child's age and maturity (Article 12).

The child's right to religious freedom is entailed in Article 14, which provides that States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. Article 14 was modelled on Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which proclaims the right to freedom of religion of *everyone*.

Comparing the two provisions, immediately appears that Article 14 CRC omits two elements which, on the contrary, enjoy an express protection in Article 18 ICCPR: the freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of the own choice and the freedom to manifest this religion or believe. This lack raises some doubts about the scope of the child's right to religious freedom as enshrined in Article 14 CRC. Notwithstanding, the commentators are almost agreed that Article 14 CRC affords the same level of protection given by Article 18 ICCPR and prohibits, even if implicitly, any coercion which would impair the child's freedom to have or adopt a religion of the child's choice [15, 13, 14]. However, it's remarkable that at the completion of the first reading of the Convention, the draft article on religion expressly guaranteed to children the right to have or adopt a religion or belief of their choice [15]. But the agreement on this text was not possible due to the fact that in many States children follow their parents' religion as a matter of divine law. Thus, the omit seems intentional.

Article 14, at paragraph 3, of the CRC is identical to Article 18(3) ICCPR insofar as it limits the freedom to manifest one's religion or belief where prescribed by law and necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

But the most significant boundary to child's freedom of religion is entailed in paragraph 2 of Article 14 CRC. It provides that State Parties shall respect the rights and the duties of parents to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the child's evolving capacities.

The recognition of the parental role is well established in international law: it is proclaimed also in Article 18 (4) of the ICCPR and in Article 2 of the First Protocol of the ECHR (which is the one convention provided of a jurisdictional enforcement mechanism), which affirms that "No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions".

Article 14 (2) is said to be a compromise provision designed to address potential conflict between children's rights and parents' rights in this sensitive area [14]. On one hand, it clearly recognizes the role of parents in the religious upbringing of their children and, in this way, appears to give priority to the rights of parents in the exercise of the child's rights to religious freedom. On the other hand, it contains two elements as a counterbalance: the evolving capacities of the child and the rights of parents to provide only "directions". This should mean that the parental "direction" cannot involve any

form of physical or mental violence and must involve taking into account the child's view in line with the child's age and understanding.

The provision is consonant with Article 5 of the CRC, which establishes the "parents' right and duty to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by their children of their Convention rights". It seems to guarantee parental primacy in the exercise by children of their rights.

Moreover, it has been noted that, apart from Article 5, parental rights are explicitly mentioned in regard to freedom of religion, while they are not mentioned in articles regarding other rights of the child [10]. If the reason is the relative immaturity of the child to make his or her own decisions and exercise autonomous choice, this reason applies to many other rights. Evidently, regarding religion, parents are seen as having a right to shape their child's identity.

4.1.2. Theoretical Models

The key concept in the theories about the child's right to religious freedom is the autonomy of the child, his or her capacity to exercise rights independently of others and the acknowledgment that the child is a person capable of self-determination and not just an object of concern [16].

Taking the autonomy of the child as a presumption, the liberal model views the child as the holder of an independent right to religious freedom and nobody has the right to interfere.

For example, John White argues: «if the parents have an obligation to bring up their child as a morality autonomous person, they cannot at the same time have the right to indoctrinate him/her with any beliefs whatsoever, since some beliefs may contradict those on which his/her educational endeavours should be based». Also J. Feinberg has identified the child's religious freedom as a sub-species of the child's "right to an open future", which can be violated if there is religious indoctrination of such severity that the child has little or no chance of leaving that religion for another [17].

On the contrary, there is another stream, often inspired by some religious principles, that regrets the view of the child as an autonomous legal subject [18]. He or she has no independent legal right of religious liberty in the family, assuming that parents' and children's convictions must be harmonious. In particular Ahdar and Leigh underline the dangers of the liberal theories about the child's religious freedom. In his opinion granting to children legal religious rights is potentially damaging to family integrity and parental confidence. Moreover, children, even mature ones, must still be shielded from the consequences of making a "bad" religious decision [18].

Most recently, a study of Sylvie Langlaude [19] on the right of the child to religion freedom under international law has advanced a new balanced position: it neither states that a child cannot have an independent right to religious freedom, nor does it state either that the autonomy of the child is the most important aspect (because the child has a right to religion freedom without necessarily having powers of enforcement or waiver over it). She undertook her analysis finding the major lacks in the work of the United Nation Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Committee, in her view, puts religion in a negative light, since it is implicit in her work that being religious may be negative for children and insists very much that the child must be able to leave a religion. Furthermore, the Committee tends to treat the child as an autonomous believer, ignoring his/her relationship with the family and the community and creating in this way a set of rights of the child against the parents. On the contrary, for the author the right of the child

to religious freedom is based on the interest of the child to be unhindered in his/her growth as an independent actor but always in the matrix of parents and religious community. Thus the child has a right to religious freedom not against the parents, but against the state. The child has a negative right that the state should not interfere in the relationship between child, parents and religious community, and the child has a positive right to protection, procedures, and substantive benefits.

5. Conclusions

Due to the growing relevance of the Islamic *kafala* in western societies, European legal systems cannot ignore it and pass it over. Its diffusion throughout European territory is by now a factual situation to face.

As the eminent scholar Alan Watson has argued, the success of a legal transplant will depend on the ability of the host national legal order to adapt to the new decontextualized model, but also on the compatibility of these models with the values and principles that characterise the host countries [20].

Thus, there is the necessity to reconcile the features of this institution, the *kafala*, which derive from religious tenets, with the principles which govern secular States, because if they don't learn to cohabit, they will clash.

About the case of the legal transplant of the *kafala*, one of the most concerning issue regards the right to freedom of religion of the child in custody in front of the parental right/duty to educate him/her in the Islamic religion.

Following the liberal stream, which views the child as an autonomous holder of rights, the *kafala* arrangement would not be accepted, since with this special guardianship the religious rights of the child are strictly connected with the parental upbringing. On the contrary, the *kafala* would be consonant with the conception which affirms that the child has not any independent religious rights. But both theories lead to a potential conflict between the secular legal order and the religious norm. In the former model there would be a breach of the parental rights supported by some religious tenets, and in the latter model the right to religious freedom, which is a fundamental principle of a democratic society, would be at risk.

In this way the balanced theory of Sylvie Langlaude [19] would be the most attractive, insofar it affirms that the child has some religious rights, but only against the State, not against the parents. Seeing at the *kafala* from the perspective of this model, the child has not only the right that the State does not interfere in their education, preventing parents from bringing up their child in accordance with their own religion, but most of all, the child has a right against the state to be brought up in their parents' faith. This means that the child does not have a right to be protected from their parents' belief: it is no coercive to bring a child into a religious community. The state has a duty to protect the choice of the child to join the religion of his/her choice, but only after the child has come of age.

But the religious freedom of parents with regard to the nurture of their children is not absolute but just qualified [21]. This means that the exercise of their religious rights could be subject to certain limitations and balanced with other rights or principles, first of all the well-being of the child. The fundamental principle which is able to limit parental rights is the best interest of the child. It is enshrined in Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that in all actions concerning children the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration. It is regarded as a general

principle which underpins all the other provisions of the Convention, but it is also by now considered, more generally, a principle of interpretation in international law [15].

There is a lack of agreement over what constitutes the children's interest, because, as it has been underlined [22], deciding what is best for a child poses a question no less ultimate that the purposes and values of life itself. Notwithstanding, it is possible to identify a core of this concept, which, without any doubt, reject any form of violence, abuse or maltreatment. In this way, it is possible to affirm that the child has the right that the state protects his/her against the parents but only in certain circumstances, when the parental direction happens with physical or mental violence or involves the child in harmful religious postures and practices.

With the firm condition of the respect of the principle of the best interest of the child, the special guardianship of *kafala* may be able to find its own accommodation among the values of the host legal order.

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The Value of Religion in the Family and the Maternal Role. Educational Resources in the Process of Integration

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Abstract. Immigration separates families and interrupts geographical continuity, friendships and processes of solidarity and mutual trust. Religious experience, on the other hand, can strengthen the sense of personal identity to make these processes even more effective. It is therefore important to explore the role of religious affiliations in the family integration process. This is what the study presented here attempts to do, followed by a specific and in-depth exploration of the maternal role aimed at maintaining the religious dimension as part of migration processes, educational practices, and the process of mediation with host country traditions.

Keywords. religiosity, integration, maternal role, education, identity

1. Introduction

The recognition of freedom of speech, conscience and religion is among the principles upheld by some of the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as well as of National Constitutions.

In addition, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), attributing a pivotal role to diversity as a necessary and ally element for democracy, states that «Respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation, in a climate of mutual trust and understanding are among the best guarantees of international peace and security» [1]. And by culture we mean «The set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and it encompasses, in addition to arts and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs» [2].

Critical issues, determined by an ineffective political management of diversity, increase and become more urgent when there are at stake not only the organizational dimensions of coexistence, but also each person's most intimate and profound aspects, connected to morality and conscience [3].

"Migration as a total social fact" [4] is an expression already used two decades ago by the Algerian sociologist and philosopher A. Sayad to underscore the complexity of

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the migration experience affecting all the dimensions of human life (economic, political, cultural, relational, emotional, cognitive, religious, etc.); dimensions that are interconnected by constant references and entanglements, hard to be separated. Sayad also points out how human migrations have a way to reveal contradictions, paradoxes, difficulties and resources of societies involved in the process and in the relations between locals and foreigners.

Dealing with a dimension like religion in a complex human phenomenon is a delicate and risky arbitrary operation, and yet essential to further research, in-depth studies and raise awareness, needed to better assess the situation that has lately taken on a greater importance.

2. Religion, migration, education: joints and perspectives

Historically, the encounter between different religious expressions has always existed; however, places of contact and conflict have increased because of migration and globalization. Therefore, faced with historical and contingent situations that are irreversible, we are constantly invited to critically read these data and to accompany in these contexts the growth and dialogue of *people* who have the urgent need to search for an existential meaning and build a convivial community. In addition to an analytical commitment to understanding, then, it is necessary to provide guidance and support to new generations and their challenges, which is a specific pedagogical task [5].

In the personal life of an individual, migration represents a crucial passage where paradigms, representations, perspectives, and religious experience are under scrutiny, which may or may not be accompanied by well-defined practices and choices and be part of a broader search for spirituality and meaning, or may change significantly in the movement from one context to another and in the experience of the journey itself.

Hence, during the migrants' journeys sometimes there are no concrete, material elements sanctioning an important alteration of their religious perspective, and there are changes and inner transformations that are difficult to grasp. "Migration is usually a response to changes in one's life (such as marriage, divorce, and parenthood), or a desire to improve one's standard of living (such as moving to a better neighborhood or a bigger house). It is generally assumed that migration is less responsive to variables like religion, that is, to variables that are more about ideology and less about material standard of living" [6].

Indeed, religion is a relevant factor influencing the migration process and integration. Even Myer argues that:

> Religion can influence socio-economic and other integration outcomes through (1) its role as a marker of identity, (2) individual characteristics attributed to religious affiliation, (3) resources acquired through religious participation, (4) signals brought about by religious affiliation, and finally (5) overt discrimination of majorities against certain religious minorities [7].

It is not always easy to understand, for example, how religious affiliation can be associated with better results – such as, an easier access to a job opportunity, or receiving financial support from religious organizations, etc... as is the case of Christian immigrants, while affiliation with non-Western religions often represents an obstacle [8], becoming the target of prejudices and stereotypes, and therefore of

discrimination. Religion can hinder or promote migrants' integration, but it is not clear and probably not easy to describe which experiences really bring it about. Migration experiences question and challenge the relationship with one's religion "of origin" and affects intra and interpersonal dynamics that frequently foster contradictions and internal conflicts.

> In addition, the lived religion of migrants is shaped not only by their life before and after migration but also by the contexts in which they settle and the translocal social networks in which they participate. (...) But adapting to new circumstances after migration can also give rise to tensions and divisions within previously solidary religious collectivities. This means that the balance between continuity and change in migrants' engagement with religion is dynamic [9].

Because of the ethnocentric perspective which the individual spontaneously embraces, religion has been often considered the cause for a lack of integration, or tensions and detachments from the host society.

> Controversies are especially intense around claims that the practice of some forms of religion can be detrimental to the status of women, incompatible with western ideas of citizenship, resistant to the ideals of universal education, and so on. Indeed, some migrants distance themselves from their religious backgrounds for these reasons, although relatively little research has been conducted on these contentious issues [9].

Migrants often struggle to be fully committed to their religion in the host society, where public events are reserved to the "official" or predominant religion. Religious freedom, in order to fully benefit from, entails many mediations, the assumption of private rather than public places, and revising orientations and directions received in the primary educational processes. This difficult compromise becomes apparent, even in the eyes of local people, only in "emerging" events or situations such as the celebration of religious feasts, ritual moments of prayer, or matters related to food and nutrition, etc. Even some issues concerning children's education according to religious choices might be controversial and depend on how parents rethink and live out their own religious belief and practice.

More often, children and teenagers come up with progressive visions of synthesis, where the conflictual cultural elements are contaminated in various ways, up to the point of creating a real personal vision of the world, generally endowed with sufficient internal coherence to support the development of their own identity" [10]. And that is why many foreign parents are open to question, revise and negotiate their traditional religious identity, by engaging more with the new reality in which they live.

Religion, as a body of beliefs, feelings, rites binding an individual or a group to what is considered sacred, as a social and symbolic context contributes to shaping and fulfilling a spiritual tension, a search for meaning [11]. It helps migrants find their own balance, but also to stay connected with their past and create new ways of community membership in the present. If then religious pluralism, like cultural pluralism, are considered vital conditions for a society that wants to be truly defined as democratic, the identification of areas to explore the relationship between migrants' own culture, religion of origin, and the one they come in contact within destination countries represents a key factor to assess the health condition of a democratic structure.

The research presented in the next pages stems out from these convictions and premises, by providing an opportunity to some special people –parents and in particular mothers, who combine their educational and care role with cultural transmission as well– to talk about the value of religion as a driving force for social cohesion, a source of individual and collective recognition, a factor of loyalty to the culture of origin and at the same time of openness –and this not without tensions and ambiguities– to the one experienced in the host country.

3. Maternal role in religious transmission

Before mentioning merits and achievements of this study, it is necessary to explain the intimate connection between the maternal role and the transmission of religious values belonging to the culture of origin, a connection that sheds light on the reasons why the survey practically focused on female parenting by involving in the research only foreign mothers.

A subtle wisdom marks the work of education and care; in fact, "knowing how to stay close at the beginning" is a typically maternal trait. It is mothers who first get lost in the wonder of their own generative endeavour and foster that attitude in the child, whose eyes wide open to the world make wonder the first way of learning. In fact, knowledge comes from amazement, and it is amazement that enhances a unique look on the world.

In that openness to life, a covenant of trust is perpetuated between generations, and in the future, when a child's birth provides the opportunity to experience an on-going awakening also to those who are around. The beginning of this primary relationship means for the child to be an open question, an individual totally absorbed in the search of definition of one's very self.

An *initial* educational practice (which gives them the opportunity to be close to children who *begin* to talk, walk, play together, reason, hypothesize, think, leave their marks in the first doodles, problematize, ask questions, even the existential ones that are often difficult to address, the day after the onset of abstract thought: "where do we come from?", "what is death?", "who is God?") has always marked the educational care that mothers dispense to their children together with the gift of language, nourishment and care for the body, the conquest of independence.

The maternal role is, therefore, carried out by accompanying children to get to know reality, including those spaces of ineffable mystery, of sacredness that involves the world and life's situations: mothers "begin", open to the quest for meaning with their own presence, and create connections, links, between the "here" and the "elsewhere".

The maternal "sensitivity" records the jolts, the transformations of the child and is always there to provide references, insights to understand the days unfolding. It even involves the religious sphere; in fact, the female religious sensitivity is more pronounced and active than the male one, aiming to grasp the variety of links present in the different levels of life and nourishing openness towards the transcendent.

In cultures, religious *socialization* has always been of a *maternal* nature, attesting to a greater female participation in religious rites and practices, greater support to rules within a religious context and, therefore, in general, a greater devotion and care for reflection and attention to their own interiority [12]. However, lately, even women are failing to achieve this goal, for they too are experiencing the transformations of

secularization, of changes linked to gender roles and functions, of places suitable for their participation in the life of religious communities [13].

The religious transmission coming about through a woman has an *intimacy* feature, meaning a direct, implicit, essential passage, which is often not explained, but breathed in. Pope Francis in a recent address to catechists, also including parents and grandparents, recalls that:

> The faith must be transmitted in dialect, in the dialect of intimacy, of that language, that is, that comes from the heart, that is inherent, that is precisely the most familiar, the closest to everyone. If there is no dialect, the faith is not passed on fully and well [14].

The intimate dimension of the maternal "tale" has a deep interreligious root, that is, transversal to several religious expressions.

The coming of a child changes a mother's perspective on the world to a very different extent than it does for a father. It commits to an irrefutable pact aimed at the search and verification of persistent, long-lasting meanings: not only for herself or for the time limited to the present or the immediate future. It is not just a matter of disclosing the reasons directing her actions and underlying her choices, so that they can be viewed as a starting point for life for the unfolding of the child's existence, but more radically to bear witness –even in uncertainty (and perhaps precisely by virtue of that), in moments of bewilderment, such as migration– to the essential trust in the possibility that existence has great motivations, as the mothers interviewed stated, to the point of touching what Frankl defines as the "unconditional meaning" or "superior meaning", [15] which surpasses the human ability to grasp an all-encompassing sense and yet confers on the latter dignity and legitimacy.

Here it is based the ontological primacy of openness to unconditional search as an educational tool to strengthen parental responsibility, in the challenge and in the task of sparking in the child the desire to find meaning in every existential situation and the confidence of being able to transform what is happening into an opportunity for specific human growth. This is an attitude of deep spiritual value –to which religion gives forms in its first domestic expressions– opening to the encounter with the other in interpersonal relationships, as with the Other in his highest and most mysterious expression, that is God.

4. Research. Methodical notes according to the phenomenological approach

As a reference methodology, the qualitative research that was carried out used the phenomenological-eidetic approach, borrowed from Husserl's phenomenology [16, 17] and applied in a pedagogical perspective [18, 19, 20].

By considering phenomenology as an eidetic science, Husserl aims to explain the essences of what happens and is lived by the subjects, essences that are to be understood as constant and general structures of experience. Thus, as Gallagher and Zahavi suggest, phenomenology "does not have as its purpose the description of experience in an idiosyncratic sense, of the here and now that each one inevitably experiences, but rather tries to capture the stable structures of experience" [21]. Structures that identify at the same time what is essential of an experience and the

sources of meaning, as they are seen in what appears by applying the phenomenological reduction.

Essences do not exist independently from the world and the subject that captures them, since awareness and the world are linked in a structural unity. Therefore, looking for the essence means above all to immerse oneself into experience, to welcome its peculiarities and uniqueness, but also to discern its fundamental and invariable constitution, which for Husserl represents the ontological foundation of the empirical sciences. As L. Mortari explains, «Looking for the essence means going beyond the contingent, the unique and singular quality of a phenomenon, to identify the essential predicates» [22].

4.1. The subjects of the research

Foreign families are a very interesting social topic as a paradigm of the systemic nature of migratory paths, where common dimensions and peculiar aspects, individual and collective biographies, come together within a circle of references, stimuli, and conditionings.

The research, with a specific explanatory goal in mind, examined the personal religious experience of some foreign mothers, the representations connected to it, the elements of continuity and problematic issues with tradition, the opinion regarding interreligious dialogue and other matters concerning the religious education of their children.

The study was carried out with the support of "Mondo Aperto" (Open World), a cultural association of social promotion, located in Piacenza, a city in northern Italy with a university campus, and operating on behalf of immigrant families to protect their rights and make them aware of the opportunities for "integration" available in the city. Mothers coming from different religious denominations and with children of significant age differences replied to the "Open World" invitation.

A focus group was set up online, while the more detailed interviews, with the same grids of semi-structured questions, were done in presence encouraging thus an ever-deeper communication.

The focus group included 9 mothers, coming from Tunisia, Iran, Senegal, China, Ecuador, Morocco, and belonging to different religious groups (Catholic Christian, Evangelical Christian, Islamic, and Buddhist). They were between 25 and 52 years old, living in Italy since many years (on an average, over 15 years), with a good understanding of the local language and culture; and they shared their experience spanning over a rather long period of time.

The presence of linguistic-cultural mediators was crucial for a mutual understanding and deconstruction of concepts that, although commonly used, had instead very different viewpoints and interpretations.

4.2. Knowledge-building devices: focus groups and narrative pedagogy

Getting to know the experience of reality from the actual subjects who lived it gives the opportunity to understand situations from within, aiming at setting up a knowledge for educational practice that is constantly referring to the horizons of meaning of the subjects involved in the educational processes. This knowledge comes directly from those people who share the stories of their own experiences of the world.

The researcher's task is to give voice to those experiences by faithfully collecting them, refraining from using personal convictions, assumptions, and predefined interpretations in order to understand them. And this is possible by applying research tools that open a way of access to the lived experience. In this case, the focus group and the collection of short narratives were set up by providing a grid of questions first sent online to each person and then reviewed during an actual meeting (when more detailed interviews took place in person).

The narrative practice touches on a "suggestive" register by which intuitions and deep meanings are not communicated directly but are found just after listening to the story: "to evoke", "to suggest", leading the thought to grasp what "is underneath", as the etymology *suggèrere* indicates, soliciting latent understandings. R. Atkinson writes in this regard, "Narration makes the implicit explicit, sheds light on what is hidden, gives shape to what has no form, and brings clarity where there was confusion" [22].

In this way, experience is configured as a "manifest reality" which is counterbalanced by an "invisible reality" consisting in the dynamics of relationship and influence, concerns and defences, aspirations, ambivalences, and contradictions, and above all by that driving force of educational practices, that is intentionality.

4.3. The results of the research

At the end of the research, which means after collecting all testimonies, reorganizing all the material put together step by step, and especially after the analysis of what emerged from interviewing the mothers, it was possible to frame an overall picture of the whole process. This reconstruction gave the opportunity to identify recurrent and transversal factors based on the "significant units", aimed at assessing the material coming from focus groups and interviews.

Using the methodology of phenomenological analysis [24], in this phase of the research solicitations provided by the investigation and intuitions of meaning stemming from it were summed up, in order to provide a general overview of the relation between religion and immigrant families.

In fact, once it is done the work of data collection, the formulation of the theoretical foundations establishing its premises, the critical reflection on what emerged from the field survey, the researcher's job is not finished yet. The work done so far finds its fulfilment and real motivation precisely in this last step, by addressing the initial question (*How do mothers live and hand down their religious outlook to their children in an intercultural context?*), outlining a critical and organic theory able to overcome the fragmentary nature of investigation and the partiality of reflections.

5. Images and representations of the religious dimension

Images and representations of one's own religious experience define clear and specific points of reference supporting a process of interiorization and personal elaboration needed to doing things and living that dimension. Also, they make an intimate relationship –that with religion– communicable, even though it is by its nature dynamic, fluid, full of experiences that are ambivalent and sometimes conflictual. These very representations, moreover, put together general social and cultural aspects with personal meanings, that is, they mix transversal, common elements with unique traits. They do change over time, and some images do settle during childhood and

accompany the subject for a long time, prompting for deconstructions and revisions in relation to dissonances, contradictions, tensions that increase while experiencing situations or changes in life (such as migration). The importance of representations connected to religious experience, Pinelli writes:

> is attested by the fact that, every time one says or thinks "God" (it does not matter whether to affirm or deny his existence), one is still representing an image of God himself through channels that are not always available (or at least not totally) to the immediate rational understanding of the subject [25].

This means that the representational and metaphorical dimension signifies a substratum common to all subjects and cultures, though different in its forms and variations. In this regard, the focus-groups and interviews showed how religious experience can take on an "all-encompassing" value: "*Religion represents everything in my life; without religion I feel lost*" (F.), or is perceived as an extended and enveloping dimension, inseparable from the culture that provides identity and recognition to the subjects: "*Religion becomes a part of culture*" (M.). Along with these viewpoints, there is also the opinion of those who minimize its impact on their life, considering it

> only a tool to express and live my spirituality which is much more important than religion. I do not like religious people very much; I find practicing believers more authentic because they are committed to their creed which does not mean to follow and perform only rites and precepts learned and internalized. [C.]

These words stress the importance of living religion as a space to express one's own search for meaning, by making a clear distinction between the external ritual aspects and the inner sphere. Consequently, there is a difference between religiosity and spirituality, being the latter dimension connected to the choice of faith. Therefore, a potential interreligious factor is introduced, that is, the possibility of understanding religion as one of the pathways available to experience the dimension of transcendence, the search for God, and one's ethical placement in the world. This can nurture a fertile ground to promote respect, mutual interest, and acceptance of different religious expressions. It is like believing that beyond the paths we take, we all share a single quest.

In line with this way of thinking, there is R.'s reflection,

> Religion was created by men. For me it is a pursuit of God in life. I began to look for him in difficult times, in my weakness. There I found strength. God's power is made perfect in our weakness, in the difficult moments that we have in life. It is in difficult moments that you entrust yourself to him, and he gives you that inexplicable boost. [R.]

In addition to seeing religion as a support for a personal search, we can find in R.'s words the representation of the encounter between the weakness of human beings and the power of God, which describes the role of help and support offered by religion to many, either on an emotional level or as meanings and perspectives provided while experiencing pain, toil and daily commitment. Religion is a support, but also a stimulus to transcendence, that is, to be "more", to be better, as a Chinese, who arrived in Italy 8 years ago without any specific religion, says:

> Religion is something useful to make us understand how we can be better people. Buddhism for me is not a religion, but an education. For example, when I have doubts about life choices on what I can / should do right, religion shows me what the best way is. We are all living beings, and my life is the same as the other human beings'. Buddhism has opened up a new world for me and I am very happy. [J.]

The religious dimension is described here in its "educational" role, which means bringing out the best in people, leading them to fulfil their life while remaining humble ("*We are all living beings, and my life is the same as the other human beings*"), directing them by providing them with instruments of discernment, comparison, and sharing a common existential fabric. The "regulatory" function attributed to religion is also subtly disclosed, "*Religion offers guidance and control*" (M.), "*It is a law that protects those who believe, but also those who do not believe*" (J.),

> Let us think of a class of students, we need rules to learn, to keep order in class, to obey; religion is like a teacher telling you what to do or don't. It controls. It does not have to be too strong, too strict, otherwise it will hurt a person that no longer wants to cultivate it. [F.].

Religion is, therefore, a crossroads of different instances: it offers rules for behaviour, indicating prohibitions and authorizations, it plays a role of control and guidance: not quite maternal – the words of F. do not leave any room for tenderness– but still masterful ("it is like a teacher").

6. Different angles: changes in visions, experiences, and meanings in practices

Migrants experience a special condition in the destination country, that is finding out how others perceive and interpret their own culture. It is subject to other people's scrutiny that, because of perceptions, emotions - mostly worries and fears -, usually scarce knowledge, attributes meanings and judgments to aspects of life that are complicated, historically, and culturally situated, which instead require exploring in depth traditions and representations that are totally different from their own. This is the area where misunderstandings and conflicts can lurk, since lack of understanding exposes you to the risk of discomfort, confusion, disorientation, disappointment, and frustration. F. stresses this aspect very clearly,

> I do not like how our religion is described in history books, which should be without prejudices. That must change. Islam is like all the other religions. For example, the phrase 'Allah Akbar' is misrepresented, in fact for us it means 'God is great'. It is something that we feel in our heart, for good and bad things as well, because you recognize that there is a Creator who has destined great things for us, which means knowing how to accept our destiny; but also, to entrust ourselves, to know that Allah does not abandon us. And saying it is something that helps. I am sorry that this expression has taken on such a violent meaning. It is scary. It creates terror. [F.]

Nurturing interest in other religious expressions and promoting the discovery of the meanings underlying in practices and words are then an essential role of education, as M. suggests:

> I like to question myself about other religions, I ask about Italian religious festivals and practices. My son is a Muslim, but I chose for him to attend religion class. I would like him to learn some things about religion. [M.]

Here it clearly surfaces the attitude to search, stay open, and the attempt to understand others, but also the desire to have a better knowledge of it, so that even reading or direct experience can promote opinions that are less stereotyped and more in line with an articulated and complex vision.

That very mother acknowledges that there are some moments when prejudice and the perception of something different cannot be easily restrained, but they just come in and immediately influence your perception, "*For example, once there were two people in love kissing, and my son did not want to look at them, because for us expressing feelings like that is way out-of-line.*" The issue of prejudicial attitudes and representations can be effectively limited by getting to know better the meanings and motivations linked to that reality, finding out its basic principles, which means applying to it a broader spectrum of meaning and then choose how to enrich this interpretation with other elements, by weaving together what is known and what is new.

Some of the scenes from the movie "*Almanya. My family goes to Germany*" (directed by Y. Samdareli, Germany, 2011) depict in an ironic but profound way the opinion that the Turkish protagonists who immigrated to Germany have regarding the Catholic Christian religion, interpreting, for example, as "cannibalism" the sacrament of Communion ("they eat the body of a man hung on the cross"). The ability to change ideas on one's own reality and be willing to accept the interpretation given by others, by welcoming some of their details and reviewing others together, means being able *to decentralize* one's own perspective by welcoming others', a precious skill needed by educators as well as students [26].

This skill signifies the ability to read oneself in a "plurivocal" way, listening to different voices and acknowledging the different aspects of one's identity, especially when someone experiences an important change, like migrating, or other significant transformations in person.

All the mothers interviewed shared that migration has not brought so much disruption to their religious practice, but more to its meanings and to the context where it is practiced.

> My religious practice has not changed: I always do Ramadan as I did in Morocco. I dress as always, I wear the veil, I do the prayer five times a day, and if I am at work, I do it when I get home. [K.]

> Ramadan creates a different atmosphere, that does not mean just not eating, or drinking etc., but it creates a special atmosphere in relationships and in life. However, even if you do Ramadan here, this experience cannot be replicated, it does not feel the same way. [M.]

This dimension of "untranslatability" of the religious experience is quite unique, as it finds its real meaning only in the original environment. It is possible to build a bridge between cultures, to be a synthesis between different ways of interpreting the relationship with the transcendent, but there is always an irreducible and untranslatable base representing the original point of reference to which one remains faithful, a distinctive trait that marks an element of (self-)recognition and identity.

> Here in Italy, I have adopted other holidays, but only superficially, without believing in them, and yet I cannot fully celebrate mine, because I do not have the right, for example, to take time off from work on the feast of Ramadan. [F.]

Therefore, taking on a practice does not necessarily mean fully sharing its meaning, and at the same time disconnecting practice from a context, experience from its meaning, can make the experience lose its depth.

By coming in contact with local traditions and customs, people can also undergo an expansion of their religious experience, bringing them to "essentialize" their religious practice. A Burundian, Catholic Christian, mother of 2 boys, says:

> I adapted to the local customs. Even though I belong to the Roman Catholic Church itself, this religion has cultural and historical influences of the place and of the ancient beliefs that are non-existent in Africa, because there Christianity and Catholicism are relatively young. For example, the patronal feasts, the celebrations of the Virgin Mary according to representations worshipped in a place or for a grace received in a place, even the tombs of Holy Thursday ... do not exist in my country. There are other celebrations here that over time I have accepted and now are part of my life. Then there are the lapidary masses that do not nourish me, do not really move me, and do not satisfy me because here people go to Mass with the stopwatch in their hand, as if it were one of the daily appointments marked on their agenda. This is not the traditional African Sunday, that is a Sunday from the moment you wake up in the morning, and therefore you know that "there is no time limit", and Mass lasts how long the priest and the choir director decided that day. Mass is the only commitment of the day. The way it is done here is a bit frustrating for me. Thanks to my migration experience, I have given more time to Christian spirituality, to the study of the Bible without locking myself up into a specific enclosure. I also practice Evangelical worship, and I study the Word with a friend who is a Jehovah's witness. I removed the superfluous structures, and I keep my eyes on Jesus who walked in the streets proclaiming the Gospel to everyone, Jesus who admonished the Pharisees, who was non-conformist and was going against the tide, who went to eat at Zacchaeus', let himself be washed by the prostitute, asked for water to drink from the Samaritan woman... [C.]

Instead, for R., migration, along with the expansion of her religious "frame", has given her the opportunity to grasp new nuances and embrace other experiences, allowing her to live her relationship with God with more conviction and commitment.

> When I was in Ecuador, I was doing religious practices, but I had not yet grasped what it meant to accept Jesus in your heart, as if he were within you and guided you. I experienced this here in Italy thanks to my spiritual mother, my

> mother-in-law, who invited me to the Evangelical Church. It was an engaging atmosphere, and I felt totally at peace. [R.]

To sum up, it can be argued that migration leads to forms of conciliation between one's own religious heritage and the particular conditions one is experiencing. This process can be more or less tiresome, depending on the personal characteristics of the subjects, the time spent in the new environment, and their affiliation to the religious community. Most likely, it needs to "creatively" read and live some religious practices by strongly grounding them on one's own history.

7. Religion that is "outside", within oneself, with others

Migration brings those who experience it to become more critical towards their culture of origin than those who continue living in it from birth and throughout their life. Those who leave their native land, in fact, have to decide what to bring along and what to leave behind. They feel the burden of sacrifices and achievements made, and experience first-hand the need and sometimes the responsibility to defend and bear witness to a history that includes an essential trait of their identity. And this also involves the migrants' religious beliefs or attitude towards religion. Vital issues like relating to suffering, facing insecurity, losing the original emotional bonds, constantly revising expectations, needs, and desires, bring the subject to become more inquisitive and take steps of great transformation that remain mostly silent and hidden, perhaps overshadowed by practical and operational contingencies.

At the end of the focus-group and interviews, these women were very grateful because by reflecting on these issues they had the opportunity to remove many personal insights from their hidden-away location and bring them back for their fruition. They also highlighted how there is a significant distinction between external elements, such as practices, rites, worship, and intimate dimensions that accompany them or develop in a personal and independent way. It is almost like there exists a fine line of separation between appearance and interiority, and migration increases it, underscoring especially the inner growth of the subject.

> For me it is important not only to read the Koran, but to understand who the Muslim is and what she must do. She has to do some practice, but also something more. Practice is part of religion, but then there is something beyond that. What we think of God, how we respect others. It is important to respect the basic rules, but also to understand the meaning of what you do. Ramadan does not mean only not eating, or not drinking, but means purifying one's whole being to meet God and feeling hunger and thirst within one's own body to get closer to those in need and understand what they are feeling. [M.]

Similarly, F. points out,

> If a hair is out of place from the veil, this is not important. It is important to respect others, helping them, not telling lies, or talking behind their backs, and treating women and men equally. [F.]

In one's own relationship with religion, therefore, what was previously lived in an intuitive and repetitive way, is subsequently invested by a personal meaning. Therefore, there is a passage from just a practice of religious precepts to a participation that is more consistent with one's own history and feelings, from an *extrinsic religiosity* (aimed at improving self-security and obtaining comfort, defence) to an *intrinsic religiosity*, which recognizes faith as a value in itself and is willing to commit and sacrifice for [27], by considering the practice of religion a source of personal and community fulfilment. In fact, the concrete practice of religion gives a chance to find in others an echo of personal expressions, as well as community answers to personal questions.

The migratory experience, however, limits, conditions or sometimes drastically compromises participation in community life, as J. complains in this regard,

> Since 2014, I started reading some Buddhist books and I would really like to become a Buddhist, but in this city it is difficult. I have not found a Buddhist temple and therefore I live and practice it within myself. [J.]

Times and places of the community represent moments of social cohesion and necessary nourishment for one's own journey.

The "public" dimension of religion, which often, precisely in the most difficult and delicate moments of life, is underestimated to pursue a more intimate and personal approach, contributes instead to strengthening the sense of belonging and community ties. This is also stated by A., Senegalese, Muslim, mother of 2 boys and 1 girl, "*I do miss the public call to go and pray, which I consider a very beautiful thing.*" The collective invitation to prayer strengthens the bond with all those who share the same creed and experience.

In migration, then, the complex religious dimension takes on a dual meaning: it is a place, where questions of meaning, enlightening choices, and providing comfort spring up and accompanies the processes of research; it is also a time of harmony and references not to a solipsistic experience with the transcendent, but it is a way of sharing life with its changes and finding elements of continuity.

8. Religious support in migration

Migration is a peak event that inevitably marks a beforehand and aftermath, setting a boundary in a person's existential journey. For some migrants, it is a traumatic and dangerous experience, representing a delicate challenge that opens new opportunities and often activates unexpected resources. It is the time when the difficulty of determining the destination comes to play, completely or partially, by exploring what is unknown, *mysterious,* when someone deals with something unintelligible, outside the schemes of what the person has so far experienced [28].

These are the peculiar features of the sacred realm that the theologian and historian of religions, Rudolf Otto, explores in his 1923 book. Anything intimidating (*tremendum*) finds reassurance and attraction (*fascinans*) in the elements of love, mercy, and piety. The consolation the sacred provides inspires in return a sense of respect and veneration (*augustum*) [29]. Changes in life, then, represent a moment when the experience of uncertainty is intertwined with the hope of Good, the intensification of questions is accompanied by the encounter with the beauty of human

solidarity, the fear of emptiness and the end is overcome by trust in the Transcendent. This strengthens the awareness of being *creatures*, connected and entrusted to their Creator, in a close relation with the real world and people living in it.

Therefore, migrants' religious experience is not only shaped by their life before and after migration but is also oriented by the places where they dwell and by the social networks they are connected to [30]. The first encounters with other people and joining a community are considered paradigmatic experiences, as relational casts supporting and shaping impressions, expectations, openings, or closures. R. says:

> When I got to Italy, I arrived at a place where nuns helped me look for a job, and they welcomed me. We were also praying with other people from our country and were supporting each other to face the difficulties of our landing. When you deeply have the awareness of an almighty God who listens to us, who is with us when we look for him..., religious practices, faith help a lot to respect others. That is how I found the strength to leave behind two children who were born in Ecuador. [R.]

Religion fosters links of meaning in a broader horizon and can support the migrant's spiritual journey. At the same time, belonging and involvement in a religious community can also help in a concrete and material perspective, through relationships and meetings. In this regard, C. explains:

> Belonging to the Catholic Church gave me the opportunity to establish human connections that have marked my personal project and migratory journey, both positively and negatively. There has never been a case when my religion has been an obstacle to me, and I believe that is because of my religious confession, Catholicism, which is the major one in Italy. [C.]

Not all religious affiliations have the same value in a foreign country, but it depends on their greater or lesser social representativeness. In this sense, C.'s account is an exception, since adherence to the Catholic religion from the beginning of her life marks a continuity in the discontinuity of the migratory experience. Sometimes, however, it is having common values that fosters integration between different religions; or the invitation to being open, as stated in one's own religion of origin, creates the conditions for the person's attitude, avoiding any closure and resentment. A. asserts this, when she says:

> When you are a practicing Muslim, you become a good person – by worshipping God you find peace in yourself and will become a very sociable person, in any country you go you can live well and be together with everyone. When I arrived, I integrated. Even the Muslim religion invites the foreigner to respect in the host country the rules and traditions of that place. [A.]

Thus, religion supports the process of integration by helping people feel good about themselves and being with others, and this gives them the opportunity to experience personal and community harmony. The ethical-social direction is, then, the resource necessary to strengthen the relational bases and offers a broader horizon within which to build one's own path of integration.

9. Children's questions and search for meaning

The study of the link between religion and migration gave us a chance to look at the generational educational experience in a natural way, as a direct consequence of one's own personal experience; and one of the transversal aspects that emerged was certainly the role of *example,* of *witness* as a special way to foster religious education. Giving to close people - especially if they are members of the family, like a child - the witness of their own choices and values of reference is an indirect, respectful, and effective form of religious education. As C., a Catholic Christian, attests, "*I am a Christian, but I do not impose anything on my family. I hope to sow a seed by setting an example.*" F., a Muslim, echoes her, "*He [the son] gets his education in the family, by being with others. What he sees, he does it. If he does not see, he does not.*" Likewise, A., a Muslim, states, "*Children do what their parents do, they follow suit.*" R. 's opinion, an evangelical Christian, is similar,

> We parents are like a mirror in which our children can see their reflex and can find themselves. I bring my children to Church. What is sown, it will stay forever. Fruits will be reaped even after a long time. The first years of life are crucial. [R.]

Also A. insists on the importance of example,

> As we learned when we were little, in turn we teach our own children. I try to make them learn the values of religion: do not steal, do not lie, do no harm to others. Ramadan is good for your health, so you feel the way others do, when they have nothing to eat, and so you help them. Pray, so that you are always close to God with a clean body. You just have to find the way, and you also need to be the example for your children... If the values you make your children learn are right, they accept them; but you have to be convinced first. If they sense that you are not sure, how can they believe? [A.]

Religious experience is an inheritance passed along silently; it is something conveyed by concrete example. Education is sowing, it is an act of faith, writes the Swiss theologian Romano Guardini, because it implies entrusting oneself to the other, to life and to God [31]. It is awareness of the freedom of the other person, whom the educator is called to let be, by being present without invading, reaffirming thus a message of trust in one's own resources and skills.

The philosopher Nathalie Sarthou-Lajus makes an interesting remark, when she writes:

> The difficulty of transmitting also recognized by educators today pertains to the content of the transmission (knowledge, beliefs, values), as well as to the very act of transmitting, of which we have lost the taste. (...) Transmitting and educating are two distinct acts. Education is based on the emancipation of the subject. Transmitting is to insert a human being into the chain of generations and to show him that he is one among others. Education imbues the transmission with the sense of personal re-appropriation. (...) Human transmission does not consist in reproducing the same person, but in generating another one that always sparks surprise, a source of both amazement and

> disappointment. The content with each generation is to be regained in a new way. Only thus can he be freed rather than crushed (...) making room for the other person to take it back. It is not the will that determines the transmission; it is more so the enthusiasm [32].

Even on the religious level, education and transmission are intertwined, and contribute by providing important elements of growth, as well as by fostering a critical and personal revision of the heritage received. As a matter of fact, some women interviewed underscored in religious education the importance of a community, of a wider family context able to enlighten the choices and the path of life. F. in this sense shares her concern and asks herself,

> You teach some things, but it is missing the supporting element of the family context. I think I did not do much, because I was not ready to face certain situations. I found myself far away, alone with my children. I have to keep this connection with my origins and religion, but I do not know to what extent I succeeded. [F.]

M.'s experience is also similar,

> I am sorry because [the son] cannot learn our religion and all the things I learned as a child. I am sorry because he cannot experience as a child the whole religious dimension. (...) I wish my son could experience our religion more deeply and get information about the other religion and be able to choose. [M.]

The "knowledge" these mothers speak of is not theoretical, abstract; it is a concrete and lived experience, an immersion in a context where the religious dimension can be "breathed". It is a knowledge that grows and develops through an inquisitive process, made up of dialogues between parents and children, which also include grandparents and other important figures. As A. says: "*When my children turned 7 years old, I began to teach them the religious precepts. Children ask a lot of questions and often, if I do not know, I send them to my mother who gives them an answer.*" M. also shares the same prudence, but unlike A. she has no other adults to turn to, "*My son asks me questions, but I am not an expert. When I do not know, I do not want to confuse him.*"

Religious questions about life attest that there is a search in progress, a desire to discover, a relationship to be established with the parent, the teacher, the educator, but also with an indirect, "higher" interlocutor, that is God. Religious questions, in fact, lead to the threshold of infinity, feed on amazement, introduce to a wisdom of life that realizes the evolutionary tension of both children and adults, «Those who give children a chance to ask questions of faith will discover something wonderful. (...) Children with their questions can help us to better focus on ours» [33].

From an educational viewpoint, it is important to welcome questions, listen to them, but also to direct and orient them not with a spirit of delegation, but with the authentic attitude of those who find themselves searching just like their own children. At the same time, it is necessary to identify together some answers, albeit provisional, which will strengthen some steps and then continue searching again. «My invitation to focus on these questions is not in contradiction with the duty to come up with answers, but answers that keep the questions going and do not end them, that at the same time take a stand and refer back to the question» [33].

E. states:

> [My children] ask me, "Mom, why do you do Ramadan?" I do it because it is good for my health, and to feel how the poor do since they have nothing to eat; so, you will learn that if you only have a piece of bread, you share it with the person that does not. There is nothing in Islam that does not have its why, and without a doubt there is always a clear answer. [E.]

In a foreign environment, questions also arise from the comparison with others and from some practices that are different from others. A. tells us that his children had a recurrent question, repeated every day, "*Why don't we eat pork?*" They did it when they came home from school because their diet did not include it, and they were curious to taste it and understand the reason for this difference.

Motivating one's religious choices, explaining what one experiences is the educational orientation that allows the little ones to continue to ask questions, to sense the "strangeness" of what they do not know how to explain, as an opportunity to look even further and start a dialogue with adults.

There are times in children's lives when they ask more questions and constantly challenge their parents and their beliefs. It is the time of adolescence, when so many certainties creak, and children start questioning the values handed down and critically assess the meaning of the teachings they have received. R. tells that

> There were conflicts during their adolescence because the boys moved away from the Christian life. But as a mom I think that once you have sown, sooner or later the harvest will come. Children challenge and ask, 'What if [God] does not exist?'. I say to my daughter: in case he does not, then I was born, I grew up, I die, I disappear. In case he does, I have missed this unique opportunity to live in the Kingdom of God. I do not lose anything by believing. Instead, I gain something. When a mother prays and is in God's grace, her children are well. I pray that sooner or later they will be able to meet him. [R.]

Edith Stein's words echo here, "The search for God belongs to the human being... A pedagogical science cannot reach its fulfilment if it does not investigate, in the whole field of revealed truth, what it means to live by faith and, through the life of faith, to attain the goal in life" [34]. The *care of the soul* of one's children and not only the task of responding to their most material and concrete needs is a very precious family educational dimension. It speaks of the need to continue cultivating transcendence in a historical time, when insecurity and the phenomenon of secularization seem to undermine the original traits of the person.

10. Conclusions

The study on the links among religion, migration and education is placed within a broad and complex framework, that the focus-group and the interviews have allowed us to approach, by shedding light on a wealth of insights, reflections, autobiographical narratives that should be taken into consideration to enhance pedagogical research and educational action. At the end of the group meetings with the women who accepted our invitation to tell their stories, it was brought up the observation that it was hard to speak

of an intimate and partly unintelligible relationship, such as the one related to mystery and transcendence, the search for a higher order, necessary to understand (or perhaps more simply to accept) life's events. Those who were interviewed also reiterated that the relationship with religion is exceptional and profound; although it is essential, it remains implicit, partly untranslatable, but also resistant to rationalization and comparison. The way in which religious experience contributes to promoting the dignity of human beings constitutes a transversal element and an educational gain, that is not at all trivial and obvious. In the current socio-cultural horizon, marked by value uncertainty, relativism, forms of technicality and alienation, religion represents that *humanizing tension* able to link particular to universal, the individual to the community, immanence to transcendence, visible to invisible. As A. summed up, "*Religion must be a simple thing, which you can live within yourself. Everyone can live quietly respecting the others' religion.*" These words are connected to R.'s,

> It is wonderful to be able to stand in God's presence. I am convinced that there is an intelligence full of wisdom and love that organizes and regulates the cosmos, even if we do not see it. He is on our side. The search for God only gives us so much love. [R.]

Simplicity, interiority, respect are the threads that are constantly found in those mothers' words, pointing out almost to a maternal role that every educational subject can assume beyond the task and position that a person has. In this regard, if we accept Guardini's perspective [35], educating is, in itself, an act of faith requiring a great and deep trust in the resources of the o/Other and in reality. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the educational task present in every culture, that is called to support moments of passage and change such as migration, when intentions and values, meanings and perspectives are being disrupted. Jacques Maritain also states, "Inaccessible and at-hand, God invests man from every side. It does not exist a single way, as for an oasis in the desert, or for a mathematical idea through the expanse of the science of number. For man there are as many itineraries to God as passes on earth or roads to one's own heart" [36]. Accompanying the subjects to reach the depths of their soul and the heights of the encounter with God means contributing to the possibility of promoting their well-being with themselves and with others, and this is an educational task that is the foundation of every process and every encounter, which does not hide the conflict, but considers it and develops it. To this the maternal role, specialized in handling delicate balances, can certainly make a unique and indispensable contribution. A contribution that sees in the work of educational care – defined by listening, dialogue, capacity for decentralization and contextualization, attention to detail... – traditionally feminine, a great work of civilization, of which even the interreligious perspective can effectively take advantage.

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Migrant Families and Religious Belonging
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Intergenerational Processes and Diasporic Religious Identity Among Immigrant Coptic Families

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Abstract. Considering the scarcity of psychological studies on Middle Eastern Christian immigrant families experiences, this chapter aims to explore the post-migration experience of Coptic Orthodox families immigrated from Egypt to Italy and chooses to adopt a family intergenerational perspective to compare narratives of two different family generations (first-generation parents and their second-generation adolescent children). Based on empirical data from 10 Coptic Orthodox families, for a total of 30 interviewed participants (10 first-generation fathers, 10 first-generation mothers, and 10 second-generation adolescent children), the chapter reveals that religiosity in its intertwined individual and social expressions is a salient part of interviewees' everyday life and an essential source of resilience. However, identity-specific content reveals differences when comparing parents and children's narratives. While a "diasporic" religious identity seems to emerge among first-generation parents, religious identity among children emphasizes the opposition with a highly secularized and "threatening" Italian society.

Keywords. migration, religious identity, diaspora, intergenerational processes

1. Intersection of migration and religion in psychological research: identity and family processes

In the last two decades, academic interest in the topics of religion and migration – and their intersections – has grown steadily. However, for a long time, migration studies have neglected to thoroughly investigate the role played by religion in migrants' integration processes [1, 2, 3, 4]. Among the several factors concurring to said gap in the literature, these are especially apparent within psychological research. Drawing on this acknowledgment, the following paragraphs briefly introduce the factors concurring to the gap in psycho-social literature on the role played by religion in integration processes.

Firstly, it is worth noting that a "deficit model" has for a long time dominated scientific psycho-social literature on post-migration processes. In other words, psycho-social research on post-migration processes has been conducted from a perspective focusing on the stressful and traumatic nature of migratory transition [5]. Moreover, reliance upon theoretical perspectives emphasizing stressors, trauma, and risk factors has become increasingly prominent in studies on groups and categories of migrants generally

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considered as more vulnerable. These include forced migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, as they generally cope with multiple traumas in pre-migration, during their journey, as well as in resettlement countries [6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11]. The focus on adverse conditions, struggles and suffering faced by vulnerable and not vulnerable immigrants has prevented from acknowledging that religion plays a central role in migrants' lives, and one of the sources of support they can turn to during all phases of migratory transition. Furthermore, in the case of forced migrations, individuals' religious affiliation has only been considered as a key factor in identifying pre-migration traumas and motives to migrate from their respective country of origin [1].

Secondly, until recently, an almost exclusive focus in psychological studies on psychological acculturation [2] has prioritized the role played by ethnic-cultural components in migrants' integration processes and migrants' adjustment to the host society over the role played by religious aspects [12, 13, 14].

As an upshot of these two factors, not only have religion and religiosity often been neglected, but also frequently identified as a hindrance for migrants' integration, adaptation, and psychosocial well-being. Religion and religiosity have been considered a source of discrimination and prejudice (in host societies as well as in origin countries), a barrier to integration and acculturation, a cause of radicalization and legitimation of hate towards outgroups, and a threat to social coexistence. This is especially true in the European context (as opposed to the North American one) characterized by highly fragmented and secularized societies, by the presence of ambivalent and hostile attitudes toward religion and towards Muslim immigrant communities [4,15,16]. More recently, the adoption of a salutogenic[3] point of view in clinical and family studies has led to a renewed interest towards protective processes and positive resources capable of supporting individuals and families during resettlement life phases [5, 6, 17, 18, 19, 20]. Among different types of individual and relational resources that enhance migrants' resilience in the face of migration challenges, religiosity is increasingly recognized as a crucial, positive dimension at every stage of migration and across different sub-groups of migrants (adult or youth migrants, forced migrants or labor migrants, migrant belonging to specific ethno-religious minorities) [1, 3, 21, 22, 23]. Challenging the notion that "religion" constitutes a problem for migrants' integration in host societies and for social cohesion, many studies have contributed to explore migrants' religious experience at the individual level and the family level. In what follows, these two levels are addressed in turn.

On an individual level, religious faith, spiritual beliefs, and sense of belonging to a religious community are key protection factors [24]. This is especially apparent as migrants – and especially vulnerable migrants such as refugees – resettle in a new society and try to tune into a new culture [8, 9, 12, 18, 23, 25, 26, 27]. Although academic interest in this area has largely neglected the experience of children and youth [3, 25], many scholars have contributed to show that religion and spirituality can alleviate pre- and

[2] The process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups [28]. This two-dimensional model of acculturation aims at assessing how immigrants are able to both navigate between their own heritage culture and the host culture, combining customs, norms, values, and practice stemming from these two cultural frameworks [29].

[3] The word "salutogenesis" derives from Latin "salus" which translates into "health", and Greek "genesis" which means "origin". Unlike deficit model investigating negative consequences and maladjustment caused by critical events and traumas, a salutogenic perspective [20, 30, 31] focuses on sources of strength and capacities that people and groups can mobilize in facing stressors and challenges and that contribute to positive adaptation.

post-migration suffering and delusion by providing hope for the future, meaning, and sense of purpose. Religious beliefs and practices help migrants maintaining a sense of identity and to mitigate the fear of losing original cultural identification. Moreover, religious beliefs and practices foster connection to personal history and cultural identity. On an individual level, studies have shown that faith provides a reliable source of inner strength to survive vulnerable conditions and adversities that migration and resettlement experiences present. A recent qualitative study conducted by Zanfrini and Antonelli [32] with forced migrants is a testimony to the supporting and empowering function that religion and spirituality have played in participants' migration trajectory, representing for many vulnerable migrants a "balm for the soul" all along the perilous journeys, extended time in transit countries as well as resettlement [33].

On the family level, two main relational processes pertaining migrants' religion have been explored and identified as crucial in explaining adjustment to the host context. These processes are to be found, respectively, a) inside the family, in the strength of intergenerational religious transmission; b) outside the family, in social ties within religious communities and faith-based organizations.

Along migration transition, family is the privileged place for transmission of values between different generations. More specifically, intergenerational religious transmission refers to a long-term process by which the system of religious values, beliefs, and practices held by previous generations is passed down to the next ones. This mechanism has almost exclusively been explored from a dyadic parental perspective, by measuring the distance from or conflict in values, traditions, and practices within parent-child dyads. In this regard, some studies in comparative empirical research seem to suggest that religious transmission is stronger and more effective in ethnic/religious minority families, in particular when comparing Muslim families migrated to Western Europe with native families or non-Muslim immigrant families [34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40]. Furthermore, several authors tend to consider this struggle to preserve ethnic and religious identity through generations a successful strategy to ensure in-group solidarity, loyalty and family cohesion among immigrant families who feel threatened by secularized Western European contexts [2, 29, 41, 42, 43, 44]. Aside from the few studies involving Christian minority migrants [45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50], research has primarily explored said theme in relation to the experience of Muslim families migrated to "Western" contexts. At any rate, such studies corroborate the observed continuity in religious values and practices across generations and a strong intergenerational solidarity that characterize religious life in these immigrant families.

As far as the second topic explored in family-based literature goes, migrants' experiences in resettlement countries are frequently characterized by aggregation around religious institutions and faith-based organizations (Churches, places of worship). For many migrants, and especially for forced migrants and refugees, positive network relationships within religious communities and Church attendance represent an essential part of life [22]. As well as being places of worship and prayer, these are places where migrants seek and receive material and emotional support, where migrants build social networks and bond with other migrants and with members of host societies, where they can relive a cultural connection with their history and their country of origin, they preserve cultural (linguistic, religious, ethnic) identity and a sense of belonging, can find responses to the need for community affiliation [1, 4, 22, 23, 51, 52, 53].

Despite the growing literature about the salience of religious experience in personal and family migration histories, most European psychological literature focuses primarily on Islam and Muslim migrants [13]. Other religious (both Christian and not Christian)

affiliations hold a marginal position in current research, either because they remain numerically marginal, or because they are not perceived as threatening. This situation presents few exceptions, including recent studies [33, 49, 50, 54, 55] on migration experiences of Middle Eastern Christians who have suffered religious persecution and discrimination in their home countries and who resettled in Western Europe. For example, the resettlement experiences of some Middle Eastern Christians groups are the focus of multi-site fieldwork projects conducted in some North European countries [45, 48, 49]. In addition to highlighting the prominent role played in the host countries by religious institutions and churches around which immigrants aggregate, these studies show how marginalization and double minority condition (in their country of origin and in the host country) experienced by these migrant communities in the host societies affect their diasporic identity and integration processes [49]. In other words, resettlement experiences and cultural encounters that Middle Eastern Christian migrants live in host societies risk to reproduce marginalization and exclusion, «due to being made invisible as Christians and visible as Middle Eastern Muslims» [49].

Considering the lack of psychological studies analyzing Middle Eastern and African Christian immigrant experiences, the present study[4] aims to explore the post-migration experience of Coptic Orthodox families immigrated from Egypt to Italy. In addition, unlike the vast amount of existing research focusing on individual immigrants, this study adopts a family perspective by collecting and comparing narratives of two different family generations (first-generation parents and their second-generation adolescent children).

The migration experience of Egyptian Coptic minority in Europe – and Italy in particular – is especially noteworthy. Numerically, migrant Copts represent a small community within a religiously and ethnically diverse migratory landscape. Based on Ismu's recent figures,[5] migrant population in Italy exhibits an extremely diverse religious composition. Whilst Muslim immigrants make up 29.3% of all resident foreigners, several Christian minorities (in particular, 29.4% Orthodox Christians, mainly Romanians and Ukrainians; 3.1% Evangelical Christians; 0.3% Copts) and other religious minorities (Buddhists 3.2%; Hindu 1.8%; Sikhs 1.0%) enrich Italy's religious landscape.

Numbering between 18,000 and 40,000 individuals,[6] Immigrant Orthodox Coptic community in Italy constitutes a religious minority both within the Italian context and within the Muslim-majority Egyptian immigrant group officially residing in Italy, that numbers 128,095 individuals (84,258 males, 43,837 females) as of January 1, 2020 [56]. About the 70% of Egyptian immigrants live in Lombardy, the region in Northern Italy where this study has been conducted thanks to the collaboration of the Coptic Church.

[4] This empirical study received funding from the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart within the program D.3.2. (2016-2018) called "Migration and Religious Belonging: from the Periphery to the Centre, for the Development of a New Humanism"). The current chapter is a revised and expanded version of the previous contribution that the authors published in the volume *Migrants and Religion: Paths, Issues, and Lenses…* [4].

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[6] https://www.ismu.org/ventottesimo-rapporto-sulle-migrazioni-2022/

2. The empirical study on migrant Coptic minority

Thanks to the mediation and supervision of a few members of local Coptic Churches located in Northern Italy, in 2017 ten migrant Coptic Orthodox families coming from Egypt were recruited to participate in the empirical explorative study presented here. For each family belonging to the recruited sample, both parents and a preadolescent\adolescent child took part in the interviews, totaling 30 participants. These consisted of, respectively 10 first-generation fathers, 10 first-generation mothers, and 10 second-generation children. Aged between 37 and 51 (M=44.9), interviewed fathers had been living in Italy for 19.4 years on average (range: 17-27 y.). Migrated from Egypt to Italy through family reunification and aged between 34 and 43 (M=38.4), mothers had been living in Italy for 15 years on average (range: 9-18 y.). Aged between 13 and 16 (M= 13.5) and for the majority born in Italy (only 2 had been reunited with their families before they were two), pre-adolescent and adolescent children (5 males, 5 females) were mostly attending secondary school.

Upon granting anonymity to participants and collecting their signed consent forms, individual semi-structured interviews with each adult or adolescent participant took place at the Church the respondents regularly attend. Interviews were conducted by researchers with extensive experience in qualitative interviewing and (forced) migration-related topics [57, 58].

The interview template aimed at gauging interviewees' perceptions of the changes occurred in their lives following migration (only for adult respondents), of the challenges and hardships faced in Italy, personal and family immigration history, identity construction processes, intergenerational dynamics family relationship and community context (family, school, work, leisure).

Interviews were conducted in Italian. On average, adult and young participants presented differing levels of fluency in Italian, and the interview process faced some linguistic hurdles with adult interviewees.

To carry out a thematic analysis of the interviews, the latter were recorded and professionally transcribed. To conduct data analysis, Atlas.ti 7.0 was used [59]. Subsequently, transcripts were uploaded on the database and separately coded by two researchers. To increase the study's credibility and validity, transcripts were reviewed by external team members without direct involvement with the data analysis.

The findings deepened our understanding of the experience of several families sharing a strong ecclesial belonging and keen participation in what their Church promotes. However, due to the potential bias in the sampling process, it is not possible to gauge the extent to which said results may be considered representative of other Egyptian Coptic immigrants living in Italy.

3. Results

Thematic analysis carried out on the interview transcripts allowed to identify several themes, as well as specificities and commonalities emerging from parents' and children narratives.

Findings have been organized around four main themes: *relevance of religiosity as private and public experience; religious intergenerational processes; religious identity in parents and adolescents; perception of world outside the family*. In what follows, each theme will be addressed in turn.

As far as the relevance of religiosity is concerned, said theme emerged from parents and children's interviews alike, both at the individual level and at the collective level. Independently from age and generation of immigration, interviewees consider religious faith and religious experience as a remarkable and essential part of their private and social life. The centrality of the religious experience is articulated both on a private level (strength of personal faith, religious beliefs, attachment to religion and own Church) and on a community level (Church attendance, community ceremonies, ritual celebrations, social gathering in religious place). Furthermore, for both children and parents, these two dimensions of religiosity are deeply intertwined: personal faith finds expression in collective rites and practices occurring in spaces for community encounters (the Coptic Church). Interviewed families acknowledge the centrality of faith as a personal resource, and the salience of their attachment to the Churches and clergy thanks to the fundamental role they play in the countries of immigration.

> For me it is important to live, to pray, to meet someone who is also a priest and maybe make confession, to stay in church. [Mother 5]

> Faith is fundamental in my life, everything I do is related to faith... during the day there is Mass, a specific prayer, and I attend it every day and every week I go to the Sunday Mass and on Saturday, too, on Saturday morning, then there are the afternoon prayers and the vespers at night which I always attend… [Son 1]

> … we love the Church… […], it is part of my identity, something specific of our life and Church, Mass, and prayer always! [Mother 6]

From conducted interviews, *intergenerational religious transmission* emerges as shared responsibility of adults (mother, fathers, priests, bishop) towards younger generations that –contrary of first-generation migrants– have never, or only briefly, lived in Egypt. Interviews have highlighted how parents and religious ministers strive to pass down faith, religious belief, and practices. Said intergenerational transmission of values aims at granting adults a certain continuity of individual churchgoing experiences as well as at ensuring loyalty to a sacred tradition and obedience to what the Mother Church preaches to diasporic churches. On the family and community level, said intergenerational dynamic is therefore articulated through a strong bond with homeland Egypt.

> No, faith hasn't changed our church, here it is the same as the one in Egypt, nothing changes. Even there, all my life I was like him (points at her son) always at church and always at Catechism with parents always for us. [Mother 1]

> We are Christians, we have been used to it since we were born, we are always in church and do a lot of things we grew up like this and then I want that my children, too, grow up like we have lived, always growing up here in church and become children of God, not children of the world, that is what we want to be, children of God. [Mother 1]

> No, I can't see the difference. Here the church does everything… all Masses, the Holy Week, Christmas, Easter, everything, everything…. [Mother 5]

> Most of all my dad and my mum are very devoted to the church, to Christianity, they never let I go, my dad always prays for anything and most of all my dad ... [Son 1]

> My parents even at Catechism they always tell me: when you don't manage to do something… let's make an example, during a school test, you know that you have studied a lot, say that you've been studying that book for three hours, to pass the History test and then you can't remember anything and then you recall the teaching of your parents at Catechism and you make the sign of the cross and maybe then you calm down, you trust in Jesus and then maybe you can also hope that the school test goes well. [Son 2]

> Each Saturday I come here, I do catechism, we do the lesson … Then after the lesson we do a very small in-depth session to go over a bit of history, then at the end of the lesson they ask us what did you understand and what it is it seems best to you to make up for your mistakes. [Son 1]

> I think I gave everything, the right path and the wrong path. So, the church is always important […] that children are born like my son, young, so young until they marry her inside the church […] otherwise even children outside get lost. I mean, the church is our mum, a mother… which is also our very own mum. [Mother 5]

Families see priests, bishops, and metropolitans as a guide and a crucial reference point. Aiming at concretely helping families as well as, it seems, marking the distance from outside society and its institutions – such as schools and young people's places to gather and socialize –, these figures take part in families' ordinary and extraordinary decision-making. Moreover, compared to other Christian denominations (e.g., Catholic Church), because within the Coptic Church priests and ministers are allowed to marry, family roles (father, husband.) and religious roles (priest) sometimes overlap. The upshot of this is that in some cases the line between the domestic sphere and the religious sphere, and between family roles and religious roles is blurred. This is especially apparent in the words of interviewed children whose father is also a priest.

> In my community I'm considered different because of my father who is also a priest, so I am also a little privileged in my religion for example I can stand on the altar to help the priest compared to another even older than me, I can greet the bishop, may have more contact with the bishop than another ... I'm also an altar boy and my dad always told me that the altar boy is like the angel and when I do something stupid or wrong, my father asks me "well, are you behaving like an angel?" I answer: "No". "If you are an altar boy you should be behaving like an angel" he says to me. [Son 1]

> For Coptic people, the priest is a very important figure, then always rely on this priest when they don't know where to come, for me with my community there are always meet-ups, when they have problems they call me, always some… and …strength… joy to gather together. [Father 1]

> We followed advice from metropolitan A. who even before becoming priest, for us he was always a father, a father for everything, and he tried to give the right advice, put people on the right path and, I mean, has always passed on that who does good, finds good, a right path is always right, so, I mean… we have, we have that he has pointed in the right direction, so let's hope that we did very few mistakes, or almost none at all. [Father 5]

As far as *religious identity* is concerned, self-identification as migrant Egyptian Copt and the belonging to the Coptic community are central elements both for first generation adults and for their adolescent children. However, identity-specific contents also reveal differences when comparing narratives of parents and children. Amongst interviewed mothers and fathers, the main religious identity contents concern the themes of *diaspora* and of *martyrdom*, underlying the continuity between their own identity and their origins, as well as with the history of the Coptic Church. As far as identity is concerned, individuals unite in their being "scattered" and "suffering" because of this fate. At the same time, they are strong, they are not scared, they are proud, and they brave said destiny with inner strength and faith. Martyrdom conveys the same spiritual strength that animates Coptic diaspora and thus the destiny of all migrants and immigrant Coptic Egyptian families. Diaspora and all the suffering it implies acquire meaning because they are a testimony to faith, because they are inscribed in serving Christ and in taking on the mission for others. Attributing at once sorrow and glory to the decision to migrate, a woman claims, "*That's why they're scattered – our pain is our glory*".

For parents, then, religious identity forms through continuity with the millennia-strong history of the Coptic Church as well as with fellow Egyptians currently living in Egypt or migrated elsewhere. Speaking of Christians who were killed in Egypt, mothers taking part in interviews state and reiterate that "*No one is afraid to die*"; martyrdom is "*not a bad thing*" – rather, the latter is a destiny, ultimately a testimony of faith.

It is also worth pointing out that, among parents, religious and ethnic dimensions of identity are closely intertwined.

> None of us wanted to leave Egypt because it is the most beautiful country in the world for us, but with all these bombs, with all these martyrs he has urged of us to go and bring the mission to others. [Mother 1]

> [being Coptic] is the most beautiful thing in the world even if suffering is a part of our glory as a Church. This is our core teaching. The martyrs of the Coptic Church and the suffering in the Middle East, the whole Church, especially us because the Christian majority in the Middle East has taught me our bishop, he has always taught me that our pain is our glory… this is part of their cross also for us. If you are Christian in Egypt, you are not Muslim, this has been our identity and this to nurture oneself. [Mother 2]

> I had to leave family behind to go to a place where you don't know where you're going to stay, what to eat, but this is why there is faith within us, that we serve Christ this is why there is not fear to go far away and serve like this, my family gave me the courage to serve like this… [Father 1]

> Coptic means that the Coptic Church has always… been persecuted, it has… they have offered to their sons, as martyrs do, so I'm happy… uhm… I'm Coptic, uhm… and so our Church… let's say…we were few in our country… [Father 5]

> Like the presence of the Lord in Egypt and Christians in Egypt keep on until the last day on Earth and they proclaim his presence here, […]. They are scattered because of this, because it is a very honorable thing… not for us to be the only ones to keep his Kingdom, we need to give it for others, too [Mather 1].

Among the second-generation participants, religious identity draws on comparisons with Italian society. Furthermore, participants clearly distance themselves from their Italian peers and from their attitude towards religious experience. The comparison revolves around identity contents such as the relevance of religion in everyday experience, articulated in the extent to which individuals attend religious services, engage in assiduous prayer and practices. For second-generations individuals, then, religious identity is built by contrast with the outside world (the world of their respective Italian peers, of Christian and Non-Christian Italian families). Comparison acquires and holds a central role and is articulated on the plane of community religious practice – churchgoing; attending service; confessing; taking part in rituals and ceremonies.

> We are different from Italians... [Daughter 6]

> Very few Italians go to church… some [of their Italian peers] are Christians and they have no faith at all, they are Christians, but they do not even believe in Jesus… [Daughter 6]

> Being a member of a Coptic family is something that surely makes us different from the others… because everyone is used to one way of living, whilst I am used to a very different one. Nowadays, I see that the religious sphere shrinks in Italian families, whereas it grows a lot in Egyptian families where it is always increasing because of the persecutions, the suffering, and the suffering of Christians worldwide and most of all in the Middle East and in the East and most of all in Egypt. [Son 1]

Lastly, the *representation of world outside* the Coptic community, the "Other" (host society, Italian society, Italian school, and Italian institutions) that Coptic families met after resettlement also appears as a prominent topic. Representation of Italian society is monolithic, without differentiations: the interviewees feel they must face an external world not only perceived as culturally alienating, but also as "threatening" and "negative". Interestingly, parents and children share said representation of a threatening and dangerous world. As a specular counterpoint, the space of the Church is "home", safe and quiet refuge, in which to find religious, affective, and material support, as well as reconnect with a collective memories and identity.

> I mean, they [priests] teach you a lot about how to behave outside, when somebody is unkind to you, I mean from the lives of Saints you learn how to react outside. [Son 2]

> No one manages to live here in Milan without the church, because the church is just too important… important to live, to pray, to meet someone who is a priest and maybe confess, the chance also to be in church that is a quiet place, far away from life, from the stress of the outside world and so church is simply too beautiful a moment. [Mother 5]

> The outside world is also ugly, boys outside, what happens in schools…. otherwise even children outside get lost. I mean, the church is our mum, a mother… which is also our very own mum. [Mother 5]

> …so about friendships only at church, there is not friendship at school… girls have many friends they attend catechism together and afterwards they play together, there is quite a few friends, the churches for us I cannot live without churches. [Father 3]

4. Discussion

This study provides interesting and original findings on the post migration experience of Coptic Egyptian families who represent a Middle East Christian minority migrated to Italy and living in its Northern regions. Compared with Muslim immigrant groups who are at the center of political, societal, and academic attention, Middle East and African Christian minorities have rarely been studied and our results highlight the complexities of their resettlement experience as a (forced) migrant and religious minority who relocated in a European Christian and secularized context. For interviewed families, immigration represents a crucial transition where identity and belonging are renegotiated and reconstructed.

In addition, combining the voices of several members from the same migrant family into a family-based scope whilst designing the study has allowed to explore processes of adjustment and identity redefinition. It is possible that bias in the sampling process limits the generalizability of our finding, as collected narratives are related to experiences of families who share a strong attachment to Coptic Churches and high involvement in religious activities. But it is also worth noting that our results are in line with other research conducted in Europe involving minorities of Christian and non-Christian immigrants [46, 47, 49, 50].

Religiosity in its intertwined individual and social expressions is a salient part of interviewees' everyday life and a key fact in personal identity. Parent and children's narrations share many elements that reveal the strong attachment to own religion, the deep sense of belonging to a religious community, the rooted link with own country of origin and the Mother Church in Egypt, recognizing faith and spiritual life as an essential source of resilience.

Before being a matter of personal and private choice, religion and religiosity are regarded as a responsibility of the Coptic community towards the younger generations who are the heirs of cultural heritage, history, and ties with the Motherland. Parents are not alone in this effort but are supported by Coptic Church, religious structures, and religious clergy.

The salience of religion finds expression as great effort and commitment on the part of that adult generations (parents and religious leaders) to pass religious values, traditions, and faith onto younger generations, as well as to preserve practices and rituals [60, 61,

62].. Interviewees emphasize the importance of religion in the education children receive within family and in Churches where youth have also the opportunity to socialize with co-ethnic peers.

Focusing on ingroup religious and ethnic distinctiveness acts as an intergenerational social glue, maintaining the link between past and present, between "here" and "there", and between diasporic Churches and Mother Church.

As already corroborated by several psychological studies, intergenerational transmission of a strong ethnic religious identity plays a key role as protection factor for migrants who frequently face distress and fatigue due to immigration itself [2]. Therefore, focusing on the history of the Egyptian Coptic Church and its features responds to the needs of communities of immigrants living in Western countries where they face marginalization [63].

Through the voices of two generations interviewed, Coptic families bear a clear religious identity in which continuity/closeness with the tradition of their Mother Church and opposition/distance from the host society find expression at once.

If both the narratives of parents and adolescents confirm the salience of religion in post-migration, it is worth dwelling on how they reconstruct religious identity in the host society and what different strategies they use to reinforce their collective distinctiveness. These identity strategies are different for first generation adult and second-generation children.

Among first generation parents seems to emerge a religious "diasporic" identity. The term "diaspora" – that in the last two decades has uncritically proliferated in political and academic discourse as noted by some authors [64, 65, 66] – has been chosen here to underline that core identity aspects among parents reference the symbolic and practical connection with a "home" outside the country of immigration (the homeland, the Mother Church), as well as with all dispersed persons of similar religious affiliation [60]. And yet, in Vertovec's words [66], this «type of consciousness (involving aspects of collective memory, desire and an awareness of identities spanning 'here-and-there') » (p. 7), keeps the return myth alive. Diasporic identity contents (suffering and enduring like the first martyrs, struggling for their faith, brave and protagonist of their destiny) convey continuity between the past and the present, between the "here" and "there", as well as a proximity with the martyrs of the Mother Church in Egypt.

Indeed, within such identity contents, it is possible to also recognize components and lexicon belonging to the narrative promoted by the Coptic Orthodox Church on the transnational level [47, 60]. Said elements include the Pharaonic heritage, the twenty centuries of Christianity, the apostolic foundation in Egypt and the glorious early era, throughout the past fourteen centuries. These provide evidence for the resilience of the Church, for its strength and spirituality, alongside the "miracle of survival". Drawing on the interviews, it can be suggested that parents view migration as emphasizing the celebration of the group's destiny. In this view, mission reflects the strong link between Mother Church in Egypt and diasporic churches. In comparison with second-generation narrative, findings suggest that parents seek more strongly after a teleological, transcendental meaning to their painful migration experience.

Unlike their parents, religious identity contents among adolescent children emphasize opposition with a highly secularized Italian society and with Italian peers, who are considered as little or not at all actively religious. For the youngest – born or arrived in Italy – the religious themes of martyrdom and of the diaspora remain in the background, emphasising the gap with the outside world, especially when it comes to the religious practice.

The two elements emerged from the narratives – the general orientation towards the homeland and the perception of an irreconcilable religious difference with Italian society – seem to be intertwined with feelings of threat from the outside world. The cultural encounter with the Other recurring across the interviews coincides with the encounter with "Italians". Interactions with Italian people often bear negative shades. This is because Italian society is essentially considered non-religious and removed from faith and religious practice. The emphasis on the distinctiveness of the Coptic identity raises doubts and questions on the risks that could arise from such a stark juxtaposition to – and separation from – Italian people and the Italian society as stereotyped in the interviews. This choice of remaining separate and distinct from mainstream society is in line with what suggested by recent studies conducted in Western immigration countries and involving migrant Coptic communities [48, 63, 67]. At the same time this choice of separation seems also linked to another element, namely a certain invisibility of this ethnic-religious minority within resettlement country's society [48] which appears to hamper cultural encounters with the local majority and its communities (Christians, other immigrant communities). In other words, Coptic immigrants are likely to experience marginalization in the society of immigration as Coptic minority (minority both within their country of origin and within the Muslim-majority migrant Egyptian community living in Italy) remain invisible as Christians.

In the long run, the identified gap can become challenging, especially for younger generations who are born and raised in Italy. This happens because it is expected of them to be loyal to a migration mandate that requires them to preserve and reproduce their cultural and religious heritage, and to prioritize the latter opening towards the new culture. Indeed, it can be suggested that a strong commitment to the values passed down from their parents and the Coptic community is a strong protection factor. However, these considerations should be weighed against the question of whether said tendency enables intergenerational negotiation, if the choices of the younger generations deviate from prescribed norms and rules. In addition to this, even if younger generations fully endorse the value system passed down from their culture and family of origin, a relationship with the outside world grounded in defensive or utilitarian attitudes and behavior would be problematic. Across immigrant communities, it is not uncommon to underscore their own distinctiveness and unique features in opposition to the new context. The main issue concerns the extent to which the Coptic community and families want to maintain this separate acculturative orientation or instead pursue a perspective of greater integration, allowing their members to be open to the new society and culture while maintaining their cultural roots [28, 67, 68]. In the long run, integration is widely acknowledged as the best solution for immigrants and the host society in terms of personal and social well-being. Nevertheless, to achieve this goal, both the Coptic community and Italian society must accept the challenge of crossing their respective borders and dare to start interacting with each other. The fact that they share a common Christian faith can help bridge the gap, allowing for mediation and personal contact.

In our research, the challenges encountered by the families interviewed when facing the encounter with the Other are articulated in the perception of the external world as full of pitfalls and threats, a world of which one must be cautious. However, at the same time, in the external world it is possible to reaffirm the particularity and strength of one's own Church. The risk of an introverted tendency and of exhibiting reactive solutions and behaviors remains evident.

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Immigrant Assimilation Beyond Secularisation: The Peculiar Case of Greece

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Abstract. This chapter deals with the exceptional case of immigrant religious assimilation in Greece. Within the European context of immigration countries characterised by ongoing secularisation process and immigrant assimilation towards natives' values and attitudes, Greece is considered as a particular case because of the tendency of immigrants to assimilate towards stronger religious identities of natives. It is argued that such identities concern identification with the nation, which can be instrumental for immigrant's acceptance and integration in the host society. This can be due to some peculiar characteristics of the Greek social, institutional and political setting which makes national identity and Orthodoxy so interwoven. By investigating the conditions in which such a "strategic assimilation" emerges, this chapter also examines whether the Greek case can be relevant for other countries across Europe, calling up for follow-up studies, especially about the role of religious socialization within-families.

Keywords. immigrant assimilation, secularisation, Greece, Europe, religious identities, generational transmission

1. Introduction

In the last decades, European countries have been receiving foreign-born populations which resulted in a kaleidoscopic mix of different groups, religions, values, and patterns of behaviour. For what concerns religion, the increasing numbers of migrants coming from very religious –and also denominationally different– countries brought in a potentially interesting "disturbance" in the secularization processes that are widely recognized as currently unfolding in Europe. Considering the role that religion plays in the integration of families with immigrant background into the new societies [1, 2, 3], patterns of religiosity among immigrants and within migrant families become of central importance for sociologists.

In studying such patterns, it is often recognized the tendency of immigrant groups to assimilate to the natives [4], becoming increasingly similar in regard to values, attitudes and behaviours. In a context like the European one, where secularization is proceeding at a fast rate, this should be translated into the diminishing relevance of

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religion for such groups too. However, when referring to patterns of change between immigrants' generations, we think that Greece deserves much more attention as a case study when considering its particular characteristics.

Along this chapter, we argue that Greece differs from other Western European countries due to its historical background, its geographic and cultural positioning between East and West and the important role of Orthodox Church in the construction of national identity and in politics [5]. As a matter of facts, Greece is seen as oscillating between (a not secularized) tradition and modernization. Despite the presence of an indigenous Muslim population,[2] Greece has been one of the most demographically homogenous countries in Europe in ethnic and religious terms [6]. Yet, this homogeneity has been challenged since 1990s due to the continuous arrival of important numbers of immigrants that turned Greece into an immigration country. According to Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum and Eurostat, the number of those coming from non-EU countries in 2021 is about 939,398 [7], while the largest non-EU immigrant groups are Albanians (422,954) – almost half of total immigrant population, Georgians (29,259), Chinese (26,586), Pakistanis (25,583) and Ukrainians (21,180). Data deriving from the Census of 2011 show that Bulgarians (75,917) and Romanians (46,524) are among the most numerous immigrant groups in Greece.

In light of these considerations, this chapter aims at showing and investigating the patterns of religiosity within families of immigrants in Greece and to discuss their peculiar character. The Greek case is examined as an "exceptional case" [8] that can contribute to magnifying sets of relations that otherwise would lack visibility. In fact, it is argued that some distinctive characteristics of the Greek social, institutional and political setting are contributing to make such a country deviating from the general pattern of assimilation toward secularisation widely observed in Europe. In fact, it is claimed that the immigrant religious assimilation occurring between first and second generations in Greece means a strengthening of religious identities as a way to become more similar to the native majority and to integrate in the host society [9]. Overall, this chapter also contributes to the debate on religiosity patterns of immigrant families in Southern Europe, which has remained under-researched [10].

In the next section, we introduce the theoretical debate on religious assimilation, highlighting the significance of secularization processes in Europe and religious patterns between first- and second-generation immigrants. Then, we account for those characteristics making Greece an interesting case that deserves further investigation on the one hand, and for the theoretical and epistemological significance of exploring exceptional cases on the other. We proceed by analysing the empirical evidence based on European Social Survey (ESS) data, and then we continue with the interpretation of immigrant religious patterns in Greece and the possible relevance of our findings to other countries. We close this chapter with some conclusive considerations and the limitations of this study.

[2] The Muslim minority of Western Thrace numbers approximately 100,000 to 120,000 people of whom 50% have Turkish origin, 35% are Pomaks, and 15% Roma (Gemi, 2019). Antoniou (2003) states that most Pomaks and Roma identify themselves as Turks. This minority enjoys a series of rights concerning legal issues (application of Sharia law), language and education. These rights apply only in Western Thrace and have no validity for the rest of Muslim immigrants (and population) across the Greek territory.

2. Religious assimilation, secularization in Europe and second generations' religiosity

The debate around the incorporation of immigrants is usually framed around what scholars call the *assimilation theory* [4]. Quite basically put, given the exposure to a new culture and a new context, and given the increasing interactions with the natives, immigrants have the tendency to become similar to the population of the receiving societies on a broad set of values, attitudes and behaviours, religion included [11]. This is to say that as the influence of the new context increases (and that of the origin weakens) over time, migrants tend to become increasingly similar to the natives on a series of attributes. Therefore, what makes more interesting the study of immigrants' assimilation patterns is the fact that individual attributes (being them values, attitudes, behaviours) can be intended as simultaneously embedded in two different contexts: those of the country of origin and those of the destination one.

As far as it concerns immigration in European countries and religious assimilation, two characteristics constitute the main lenses to be used to interpret such processes. On the one side, there is large consensus that European countries are on advanced stages of *secularization* [12, 13, 14]. On the other side, it is often intended that such phenomena of secularization and religious decline are driven by *generational replacement*: it is not that people change their belief system over time (or when key life-events happen), but rather new –and less religious– generations are progressively replacing older ones [14, 15]. It is, therefore, from the changing composition between older –more religious– cohorts and younger –less religious– ones that processes of secularization emerge.

Saying this, if we intend a "*generation*" as a group of people that have experienced the same social, historical, and political settings in the same moment and in the same place –thus stressing the significance of the formative years for the development of values, attitudes and set of preferences, the relevance of this concept when it comes to immigration is easy to see. As a matter of fact, first generations have been completely socialized in the origin country and then moved to the host one, while second generations have been completely socialized in the new context. If we want to use an evocative picture, they may be seen as the link in the chain between their parents and the natives, because they are contemporarily exposed to the family environment (made by parents socialized in the origin country) and to the group of – native – peers.

Given the advanced patterns of secularization mentioned above, what is relevant for the study of religious assimilation is that –on average– immigrants come from more religious countries and that, therefore, they are usually more religious than the native-born population [16, 17]. Because of the relevance of the processes of socialization for the development of religious values, it is therefore not expected that first-generation migrants will change their religious attributes as a result of the assimilation pressure in the new context: their religiosity has already formed and stabilized. If an assimilation pressure exists, it will unfold during the formative years, and therefore only immigrant children will be "pushed" toward some characteristics of the native population, religiosity included. If this happens, the expectation is therefore to see second-generations' levels of religiosity to be more similar to that of the natives (and therefore lower) if compared to that of their first-generation migrant parents.

2.1. Individual and contextual characteristics shaping assimilation processes

Within the above general reading, both individual and country characteristics can mediate this tendency toward assimilation. Among these, Muslim/Christian divide, the denominational concordance between origin and destination country, and the level of secularization of the destination country play a central role.

As far as Muslims and Christians are concerned, firstly, many scholars have shown that differences in levels and patterns of religiosity across generations are relevant to assimilation process. While the general reading for Christian migrants is that of a decline across generations [18, 19, 20, 21, 22] and over time [23], quite different patterns have been found for Muslim families of immigrant background. Indeed, many studies [11, 16, 24] have indicated stability – or even small increases – in Muslim migrants' religiosity.

Secondly, in reading these differences in the assimilation processes, an emerging approach refers to the so-called "similarity-biased social influence" [25]. The fundamental idea behind its basic statement is that only similar people can influence each other. If this is true, people tend to assimilate to others and, therefore, to adjust their opinions, values, and practices, only when such traits are sufficiently similar; when such traits are too different, such an assimilation will not happen. When looking at religion, not only may Muslim migrants not assimilate to (Christian) natives because their religiosity, together with many other cultural traits, are so different, but something similar may also happen within Christian migrants.

Thirdly, though, it is not only the denomination of the native majority that plays a role in this game. As a matter of fact, European countries –despite being all on the same secularization track– are very heterogeneous in terms or religious levels. For example, European Social Survey data (2020) show that the percentages of those who do not belong to any religion range from 77% in Czech Republic to 7% in Greece or 9% in Poland. Similar gaps can be also observed when looking at the service attendance or other more subjective indicators, including the self-reported level of religiosity. If the idea of assimilation holds, migrants moving to more religious countries should be exposed to lower secularization pressures, and, therefore, we can expect lower religious differences between parents and children.

To sum up, this section sketched out how generations, individual and contextual characteristics have a major role in shaping migrants' patterns of religiosity. Within this general reading though, some peculiar characteristics of the social, institutional and political setting can result in some deviation from the general pattern. As argued in the next section, Greece can be one of those deviant cases which this chapter attempts to investigate.

3. Greece as a particular case to study within the European landscape

When it comes to the study of the patterns of the religiosity of immigrants and their families, Greece has some characteristics making it a really interesting and potentially deviating case.

Such particularities mainly concern "religion, religiosity, and religious freedom" that largely "deviate from the European modernizing paradigm" [26]. What mainly differentiates Greeks from their western counterparts is their tendency to strongly associate religious affiliation to ethnicity, which means that being Christian orthodox is a necessary condition to be Greece [5]; or, similarly, "an ethnic Greek is also a Christian

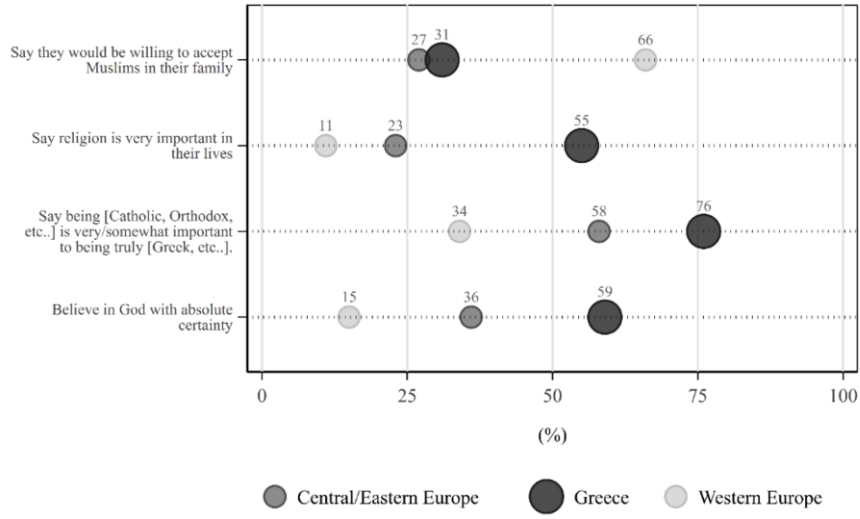
Orthodox" [6]. As we will see shortly, such particular characteristics derive mainly from conflicting past influences of the Byzantium and of the West.

This strong role of the Orthodox religion is also translated in the institutional and political settings. The Greek constitution recognises the Orthodox Church of Greece as the prevailing religion, while the Greek state is not separated from the Greek Orthodox Church. The public law also recognises two minorities: an autochthonous Muslim minority of Western Thrace (in north-eastern Greece) and the Jewish. Triandafyllidou and Gropas [27] reported that these distinctions in themselves have obstructed religious freedom and have led to discriminatory legal and administrative attitudes against these religious groups. Nowadays, the population in Greece is approximately 10,8 millions, 81% to 90% of that being Greek orthodox, 2% Muslim, 0,7% other religions[3] and 4% atheist [28].

This peculiar situation just mentioned is also visible when considering Greeks' attitudes towards religion, national identity and diversity. Looking at Figure 1, we observe that only 31% of Greeks do declare willing to accept Muslims in their families, a percentage that is very close to the attitudes of other Central and Eastern European countries (27%). Contrary, this percentage is of 66% among Western Europeans. When considering answers related to religiosity and belonging to the nation, not only do Greeks differ even more from other Western Europeans, but the former's attitude diverges from people in Central and Eastern European countries in some cases. 55% of Greeks say that religion is very important in their lives (23% among Eastern Europeans; 11% among Western Europeans), while three-quarters of them say being Orthodox is at least somewhat important to being truly Greek (58% among Eastern Europeans; 34% among Western Europeans). Moreover, almost 6 out of 10 Greeks say that they believe in God with absolute certainty (36% among Eastern Europeans; 15% among Western Europeans). What really strikes the eye is the empirical confirmation that Greek orthodoxy still has a crucial role in building national and ethnic identities, as we already mentioned. All in all, we see the Greek situation more strongly resembling – and even overtaking – that of the Eastern European countries rather than that of the other Mediterranean and Western ones.

[3] Greek Catholics and the Jewish community are the most numerous religion groups after Muslims, numbering 50,000 and 5,000 members respectively.

***Figure 1**: Share of people who...*



Source: Pew Research Center [29]

Coherently, drawing on ESS data, Georgiadou and Nikolakopoulos [30] stated that 88% of youths declare that religion is of great or very great importance to them, although interestingly this is not interpreted as high religiosity nor frequent religious practice. Instead, religious faith referred more to identification with and belonging to the Greek nation. In other words, Dragonas [26] claimed that "Greek religiosity has to do less with spirituality and a religious deepening among believers and more with the ethno-religious nature of the Greek Orthodox Church". It is exactly this functional role of orthodoxy for the building up of ethnic and national identity that makes Greece so interesting to study as a deviant case.

4. Why to study a deviant case?

Social scientists are interested in the typical, in the representative, in the common reading. It is through the observation of recursive patterns that we identify regularities, and we abstract the interpretations from which we derive the theories. But, what if some anomalies in these recursive patterns emerge, as is the case of Greece for assimilation toward secularization as we see below? Given the emphasis we place on generalisation, the latent tendency is often to neglect the relevance of such anomalies, or at least to exclude them from a general reading which is intended as to apply everywhere and anywhere *except* for that specific situation.

Therefore, in confronting with strong approaches such as that of assimilation, the tendency is to consider assimilation as what *should* happen. Here, the strategy we want to purse is different. The situation we are observing for Greece is so particular and interesting that we want to place ourselves in the perspective of learning from this "anomaly". To this respect, it is Ermakoff [8] who provides some interpretative lenses

to go beyond normative expectations and to transform deviant cases into research opportunities.

Deviant cases, in this sense, are not sources of confusion, nor something we need to state not fitting our theory or hypotheses. Instead, these can act as a way to magnify relations that otherwise will be hidden behind the general pattern. Exceptional cases can serve purposes of research in three different ways. They can have a *critical* role, because of their capacity to question assumptions and expectations. They can have a *paradigmatic* role, because they can exemplify a characteristic feature of a "social object" that has never been investigated. They can have a *heuristic* role when they "magnify sets of relations" that in other situations would remain invisible. This last one is clearly the scenario best fitting with our situation.

Drawing on Ermakoff's view, we want to use Greece as a deviant case to produce "novel facts" that are not only facts that have "been contradicted by previous or rival [research] programmes" [32]. By a reasoning based on subtraction, we aim, on the one hand, to refine the scope conditions[4] of our theoretical claim, namely when, where, how and under which conditions such a claim works (i.e. it works everywhere except for that country, that period, that group of people etc.). On the other, a little more ambitiously, we aim to use our deviant case as a prototype, that is as a way to magnify and clarify a relation that has been neglected so far. What if some conditions, or some combinations of conditions, exist? Does this have an effect on our theory, which is supposed to work universally?

5. Greece as exceptional case: empirical evidence

In proceeding with the analysis of the empirical evidence, it would be useful to highlight two main elements derived from the previous paragraphs. On the one side, the religious differences between migrants parents' generation and children's generation can be intended as a rough measure of assimilation pressure or, at least, of assimilation speed. The bigger this difference is, the stronger –and the faster– the assimilation. For example, when there are very big generational differences for a very religious group of migrants who moved to a very secular country, we can presumably infer that the assimilation pressure toward natives' (low) levels of religiosity has been strong. As we will see, levels of religiosity for the second generations turn out being very similar to that of natives in many European countries, thus adding that a religious assimilation in such countries needed just the passage from one generation to the following to be completed. A second relevant element we can derive from what mentioned before is that the Greek case seems to be quite different if compared to the majority of European countries: we argue that this is not only due to the higher religiosity of natives compared to the majority of immigrants, but also to the fact that the strong link between Orthodox religiosity and Greek identity serves as a potential resource that immigrants can mobilize to facilitate their integration in the Greek landscape.

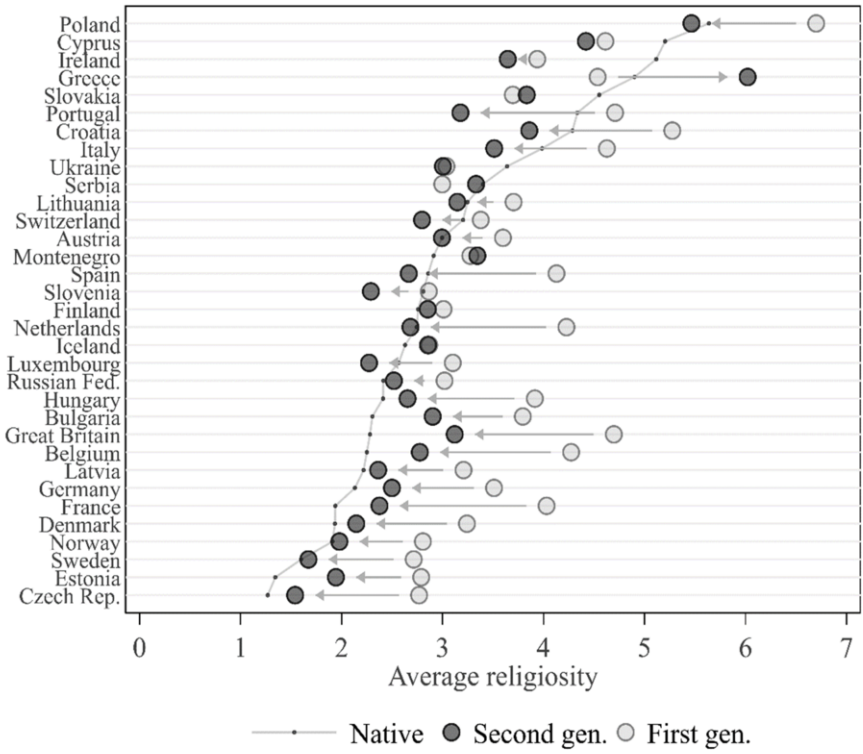
Unfortunately, a deep quantitative investigation of the religious differences between immigrant generations in Greece is almost impossible due to the lack of individual data on the topic. In order to –partially– overcome this limitation, and to compare the Greek situation with that of other European countries, the choice is to rely on the ESS (2020)

[4] Scope conditions are intended as the statements defining the circumstances in which a theory is applicable and their definition can serve to reconcile contradictory findings.

data [33]. This enables us to show the differences among first-generation immigrants (here identified as those born abroad), second-generation immigrants (here identified as those born in the country of survey from at least one parent born abroad) and natives.

Based on such data, two main figures emerge. Figure 2 provides a descriptive reading of the differences in the levels of religiosity between natives, second- and first-generation immigrants, while Figure 3 reports the differences in the share of people declaring a religious affiliation (left panel) and the affiliation to an Orthodox religion (right panel). Concerning Figure 2, we must specify that religiosity is intended as an index putting together information about attendance to services, private pray and self-definition,[5] three of the most important –and more studied– dimensions of religiosity.

Figure 2. Religious differences between first- and second-generation migrants based on ESS data, wave 1-9

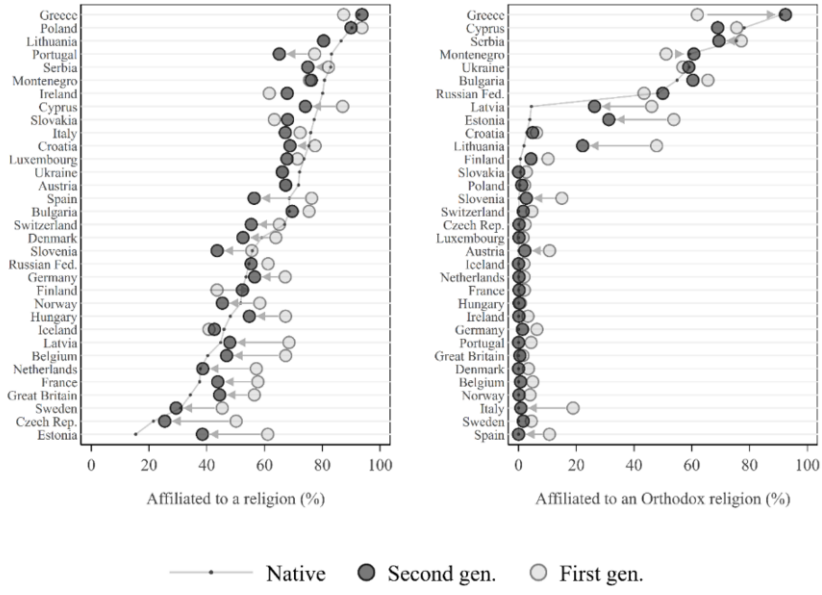


Source: Authors' elaboration on ESS data

[5] Such a choice has been made in order to provide a single compact graph that is easy to read. In any case, the general message (the picture in Greece is different from that in other European countries) remains the same even when focusing on the three dimensions separately, when adopting a more stringent definition of second-generation migrants (born in country of survey with both parents born abroad in the same country) and also when alternatively excluding some categories of migrants, such as Albanians, immigrants with a Turk Ancestry, Muslim, non-Orthodox. The same robustness checks have been also performed for the graphs reported in Figure 3.

Figure 2 clearly shows that there are evident tendencies toward religious assimilation in almost every European country covered by ESS. As a matter of fact, religious differences between second- and first-generation migrants always exist in the sense of second generations being –on average– less religious than first generations. Moreover, Figure 2 is also a good indication that migrant religiosity always tends to decrease and to become similar to that of the natives, no matter what the "starting point" is (even though bigger differences are generally observed in the most secular countries). Given this homogeneity in the interpretation of the results, and their coherence with the general theoretical tenets behind the assimilation theory, the existence of a case that deviates so much from this general reading raises curiosity and calls for attention. As a matter of fact, Greece is the only country in which we observe higher levels of religiosity for the second generation if compared to the first. Following what said above, this means that children's religiosity tends to be higher than parents' one and that the basic mechanisms of assimilation resulting in secularization are working differently here. There are clearly weak pressures toward secularization in the Greek religious landscape. Having this in mind, a further piece of the puzzle is provided by Figure 3, showing the difference in the affiliation to a religious denomination.

Figure 3. Differences in religious affiliation between first- and second-generation migrants based on ESS data, wave 1-9



Source: Authors' elaboration on ESS data

The first information coming from these graphs is that almost every citizen in Greece (~93%) declares affiliation to a religion, no matter being it a native, a second- or a first-generation immigrant. This makes Greece the European country (together with Poland) showing the highest share of religiously affiliated people. This is not so surprising as it

reflects what official statistics show [28]. However, the most interesting indication comes from the right panel of Figure 3. Given that there are almost no differences in the share of affiliation to *any* religion between first-generation, second-generation and natives (left panel), and given that such a difference is rather big (~30 percentage points) when it comes to Orthodox religion, the indication is that many immigrant –second generation– children with a non-Orthodox background tend to declare an Orthodox denomination when interviewed in Greece. As a matter of fact, the share of second-generation immigrants declaring an Orthodox denomination is almost the same to that of natives (~90%). This is interesting given the consistent number of immigrants with a non-Christian background (such as Albanians, but also Africans and Asians).

Although the literature on religious patterns among second-generation immigrants in Greece is scarce, previous studies on Albanian migrants' children offer some confirmation to this reading. Studies on integration and identity formation [33, 34, 35] have shown that second-generation Albanians have been often baptised Orthodox and/or disavowed the Muslim religion responding to the assimilationist pressures within the Greek society. In other words, this has been a way to indicate their *Greekness* in order to integrate and be de-stigmatized and avoid discrimination [7]. So far as is known, there is a gap in the literature with respect to religiosity among other second-generation migrant groups, as well as a lack of quantitative research on this topic. This is what makes these descriptive indications a very interesting starting point.

In fact, putting together all the cues coming from ESS data and very little research on immigrant families' religiosity in Greece, we can draw a picture in which almost all European countries stand within the same interpretative framework –that of an assimilation toward secularization– while only one country deviating from it. This is to say that we have a relation (that between migrant generations and religiosity resulting in a religious decline) working in the same way almost everywhere, except for a country: Greece. Therefore, it should exist something in the social context, in the history, in the institutions and political setting of Greece that makes this country diverging from the general theory when it comes to migrants' religious assimilation and secularization, as argued in the following section.

6. Interpreting the peculiar case of migrants' religiosity in Greece

The peculiar religious patterns between migrants' generations in Greece can be interpreted by considering a series of intertwined historical, cultural, political and geographical reasons that shape representations of the Greek national identity and its relationship with the Orthodox doctrine.

First, *Greekness* is intrinsically connected with Christian Orthodox religion as the Greek national identity has been also constructed by the Greek Orthodox Church. This institution is represented as the protector of the Greek nation during the Ottoman rule, while backing the narrative according to which Greeks are "blessed by God" [36]. In addition, the modern Greek state from its very constitutions defines the Greek citizen as "the inhabitant who lives within the Greek territory and believes in Christ".

Second, present-day Greece has a long history of four (and in some places five) centuries of Ottoman domination [26]. Some evidence from the Ottoman period can be still found in the landscape of numerous minarets and mosques, although most of the Muslim buildings during the Ottoman rule have been demolished after the foundation of the independent Greek State. It is on this basis that Islam in Greece has been usually

associated to the Ottoman-Turkish oppressors who became the "other" upon which the national identity in Greece has been constructed [37]. This also implies a natural equation of Muslims to Turks, as the Ottomans (Turks) and their religion become the nation's other. Such associations of Islam with Turkey and of Muslims with Turkish people often re-emerge when native Greeks interact with Muslim immigrants in Greece.

Nowadays, the relation between the Greek State and Orthodox Church and the latter's role in defining the Greek national identify are still reflected in the privileged position of the Orthodox Church [26]. In turn, this is translated, for instance, into Church's involvement in some state affairs such as the curriculum and textbooks for the class of religious education in schools which is a compulsory for pupils of primary and secondary education schools. Although an exemption is provided for whose parents who do not desire their children take religious education classes in schools, students may feel discriminated in those cases in which school headmasters demand parents to declare their children's religious identity, so that pupils can be exempted. This is because the Minister of Education has occasionally issued some circulars blurring the decisions of the Independent Hellenic Data Protection Authority related to religious identity at schools. Other instances indicating Greek Church's involvement in state's affairs were when the Orthodox Church opposed to the abolition of the law providing the compulsory indication of Greek citizens' religious affiliation in the identity cards by asking a referendum on this issue; or, when local religious leaders voiced against the law granting citizenship to migrants of second generation.

Third, Athens –where the majority of immigrants reside– remained the only European capital without an official mosque until June 2019, while the only Islamic cemetery within the Greek territory is found in Thrace (region in Northern Greece). Although the law providing the construction of mosque had been passed in 2000, Greek governments (regardless of whether were ruled by the Conservative party New Democracy or the Socialist party PASOK) struggled in finding an agreement on where the mosque should be built [27, 38]. This was mainly due to administrative obstacles, public (local) opposition to the construction of a highly visible mosque that could attract Muslims in a certain area, and a discreet obstruction of the establishment of the mosque by the Orthodox Church [27]. Nowadays, there are three officially registered mosques and almost one hundred informal places of religious worship under the label of cultural associations across Greece [28].

Two more reasons of political nature are relevant in the Greek case. On the one hand, it should be underscored that immigration policy has been reactive and fragmented, without promoting initiatives for integration for at least two decades since Greece became an immigration country [5]. Not only does this concern Muslim migrants, but the whole immigrant population. On the other hand, Greek people's perceptions of and concerns against Muslims have been expressed through the electoral triumphs and action of Golden Dawn [39, 40] –a neo-Nazi political party of national-socialist ideology that was recently branded a criminal organization– from 2012 to 2018. Apart from expressing xenophobic and anti-Islamic public discourses (reproducing the link between the fear of Islam and Turkey), some of its members have been guilty of attempted murders and assaults against (Muslim) migrants, while two individuals linked to Golden Dawn were convicted of the murder of a Pakistani migrant.

Fourth, ongoing tensions and conflicts with neighbouring Turkey inflame nationalist discourses and fear of Islam. For instance, Sakellariou [36] suggests that older[6] and more recent crises during the 1980s and 1990s[7] that could have led out to wars reinforce collective memory and trauma of Ottoman rule, which equates to perceiving Turks (and Muslims) as an enemy of Greece. Similarly, constant accuses against Turkey of violating Greek airspace and maritime boundaries constitute elements that render Turkey a permanent threat to Greece's sovereignty. Critics against current Turkish government for encouraging asylum seekers to enter Greece has become a new reason that creates tension between the two countries.

Turning now to the differences in religiosity and religious affiliation between immigrant parents and children that we are observing in this chapter, we can now try to read them with the lenses of the strong role of Christianity for the building-up of a sense of *Greekness*, the reasons behind which we have just described. An effective way to do so is to distinguish between three main groups of migrants residing in Greece: the Albanian Muslims, the Eastern Christian Orthodox migrants and the other (mainly African and Asia) Muslim migrants.

Concerning the case of Albanians, it should be stressed that Albania has a Muslim majority, but also a constitution that makes religious pluralism and tolerance, together with the principles of secularism the benchmarks of the Albanian national identity [41, 10]. Starting from this, it sounds plausible that children of very secular parents have bigger room for religious increase if compared with children coming from families putting a lot of emphasis on religious principles. As a matter of fact, first-generation Muslim parents who arrived in Greece in the 1990s and 2000s had lived in a communist country where religious freedom was banned from 1967 to 1990 [6]. Secularizing policies in Albania resulted in a highly secularized population [42], which made no religious demands upon its arrival in Greece or had "absolutely no religious conviction or identity" [43]. Coming from a much more secularized country than Greece, assimilation pressure of Albanians can be towards more religious identities, therefore the opposite if compared to the classical "religious migrant in secular country" pattern. This has been confirmed in previous studies claiming that many Albanian Muslim migrants declared either atheists or belonging to the Orthodox Church upon their arrival to Greece, as a way to achieve acceptance and better employment opportunities in the host society [6]. Moving to second-generation Albanians, it can be claimed that strategies to cope with discrimination and stigmatization can entail even a sort of conversion. This is confirmed in a study conducted by [35] who showed that many Albanians parents see their children's religiosity as instrument in their integration, thus baptising them to Orthodox Church and giving them a Greek name. This author claimed that this practice was less far common in Italy, another country with a considerable Albanian presence, which highlights the particularities of the Greek case where assimilation pressure is high. This situation has been described by some authors with the label "strategic assimilation" [35], meaning an assimilation toward more pronounced religious identity aimed at smoothening the Albanian integration in the Greek landscape [34].

When it comes to the group of second-generation Orthodox Christian migrants (mainly from Eastern Europe) instead, such a stability –or even increase– of religiosity

[6] The Greek-Turkish War of 1897, the "Asia Minor Catastrophe" of 1922, and the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974.

[7] Disputes over oil-drilling rights in the Aegean Sea in 1987 or over the sovereignty of Imia/Kardak islet in 1996.

can occur due to higher assimilation pressure in a country where the majority belongs to the same denomination. This is coherent with the main idea of the "similarity-biased social influence" that we sketched in the first section. This can be the case of Romanians, Bulgarians, Georgians, and Ukrainians, as well of Christian Albanians (some of whom of Greek origin and Cristian Orthodox background), and other migrants sharing the same doctrine with Orthodox Greeks. For instance, this can be the result of confrontation with the values of the Greek society through their Greek peers and friends, as well as in school [44]. Indeed, a recent research showed that religion is high in Greek teenagers' value system and constitutes a determining factor of their identity [45]. Moreover, Orthodox Christian migrants in Greece come from former communist countries where the idea of a strong relationship between religion and identity is typical [46, 47]. In addition, the transmission of religious practice from parents to children is favoured by the privileged position of Orthodoxy in Greece, together with the presence of religious infrastructure of their own denomination, as explained above.

The third group of analysis, that of (non-Albanian) Muslims, is the one for which it is more difficult to advance an *ad hoc* reading. On the one side, because it is a very heterogeneous one, being it composed by many different national groups ranging from Maghrebis (Egyptians, Moroccans, Algerians, Tunisians), centre-African (Somalians, Sudanese, Senegalese), people of the middle East (Lebanese, Syrians, Turkish, Iranians, Iraqis, Afghanis) and Asian people (mainly Pakistanis and Bangladeshi). On the other side, because it is presumably the group which is harder to reach with survey not explicitly targeted to this population. In any case, a very safe approach is to extend to these groups the same reading we have for Muslim groups in other European countries. The fact that many studies [24, 11, 16] found stability –or even small increases– in Muslim migrants religiosity is perfectly coherent for our course of argumentation. In addition to this reading, what can be pretty typical in the Greek case is that the representations of Turks and Muslims as "other" coming from the past history may influence the way in which Greeks approach newly arrived Muslims [38], thus discouraging them to declare their Muslim faith. This, again, can provide some explanation in relation to the high rates of affiliation to Orthodox religion among immigrants with a non-Christian background.

In light of these considerations and relying on Ermakoff's work [8], we are reflecting on a series of questions in the next section: what if other countries are on the same path of Greece, or are becoming more similar to Greece concerning some characteristics? Should we expect the same patterns among immigrants? Should we expect these countries to become more and more similar to the Greek prototype? Or should we conclude that the Greek case is so peculiar as to be the only exception possible in a theory working that way everywhere else?

7. How can the Greek case be of reference for other countries?

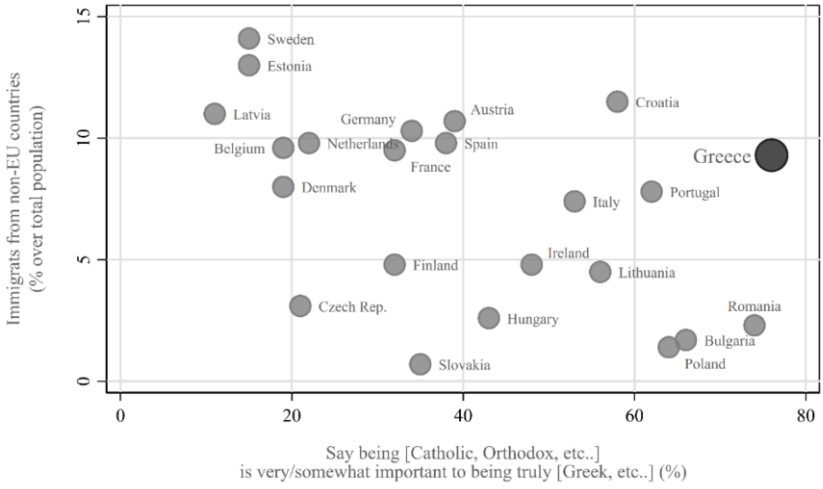
The fact that Greece –quite differently from other European countries– shows strong signs of religious stability or increase between migrant generations represents a very interesting case per se, but it could be very interesting also for the identification of the potential conditions behind this pattern. If we are able to identify the conditions that can foster a religious stability between migrants, we could be also able to specify some expectations concerning other countries that can possibly share and/or replicate some of the Greek peculiarities. In considering data interpretation in the previous paragraph, we

can now specify three main conditions that, if contemporarily present, can discourage second-generation immigrants to lose their religious faith and to follow the majority in a sort of assimilation to religiosity, or to religious identity, as intended by the Greek society: a national identity reinforced by and interwoven with orthodoxy.

The *first and most important condition*, we believe, is the strong relationship between religion and national identity, which results in high level of religiosity in the Greek society. In this regard, being it cemented in centuries of historical events, such a relationship is expected to be stronger in Greece if compared –for example– to former Communist countries in which a light form of de-secularization has mainly to be intended as a way for "burning the bridges" with the Communist past [48]. In any case, the strong role of Orthodoxy for the building-up of a collective identity makes Greece much more similar to the Eastern European countries rather than to the Mediterranean and western counterparts, as also Figure 1 and Figure 4 show.

The *second condition* is a high share of immigrants, especially from non-EU countries. This because these groups of migrants and their families –under specific conditions– can see a declaration of belonging to the Orthodox denomination as a quite effective way to integrate in the Greek society, especially if they come from a Muslim culture which is ostracized in Greece because of centuries of Ottoman domination and also by the problems with the Turk neighbour.

Figure 4: Share of immigrant from non-EU countries and people stating a strong link between religiosity and national identity



Source: Pew Research Center [29]

Figure 4 puts together official Eurostat statistics and the same information about the role of religion for national identity reported in Figure 1 in order to inspect together the first and second conditions. As a matter of fact, Greece is the only country showing both the strong role of religious belonging for national identity-making and a conspicuous

presence of non-EU migrants. While Eastern European countries somehow are characterised by a similar strong role of religion for national identity construction, they are not immigrant destinations. Contrarily, although Mediterranean and other European countries are immigrant destinations, the role of religion in the construction of an identity is becoming weaker and weaker. Overall, this combination is what makes Greece so peculiar in the sense that this country puts together characteristics from both Eastern and Western Europe, being also the only majority-Orthodox country without a Communist-domination past.

These two conditions alone should be enough to depict Greece as a very particular context for what concern the religious assimilation of migrants, but a *third one* comes out very important, and relates to the role of Albanians (who constitute more than half of the immigrants in Greece). In fact, Albanians have the almost unique feature of being at the same time mainly Muslim but also very secularized. This results in a rather weak identification with the Muslim faith up to the point where they may also tend to declare a non-Muslim Orthodox identification –or even to convert– if this is expected to be functional to their assimilation. However, it should be reminded out that changes in religious affiliation can be just outward or superficial in the case of conversion [34]. This means that Albanians' declared Orthodox faith should not be automatically translated into actual practice nor even into personal religious convictions. Indeed, scholars on Albanians' religious affiliations across Albania argued that people do not flee their belonging repressed by their religious affiliation even when they convert to another religion [49].

Putting together these three conditions, which are a strong role of religion for national identity, a large share of non-EU migrants, and a relevant group of non-Orthodox migrants which accepts to declare another faith in order to integrate, our educated guess is that Greece, at the moment is quite a peculiar case and is destined to remain as such. If we want to speculate that what happens in Greece can be possibly observed in other countries, the most opportune direction to look at is the Balkans, where especially Serbia and Montenegro, but also Croatia, seem to share some characteristics of Greece [42]. As a matter of fact, in such countries, there are both an Orthodox majority (Catholic in the case of Croatia) with a strong role concerning identity and a relevant share of Muslim immigrants (mainly Bosnians, but also Albanians). Somehow similarly to Greece, these immigrant families might have no choice than declaring Orthodox in order to integrate. Similarly, our findings could be presumably relevant also to the former-Communist Eastern European countries, where we can observe a comparable role of orthodoxy in making up national identity, especially after the fall of the regime. Quite differently to Greece, however, such a role is much more recent, and it is not cemented by centuries of Ottoman domination and historical events that so strongly shaped the construction of the Muslim otherness. In addition to this, all the former-Communist countries are far from being immigrant destinations; at most, they are mainly confronted with a sort of "internal" migration from other former-Communist countries, which is quite different from what the second condition is about.

8. Conclusions and limitations

We have seen that a combination of contextual characteristics may explain why Greece appears so different from the other European countries when it comes to the secularization of migrants. Starting from the generally high levels of religiosity observed

in Greece, these conditions together can instigate both a religious stability (or even increase) and what previous research calls a "strategic assimilation" [35], meaning non-Orthodox migrants in Greece declaring an Orthodox denomination in order to smoothen their integration process. However, it should not be forgotten that this sort of "functional conversions" should not be confused with real religious conversions, in the sense that this new Orthodox faith remains somehow nominal and probably do not translate into actual practice, belief or even religious convictions; which is true for native people too. Being the peculiar situation of Greece emerging from five centuries of historical, social and political events, we argue that this peculiarity is intended to remain so. No other European country (with the exception of the Balkans to a minor extent) is expected to replicate all the three conditions we identify as best fitting the Greek case.

In addition to this main theoretical and epistemological argumentation, the added value of this chapter, we believe, is to also provide a quantitative reading of the religious differences between immigrant parents' and children' generations in Greece. Given the gap in the literature with respect to such a phenomenon, especially for what concerns southern-European countries) [10], as well as the lack of quantitative research on this topic, this makes such an attempt valuable.

Clearly, the lack of official statistical data or survey data especially targeted to migrants in Greece forces us to refer to European Social Survey which, despite the presence of useful information to identify the interviewees with a migrant background, is not designed *ad hoc* to reach such a population. This is particularly relevant especially because, being ESS questionnaire administered in Greek language (as in the other native languages in the other European countries), this may result in a potential over-representation of the better-integrated migrants, namely those who are at least able to speak Greek quite fluently.[8] This potential distortion, we believe, is less relevant when it comes to second generations. Another drawback linked to the use of ESS data is that, given their structure, it is not possible to push the argumentation about generational differences too far[9] nor to speak about conversions and/or individual changes. In this regard, we believe that the descriptive indications we provided in this chapter surely represent a very interesting starting point and definitely call for follow-up studies.

In order to expand from here, future research should include an explicit focus on the factors influencing the transmission of religiosity within families. In particular, it is the interplay between contextual pressures and family socialization that make this topic so interesting. In fact, when speaking about native majorities, it is often thought that families have a less relevant socializing role in very religious countries because it is the contextual pressure that matter most in such contexts. It would be more that fundamental to study whether the same applies also when looking at migrant families [50].

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[8] We should not forget, however, that the ESS samples are drawn starting from population lists.

[9] This because we are not comparing parents with children, but rather different groups.

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Migrant Families and Religious Belonging
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Muslim Families in Italy: The Transmission of Religion Between Continuity and Transformation

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1. Introduction

Within the field of study concerning the impact of migratory flows on the societies of receiving countries, the role played by migrants' religions has long been a subject of enquiry. As is often the case when dealing with religion and migration-related issues [1], the reflection started in the USA, where numerous scholars have tried to understand whether religious traditions favour a better integration process of immigrants and of their children in the host society [2]. Subsequently the debate shifted to Europe, where the analysis of these issues has developed in a more articulated way, considering different national realities; however, it focused mainly on religions outside the Judeo-Christian tradition, i.e., those perceived to be more "different" than the mainstream - in particular, Islam and Sikhism [3, 4].

There has also been an evolution in this field of enquiry from a generational point of view. How migrants lived and expressed their religion was first addressed by focusing on the first generations [5, 6]; intra-family relations, as well as migrants' descendants' religious experience and the outcomes of their socialisation, started being considered only in more recent years.

Concerning the Italian reality, just as in the rest of the European context, not all migration-driven diversities are considered equally different" in the public perception [7]. Some of them are perceived as conflicting conflict with values and beliefs considered essential for civil life: When it comes to religious diversity: while the different Catholic traditions and many Eastern religions are not seen as disruptive of the social order and get "ignored" [8], the multifaceted world that refers to Islam suffers from a deep-seated hostility, whose reasons are to be traced in the perceived "troubling" levels of religious practice of Muslims, which have been deemed to represent a challenge for increasingly secularised Western European societies [1]. Such differential perceptions of "othernesses" translated to academic research, too, which, especially in the European scholarship, especially focused on Islam and on Muslim migrants from different points of view: their religious faiths and practices, their worldviews about their desired society ("secular" *versus* "Islamic"), the definition of their identity (religious, European,

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cosmopolitan), their orientation about child rearing and mixed marriages, and the demands placed on institutional arrangements of European societies to accommodate religious diversity and Muslims' requests (recognition of holidays, teaching of religion in schools, construction of places of worship, etc.) [9].

In looking at young Muslims across European societies, their religious belonging has often been correlated with open questions in education (Does the increase in Muslim students give rise to demands towards secularisation and changes in educational paths?) and in the labour market (Are Muslims discriminated in their access to the labour market, compared to people of other religious belongings? Moreover, the attacks carried out since the beginning of the 2000s in Western countries, often at the hands of so-called "homegrown terrorists", put the group of Muslim migrants' descendants in the spotlight both of policies and of scholarly research: while the former tried to securitise the Muslim community, the latter attempted to understand if young Muslims are likely become new representatives of fundamentalism or jihadist candidates [10].Therefore, over time, the point of view of young people has become of particular interest, both in for the ways they display their religious identity in the public space and for the socialisation practices and the beliefs of a minoritarian religion.

This chapter offers an overview of the workings of religious socialisation within Muslim migrant families in Italy, both from the perspective of the first generation (the parents) and from the standpoint of the second generation (the children). Drawing from more than 80 interviews[2] with parents and young adult descendants of Muslim-immigrant families composed of two generations living in Italy collected in two Italian cities –Milan and Turin– and their respective hinterlands, this piece provides a sociological examination of the process of intergenerational transmission of religious values, evaluating the extent to which, within Muslim communities, the parents' lived religion [11] and religious identity [12] is maintained by their children. First, we will evaluate the conditions and the premises for the religious socialisation process among migrant families in general and specifically for Muslim families, reviewing the main findings and theories developed around these issues. Secondly, we will describe the specific features of the Italian context, analysing the level of inclusion of the Muslim minority in Italy and assessing the extent to which it may influence both the first-generation and the second-generation's experience of religion. We will then turn to the point of view of parents concerning the task of "handing down faith" in such a context, which we will subsequently compare with children's words about how they experience the transmission of religion within their own families. In discussing the religious divide emerging between parents and children in these Muslim families, we highlight how family-related and context-related socio-cultural dynamics define three possible outcomes of religious socialization.

[2] The analysis is based on two distinct research projects, one focusing on first- and second-generation Muslims in Turin, the other focusing on second-generation Muslims in Milan and Turin (Italy). The corpus considered for the present chapter comprises 80 interviews, of which 30% were conducted with first-generation representatives and 70% with second-generation Muslims, aged between 18 and 32. The sample includes an equal representation of the two genders; interviewees were selected both among members of religious associations and from outside religious organizations. In the interview quotations, they are indicated in the following way: sex, age, country of origin, city. All the material was collected between 2018 and 2020.

2. Handing down Islam in the West. What are the conditions for a Muslim religious socialization?

Religious transmission across generations is an underrepresented topic in migration studies. Several scholars have scrutinized the relations between religious identity and integration paths, but only a few have investigated what happens *within immigrant families* on this aspect, even if the «processes of social integration, as well as the definition of cultural identity, in many instances, are filtered by the relation with religious institutions and their educational socializing activities, and by the support they offer» [13]. Indeed, as some scholars showed [14, 15], there is clear evidence of the importance of religion in how immigrants engage in their intercultural relations, their educational choices and their integration paths.

There are many possible patterns in migrants' relationship with religion, with variations that depend on three kinds of factors: a) personal and demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, age, country of origin, acquisition of citizenship of the receiving country, place of residence); b) factors that are external to individuals and their communities (e.g. policies towards diversity in the society, as shown in par. 3); c) differences between immigrant groups and society at large (such as differences in values). In addition, when looking at how the descendants of migrants develop their relationship with religion, two aspects need to be duly considered. On the one hand, the acculturation process, i.e., how they fit into the (secularised) receiving society, where their parents' religion is often minoritarian [16, 17]; on the other, their self-identification process, i.e., how they define their multiple identity as young people with a migratory background, growing up in Western environments in a historical period marked by continuous globalised exchanges and influences.

In this sense, it is fundamental to recall that the descendants of Muslim migrants are exposed to two main sets of demands. The first set of demands has clearly to do with the expectations that their parents may express concerning their religious education and their adoption and display of religious behaviours taking into account that the Muslim faith has a prominent performative and visible character, since its orthopraxis permeates numerous dimensions of everyday life, and gest mingled with mundane practices (eating, dressing, praying, but also having fun, practicing sports, entertaining relationships with the other gender…). The second set of demands has to do with the trends pertaining to the radical post-modern transformations undergone by Western societies, whose "usual" socio-institutional frameworks have been disrupted by globalisation processes, meaning that the individual is no longer provided with reference points by social institutions: the life of the person is not "projectable" along predefined paths anymore, as the individual has to embark on a solo journey in his or her quest for meaning, navigating among multiple and relativist horizons. Such research is thus privatized and individualized and may entail a continuous experimentation on oneself [18, 19]. In this context, as is the case for their native peers, inheriting a religion by the parents is not inevitable nor self-evident, as religion may become one of the many options among which the individual may choose for his or her self-identification.

The secularising tendencies pervading the environment in which Muslim families settle represents an issue of concern for the parents: as we shall see below, they do worry about the possible negative influence of such context on their children, which might induce them to distance themselves from religion. This is particularly salient for Muslim migrants, compared to Christian migrant groups, because the everyday environment and the everyday cultural practices in the Western context of settlement bear no signs nor

symbols of the Muslim religion, thus making Islam even less "plausible" or "credible". As Roy [20] efficaciously argues, Islam undergoes a "deculturation" process in emigration countries, as it is not part and parcel of the culture of receiving countries as it is in Muslim migrants' countries of origin. To Muslim children in the West, Islam cannot not be obvious and taken-for-granted, because they do not have chances to "encounter" Islam outside their homes and their place of worship (when they are taken to the mosque by their parents). While sociology has already shown that, in fields ranging from religion to politics and relationships between genders, family is the actor that affects the most the socialization and the transmission of values in young people [21], in the case of the transmission of Islamic religious tenets to young Western Muslims this is more the case. Their family thus becomes *the crucial site and the first and foremost agency of their religious socialization,* arguably even more than for their native peers, as parents represent their earliest and – often their sole – "source" of Islamic religiosity.

Therefore, on one hand, young Muslims share with their native peers the exposure to globalising influences and the lack of socio-institutional points of reference to "direct" their lives, which are open to experimentation in a post-modern search for the "true", "authentic" Self; on the other hand, they differ from their native peers in that their parents often feel a heightened responsibility in educating them to religion values and to behaviours and attitudes expected of them in their cultural heritage. At the same time, for these youths, Islam is not a cultural trait of the context where they live, which may encourage them to appropriate their religion "in their own way", thus spurring personal –again, very post-modern– trajectories. How do these dynamics play out in Italy?

3. Being Muslim in a hostile context

In Italy, migration-driven religious pluralism represents one of the main elements of social transformation in recent decades. Italians look with a certain fear at this growing religious pluralism; however, as anticipated above, while the Italian society is already home to many religious expressions, the focus of concern is Islam. Uncountable authors [i.e., 22, 23] have shown how the debate about Islam across Western countries is simultaneously framed in securitarian terms (Islam as the enemy of the West from the geopolitical point of view) and in culturalist terms (Islam as intrinsically incompatible with claimed Western democratic and cultural values). Such a "moral panic" about Islam has affected the Italian debate [24, 25, 26] producing a negative perception of Muslims in the public opinion, as demonstrated by some recent surveys. Indeed, for a long time, in the Italian public opinion the image of "the Muslim" has been associated to that of "the immigrant", as people coming from Muslim-majority countries (especially Morocco) represented significant proportions of the first migratory inflows that Italy experienced between the late '90s and the early 2000s. Furthermore, such consistent arrival of Muslim migrants occurred in a period dominated by an overwhelmingly negative discursive environment surrounding Islam, spurred by the 9/11 attacks and their consequences. Therefore, Islam has come to be perceived –and portrayed by the media [27]– in deeply negative terms.

Such a hostile context generates concrete consequences for the practice of religion and for the related feelings of legitimation and acceptance as Muslims. Again, the condition of places of worship symbolically encapsulates the fact that Islam is not granted a fully-fledged visibility, something which affects young Muslims in particular, who, in contexts as different as Milan and Turin can be express similar frustrations

regarding the absence of decent places of worship and the patent inadequacy of the existing ones [28]:

> Muslim places of worship in Milan are horrible. It makes me sad. And I can't understand why there cannot be a real mosque, from the architectonic point of view, instead of a warehouse. [F, 23, Egypt, Milan]

> Mosques here are the ugliest places in the world (...). You suffer in the mosque because it's hot, it stinks, there are people who are cramped in a shameful way. [M, 27, Egypt, Turin]

This interviewee clearly remembers the internal discussions within his community concerning whether it was appropriate to claim a proper place of worship in the city:

> Our parents are obsessed with the mosque. I remember as a child, when I was taken to meetings with the imam, it was all they talked about. "They won't let us pray in a suitable place, they won't let us build our own halls, they only let us have garages. But how can we pray well in places that are also unsuitable for health", said some. Others, however, were more cautious, saying that the important thing was to be accepted, not always to be stopped by the police. After all, according to some, we have only just arrived, and we must be appreciated for what we do every day. The rest will come. We don't need big buildings to pray. [M, 20, Morocco, Turin]

In stark contrast with the views of first-generation Muslims reported in the quote above, their descendants seem to "dream" of officially recognized mosques that can legitimately claim their space and fit in the landscape of Italian cities as sites for intercultural encounters, as well illustrated by these words:

> I would like to become the leader of a mosque (…). If I become one, want to sign an agreement with the municipality. I want the mosque to be transparent, maybe also with a baroque architectonic background, so that it can fit well in the landscape. The khutba [sermon] should be in Arabic, in Italian and maybe also in English for the Pakistanis. It shouldn't just be a place of worship, but also a library. Because there's a lot of Arab philosophy and literature, like the Lebanese poet Khalil Gibran. [M, 25, Lebanon-Syria, Turin]

4. Everything should be the same everywhere: the dreams of parents

When introducing the topic of religious socialization, we did not touch upon the changes in religiosity that first- generation migrants, too, may experience when migrating. Religion –as a faith and a cultural trait– may be experienced differently or may even get abandoned in the country of emigration, as this example shows:

> There are people who come here and change their religion, their life... there are Egyptians who come here and live only the ugly things about Italy, others see only the beautiful things, others think only of money. [M, 42, Egypt, Turin]

However, as a consistent body of literature shows, religion is very much present in the lives of immigrants, even when their process of integration and the progress of the second generations lay the foundations for becoming Italian citizens [8]. Smith [29] has famously described the migration experience as a "theologizing" one, as migrants would resort to their own religion –and to their fellow believers– to alleviate the traumas of emigration and the difficulties of the settlement process [5]. Indeed, as this interviewee explains, some become even more religious after having emigrated, also due to reasons pertaining to the religious education they feel they should transmit to their children in a non-Muslim context, as explained below:

> I wasn't a practising believer in Morocco before I came here, but I have noticed that some people become more practising once they are here. Because they say you must protect your family, you must protect your traditions in the West. They also do it for their children, because they know that when you live here, you get used to a different way of life and maybe you take a slightly different path... whereas, if you become very religious, it is easier for you to stick to your own path. Religion serves to give clear rules: don't do this, do that... [M, 48, Morocco, Turin]

This is echoed by the words of an Imam, who explains how parents deem it important to remind their children "where they come from":

> For us as parents abroad, it is important to pass on our culture, our language, our religion to our children. It means keeping the link with whom we are and where we come from. [M, 46, Morocco, Turin]

In fact, parents bear in mind the socialization they received "and the possible negative judgement of the extended family residing in their own country of origin, should the children not abide by the "model" they are expected to align with:

> Many women are worried when they go back to Morocco about how their children will behave. They don't want to be judged negatively. It is as if they think they are not good mothers because they are not able to transmit religious feelings in a profound way. Others are resigned to these problems and try to agree with their children to behave differently depending on the environment. [F, 39, Morocco, Turin]

While some mothers "surrender" and accept that children may strategically change their behaviours according to situational contexts, others genuinely feel that the relatives' expectations do not just impinge on their children, but also on them *as mothers* for not having done "a good job" with their sons and daughters. What is interesting is that children hold quite opposite views regarding the possible opinions of their extended family, revealing how differently they experience these transnational linkages:

> For my mother, my sister had to be the best at school and the best in the Qoran recitation competition. She repeated the competition three times, she had to win, but my sister didn't care. It was my mother who wanted to be able to tell her sisters and mother-in-law that she had done well and brought up her children as good Muslims. [M, 26, Morocco, Turin]

However, the religious education they attempt to transmit to their descendants does not necessarily generate the expected results:

> We don't talk about religion. Only during Ramadan or when we have family celebrations and online get-togethers with relatives, then we must be careful and pay attention to how we dress, how we talk, what we say. Our parents have understood that we are different Muslims. It's natural, we live in Italy. [M, 26, Morocco, Turin]

> They come to the mosque when a relative arrives from abroad. It's like staging a script. Those who live in emigration are afraid of being judged by those who stayed in the home country as incapable of being good parents in non-Muslim contexts. [Member of Muslim association, F, Morocco, Turin]

Indeed, young Muslims have to mediate their religious belonging with living in a non-Muslim context that may affect them in various ways. Parents appear quite worried about these influences: as has been confirmed also by other studies [8], parents – and not only Muslim ones – do declare to be worried for the negative influence that the Italian secularized context may have on the children and try their best to prevent their sons and daughters from distancing themselves from religion. The same Imam quoted above explains it clearly:

> In many families, there are conflicts. The children live in different environments; they meet friends who have other traditions, and other habits, and for whom religion is not important. Then, they want to live like their friends and move away from the mosque, they behave "haram". [M, 46, Morocco, Turin]

For these reasons, Muslim parents turn to the community – at the place of worship or through religious associations – to seek help from their peers, with whom they share the difficulties of being a parent in the context of emigration, in a sort of "mutual support" within the comfort zone of the group of co-believers:

> We get together with other mothers to talk about how our children are moving away from religion. We try to understand what to do; how to involve them in the activities of the mosque and how to make them understand that they can reconcile being Muslim with being Italian. It is an effort that we must make, that they have to make. For us parents it means showing that we have done our duty. (…) There are also many fathers who come to the mosque to ask the imam for advice on how to deal with children who say they are "ashamed of being Muslim". [F, 54, Morocco, Turin]

5. The role of the mosque: diverging views

The place of worship as a further agency of religious socialization represents another dividing line between parents and children, as the two generations, while agreeing on the need of official recognition, attribute different meanings to it. For the parents, besides representing a place where they can support each other and seek advice to educate the children, the mosque is eminently a place in which they can recognise themselves and

maintain their identity. It means seeking refuge within one's own roots and retrieving oneself in a space in which one's own identity is recognised and respected, as opposed to what happens in society outside the prayer halls, where it continuously gets questioned. In the mosque, they can shield themselves form the negative external gaze within the secure "cocoon" represented by the community.

Their descendants show a variety of attitudes towards the mosque, which represent further differentiations with their parents' generations. For some, it is simply a religious marker on the territory, rather than a space for social gatherings: a place of prayer that must be simply considered as such, even in its structure and decorum. Going to the means going to a building recognised essentially and exclusively as a sacred place. Others, especially those who are more actively engaged in the mosques' activities, acknowledge their parents' achievements in arranging a place of worship, but would like to go beyond this by turning the mosque also into a reference point for the whole local community, and not just for Muslims, as they would entrust it with more functions, besides the religious one: as mentioned in the citation quoted above, they would like the mosque to become a cultural centre able to attract non-Muslims, too, so as to debunk stereotypes about "backward" Muslims, in the attempt to finally acquire legitimacy within the local social landscape.

Furthermore, the youths involved in the mosques' leaderships are particularly keen to organize activities for their peers and especially for adolescents and children. Indeed, the younger components of mosques' boards share with the older generation of their parents a particularly acute awareness of the risk of "losing the young ones" – a preoccupation they have in common with all faith communities, starting from the Catholic one [30]. However, it is particularly young leaders who take the initiative to make the mosque appear attractive to teenagers, by organizing activities that may appeal to them, such as establishing football teams linked to their mosque and registering them for local tournaments, creating local chapters of the new-born Italian Muslim Scouts' Association (*Associazione Scout Musulmani Italiani*) or organizing summer camps and trips [31]. These examples show young leaders' ambition of expanding the activities of Muslim places of worship and make them similar to parishes –a stated intention in the words of some of them (ibid.) Indeed, as research on contemporary youths' religiosity shows [30], young people are more likely to cultivate the faith they inherit from their parents when they are given the opportunity to socialize with the peers of their religious community and when they get "to do things" with them, such as sports or volunteering. This holds for Muslims, too, whose youths get to be involved also in the organization of initiatives such as "Open mosques" (i.e. days in which the mosque is open to visits guided by the younger representatives of the local Muslim community) or Iftar dinners during Ramadan, but also in charitable activities such as regular blood donations set up by mosques in collaboration with hospitals or the Red Cross, or food distribution for poor families, also among the non-Muslim, native Italian ones, a circumstance occurred during the Coronavirus pandemic [31]. Assigning young people with responsibility roles in this kind of activities encourages them to take part in the mosque's life, even more as, with their knowledge of the Italian language and of the Italian context, they become pivotal to the improvement of the image of "Muslims" within local communities [ibid]. Hence, such initiatives allow to gain legitimacy and represent opportunities for expressing forms of participation and of "religious citizenship" at the local level – something which the younger members of boards' mosques have particularly at heart: since they *do feel* to belong to Italy [32], they strive to make their religion a fully-fledged accepted one by the country –or at least by the city– they call home. In this regard, the

characteristics of the Italian context, outlined above, play a crucial role, in that they may motivate younger Muslims to "defy" the hostility they are surrounded by, through their active and public engagement.

However, this aspect is not always understood by the older generation: while young leaders take the mosque and its activities as a springboard to claim recognition for Islam and for themselves as citizens, their parents often prefer to be less visible in the public sphere, limiting themselves to have "good relationships" with administrations or neighbouring parishes, without engaging in more structured forms of participation. As we shall see now, the relationship with the place of worship is not the only issue around which differences between parents and children emerge.

6. Mind the stereotypes: Muslim identities in the younger generation

Muslim minorities in Italy constitute a critical test case of competing theoretical expectations about the impact of inter-ethnic relations on religious mobilisation [33, 34]. When applied to ethno-religious minorities in a highly secularised society, assimilation theories predict less religiosity in more recent cohorts, because of increased inter-group contact and acculturation (Secularisation Hypothesis). By contrast, conflict theories expect more religiosity in recent years due to an assumed increase in perceived inter-group conflict or group threat (Religious Mobilisation Hypothesis).

Indeed, the secularized context that parents worry about may indeed play a role in young adults' trajectories and relationship with religion, regardless of the religious socialization they received. The two following stories well exemplify this tendency and seem to confirm the "secularisation hypothesis": significantly, these two persons received a very different religious upbringings, but end both disinterested in Islam. The first concerns a young man who declares himself "atheist": he describes his mother as "traditionalist" ("*she does not eat pork and observes Ramadan*") while his father as "progressive" ("*he does not fast at Ramadan and drinks wine at home*"). The mother tried to transmit him religious values and behaviours: "*When I was a child, my mother tried to transmit me religious tenets, she tried to give a direction to her son*". Yet, he feels completely remote from religion and thinks religion should not be "imposed": "*If one believes in God and attends the Mass, he should not impose his ideas and tell me that I should get in touch with God. […] Religion is a big constraint*" [M, 27, Egypt, Turin].

Still, this does not mean that he never poses himself moral and spiritual questions. Rather than religion, he affirms to be more interested in the Buddhist "philosophy":

> I have never felt at ease with religion. The only religion I like – which is defined as a religion, but it is not, it is a philosophy – is Buddhism, because, according to Buddhism, you can do whatever you want as long as you are correct with yourself and with the others. [M, 27, Egypt, Turin]

He was only mildly exposed to religion. Hence, this young adult felt free to distance himself from his cultural-religious background and recognized himself in another "philosophy". This trajectory resembles that of many of his native peers and exemplifies the typical "mix 'n match attitude" that characterizes the "quest for meaning" in Western globalised contexts, where one can freely choose to adhere to cultural and religious tenets different from the ones he or she was socialized to.

The second case concerns a young woman who expressed an almost outright rejection of the behavioural model offered by her parents, who are strongly religious. She was socialized within the community of Moroccans that had settled in the small village in central Italy, where she grew up: the rigid social control – exerted especially on young girls – caused her to develop a marked refusal of the imposition of cultural and religious norms, which prevented her from doing a few things she would have wanted to, such as spending time with her schoolmates. Thanks to her hard work, she could obtain scholarships to attend high school and university, and then spend a year as an exchange student in Japan –an experience that changed forever her relationship with religion. Meeting a third culture –different than the Moroccan and the Italian one– allowed her to be "finally" able to choose who she wanted to be:

> I spent the first part of my stay in Japan during which I would wake up at night to pray, because it was Ramadan, and I used to pray only during Ramadan. I don't know if I was a believer at the time, maybe I was just following my family's tradition more than actually believing. And then in Japan I realized I was doing that only for tradition. I used to do it "Because I am Moroccan, so I am Muslim, so I fast at Ramadan". But this was not logic. Because you do not observe Ramadan because you are Moroccan, you observe it because you are Muslim. (…) During the second part of my Japanese experience I felt free because (…) I slowly started to discover myself, (…) I was really able to write my own story. Before that, I was conditioned by the community where I lived (…) – but from that moment on, I could reject those labels. [F, 30, Morocco, Milan]

Yet, she also intends to teach Arabic and transmit the basic tenets and values of her religion to her daughter, so that she would know her "roots" and would be able to "choose" based on actual knowledge. Although it originates from completely diverging conditions, compared to that of the young man reported above, this story, too, is exemplary of a typically post-modern search for "authenticity" and for achieved identities, instead of ascribed identities.

These two vignettes surely demonstrate the significant role played by the secularized context in which these young adults have grown up, but also, and probably even more importantly, of the influences of globalised exchanges and of the exposure to the circulation of cultural flows and trends. However, as telling as these two cases may be, they do not, by any means, exhaust they variety of possibilities that we could meet along our research. Indeed, the analysis of our sample offers a much more complex picture, which prevents reductions to either one or the other sets of theses and hypotheses – secularisation *vs* religious mobilisation. In the group of Muslims that we interviewed there were some girls who wore headscarves and others who did not, some of them were engaged in a mosque association, while others were not. Some who used to attend mosques frequently and others who argued with their parents for not being so committed to the religious practice. Based on such variety and on the accounts of the discussions occurring within families, we could observe three possible outcomes of the process of religious socialization, corresponding to three subgroups: the "uncritically adherent", the "pragmatic", and the "engaged" ones.

The subgroup of the *uncritically adherent* comprises young Muslims for whom the inheritance of religion from their parents is not problematic: they do not discuss or "fight" about religion within their families. To them, the subject was "naturally" in the atmosphere, it was part of the daily routine through the rhythm of prayers recalled by the

parents, the visits to the mosque, the reading of a few surahs in the evening. It was a habit that was not perceived as a "teaching":

> Religion is part of our life. Parents don't "teach" us to be religious, it is their very way of doing things that expresses religion. There is no need to say "Let's go and pray because it's Friday". That's the way it's always been done, none of us brothers or sisters have ever asked anything. Just as we learn to read and write, so we have learned the rhythms and activities related to religion (…). Our parents, especially my father, have experienced the mistrust, the looks of people dissecting him trying to understand whether he could be trusted or not. Perhaps this is why we have always been taught that our being Muslims is not something extra, but something inside us that we cannot do without. [F, 25, Egyptian, Turin]

Similar thoughts seem to be echoed by this other young woman, for whom starting to wear the veil did not really amount to a "decision". Rather, it represented an obvious step in her growth:

> I started [wearing the veil] when I was at the middle school… because I liked it so much! I liked to see my mother wearing it, and I liked to see other women making all the matches, with accessories, and colours, and I was like "It's so much fun! I wanted to do that too!", but I was too young, I could not understand the meaning, and my schoolmates kept asking me "Why do you wear it?" and I didn't know what to reply. (…) I cannot think of getting out without the veil, it would be as if I got out in the street naked... I don't understand why, but it has become a part of me. [F, 22, Egypt, Milan]

As it is clear, for this young woman the veil is such a natural part of her appearance, that she does not motivate the choice to wear it in sacralised terms, providing religious motivations to justify the need to don it. These examples invalidate the "deculturation" thesis advanced by Roy [20], according to which the religiosity of young Muslims in the West is always the result of a decisional process by which they consciously chose to appropriate their religion in a non-Muslim context. These cases show that handing down religion to the children may also occur "naturally", in a taken-for-granted manner, even in context of emigration.

The case of another young woman exemplifies how, for some of them, the decision to wear the veil may be difficult. However, what is perceived as difficult to understand is not so much the nature or the religious reasons motivating the veil, nor the prescription to wear it coming from the parents; rather, the gaze of the majoritarian society, which makes young women feel inappropriate according to Western standards:

> My objective is really to finally wear the hijab (…) It's a sin not to wear it, I have been told that I have to wear it... I've been told than on the judgement day we will be judged for wearing or not wearing it. I've been thinking about this... I had started donning it but then I did an internship in a hotel, and then in a travel agency, and they did not want me to wear the veil, so I kept taking it off and resuming wearing it. But my mother told me "Either you wear it or not, otherwise the people [other persons of the community] will think that you are not being serious, that you are playing with the veil". [F, 19, Morocco, Turin]

For some girls, starting to wear the hijab represents such an obvious act, that, sometimes, parents themselves prefer to make sure that their girl is fully aware of what she is doing and is taking an informed and conscious decision:

> I remember that I sat with my father and we talked about this [my decision to don the hijab] for long, because he wanted to make sure that I was convinced about this choice and he wanted me to motivate it with my own words. [F, 24, Egypt, Milan]

The subgroup of the *pragmatic* ones is composed by people who do reflect about their inherited religion, and do not just adhere to it uncritically. For some, this may mean seeking to balance their religious identification with other self-identifications, or actively searching for identifications other than the Muslim ones:

> Above all I am Moroccan, my parents remind me. According to them I must do "Moroccan" things, be like Moroccans are, be religious and be a Muslim, but I want to be Italian AND Moroccan, I don't want to be identified only on the basis of my religion. [M, 19, Morocco, Turin]

> but I have been living in Turin since I was 10. I speak Italian well; I have friends of many nationalities, and every year I go back to Morocco. It hasn't always been easy. At school, there is always someone who has something against foreigners, like Albanians, Moroccans, blacks… But there are many people, and fortunately I know many, who think of me as a person and not as a Moroccan in particular. [F, 19, Morocco, Turin]

> It is very hard to make people realize we are people, not just Muslims. [M, 24, Morocco, Turin]

These youths' words show that they do not want to be reduced to their religious identification, and show pragmatic attitudes concerning their religiosity, which may mean that they strategically adapt their behaviour and show their "Muslimness" to varying degrees, depending on contexts and situations. Sometimes, this may signify "succumbing" to society's negative perception of Muslims, as is the case of an interviewee, who, to occasionally work as hostess at fairs and conferences, wears a turban instead of a proper hijab, thus accommodating the requests or expectations of the employer to secure the job. However, this is not always necessarily the case: adopting pragmatic attitudes may also signify code-switching by flexibly playing with belongings, labels, and identifications, resorting to different repertoires of action, in ways with which the person is fully at ease. This is the case, for instance, of two male interviewees: one explains that he behaves differently with "Italian" (*sic*) and "Arab" (*sic*) girls, being more outgoing with the former and more reserved with the latter; the second interviewee describes how he spends time both with Muslim friends and with non-Muslim friends, paying attention to not smoke at the gatherings organized by Muslim friends, although they know that he smokes.

What should be noted across these examples is that being pragmatic does not necessarily mean becoming less believing: accommodating the orthopraxis to make it coexist with a non-Muslim environment does not mean distancing oneself from religious beliefs or from religious practice altogether. Gans [34] coined the concept of "symbolic

religiosity" to indicate second-generation religious identities as less linked to practices. It may happen that young Muslims born in Italy feel a common Muslim identity, which is shared and practiced in various associative activities, but this is not necessarily linked to the strict observance of all religious precepts and rules (such as daily prayers). Among the "pragmatic", we also identify some who, while defining themselves as Muslims, may question certain aspects of their religion. This is the case especially of young women who contest the control exerted on women's bodies, rights, and practices:

> When other Muslims tell me "Why don't you wear the veil", I always quote a proverb in Arabic which basically means that "It is my life and that it is only God that can judge us": I will regulate these things with Him directly! [F, 20, Morocco, Milan]

> The topic that I need to know about the most is the role of the woman, because I've always been told that the woman is respected in Islam, but then, for instance, the woman is denied the possibility to divorce in Islam. So, I ask myself "What kind of right is this?". And I would like to know more about what is truly written in the texts, I would like someone to explain to me the reason why even well-educated people accept this thing. [F, 23, Pakistan, Milan]

These young women, too, display a pragmatic attitude, in that they "choose" the aspects they prefer about their religion, while rejecting other aspects that they do not understand or are not comfortable with, thus showing a reflexive stance towards their religious tenets. The latter case, in particular, is exemplary of an increasing tendency among young Muslims, who feel an acute need that "faith" be accompanied by "reason": she cannot simply accept what she is taught without a thorough explanation of the "why" and the "how", something which make young Muslims similar to their peers of other faiths. Young women, however, express such need more strongly, as they are often the focus of attention both of their parents and of the Western society where they live: while the former may impose the respect of norms concerning how they dress or with whom they spend their free time, the latter often wishes that Muslim girls "liberate themselves" from the veil, taken as the symbol of their oppression. It is hard for them to juggle between these two sets of demands which both put significant pressure on young women, who always have to justify and explain themselves, with other Muslims and with non-Muslims alike. Hence, in response to the expectations of their families, of the community and of non-Muslims, the strategy they often resort to is that of distinguishing between what is truly prescribed by religion and what derives from the cultural traditions of the parents' country of origin:

> One thing that disappoints me a lot is the fact that often tradition gets confused with religion. Things that were valid 1400 years ago simply cannot be valid today. [F, 27, Morocco, Milan]

This is the reason why the above-quoted interviewee claims she wants to "know more about what is truly written in the texts". Such words point to the need to deepen her knowledge of religious tenets, to have more arguments to reject some of the rules that concern women, which she might be imposed by her family: if some of these rules pertain more to "traditions" than to the actual predicaments of Islam, then one is free to criticize and refuse them, *precisely in the name of Islam*. Hence, the fact that girls may not adopt

or question some behaviours often becomes a source of tensions within families: while parents blame the bad influence exerted by the "Italian" context on their offspring, children – and especially daughters – show a resourceful attitude in educating themselves about religion, to better respond to the negative remarks they might receive from their family and community. Faith is inherited from the older generation but also becomes the object of personal adaptations and re-elaborations that help sustain it.

One of the ways in which faith gets re-appropriated and adapted pragmatically consists in making the *hijab* "cool": the veil is not just a religious symbol, but has also become a fashion accessory, through which girls and young women can feel modern and at ease with their bodies and look in a non-Muslim context. That of so-called "modest fashion" is a burgeoning market across the world, but it has a particular resonance in Western societies, where Muslim women can combine modern *hijabs* with the garments in vogue, which they wear as Westerners *and* as Muslims. Just as claiming a deeper knowledge of religion helps them face the tensions they experience with parents, resorting to modest fashion allows to balance their desire to preserve their Muslim identity, without appearing "traditional" or "backward" in the context where they are growing up. These young women share the styles of their peers but add the ingredient of "modesty" by donning the *hijab* and by not showing some parts of their bodies. At the same time, mixing items of modest fashion with their outfits as Western young women represents a way to challenge Western aesthetic standards [35], because they do not simply "fit in" such standards, but elaborate a personal synthesis of the religious and cultural worlds they belong to – e.g., by ordering a hijab by a Turkish designer on Amazon to be matched with a blouse or a pair of jeans from H&M or Zara. While representing another instance of a post-modern "quest for authenticity" expressed through bodily practices -being true to oneself and to one's roots by wearing a "Modern version" of the veil– such repertoire of action has the potential to counter racist and Islamophobic discourses.

Indeed, the decision to wear the veil seems to be a way of "not disappearing", of presenting one's specificity to the world, one's being "many different things" and showing the complexity of being oneself to the outside world: it is the shift from being *labelled* "Muslims" to *owning* such identity by proudly and visibly displaying it. It requires, however, daily commitment and constant work, because the environment is not always perceived as being friendly and devoid of incongruities. As this interviewee explains, one cannot "code-switch" so easily with the veil – at least in the context of emigration:

> In Morocco I wear it one day and not the next, there's no problem. Here it's different – if they see me with it one day and without it the next, they don't understand. Nevertheless, in Morocco it's quite normal so they don't think anything, either good or bad. If I take it off here, what will the others think? [F, 19, Morocco, Turin]

The subgroup of the *engaged* ones comprises young people for whom religious socialization resulted not only in their adherence to religious precepts, but also in a conscious and reflected-upon appropriation of religious beliefs (contrary to the "uncritically adherent"), which often occurs within and through religious associationism, frequently with the group of peers. Individuals in this group decided to further the religious they inherited from the parents and continued their religious socialization. For instance, interviewees stressed how attending religious lessons with other peers in the

mosques had been a useful choice in the construction, support, and reinforcement of the Muslim ethnic identity in their lives. As an institutional vehicle for the cultural reproduction and socialization of the second generation, this is accomplished in the mosques by ideologically legitimizing and defending a set of core traditional Muslim values and forms of social relationships, Indeed, not all youths find it easy to seamlessly code-switch between settings and languages and may encounter great difficulties in their processes of self-identification; in this regard, religious associations represent safe havens, where to discuss these problems with peers. Larger and more established mosques, where young leaders are involved in the mosque board, show a particular awareness in this regard: since these young representatives empathize with the condition of their peers and younger "siblings", they started creating spaces where to openly discuss these issues –for example, through weekly meetings led by young leaders and reserved to young people, devoted especially to the identity crises they face, to help them overcome such difficulties [31].These moments of reflection are aimed explicitly at aiding young Muslims to balance their identity as Muslims and as Italians, from a religious perspective.

Again, the case of the veil is emblematic here: many female interviewees explained that their decision to wear the veil was taken after attending religious education sessions within their religious associations, and with the support of peers, who thus act as another strong agency of religious socialization.

Becoming more pious after joining religious associations occurs also among young men:

> [Name of the association] is a very good thing (…) They helped me a lot, because now I pray, and go to the mosque, which I didn't do before, and it is also thanks to them... And it is important because now I understand who I am, it gives me positivity, it gives me a direction… as we say, I returned to Islam. [M, 23, Morocco, Turin]

Staying with the group of fellow young Muslims reinforces one's own religiosity, yet sometimes this may occur in a "reactive sense". Group religious identity is particularly attractive because it can be a positive source of social identification, especially in the face of discrimination [36]. Indeed, seeking "refuge" in the group of peers may reflect forms of defensive ethnicity against their perceived marginal status within Italian society as both a migrant and a non-Catholic group. Therefore, beyond its role as a vehicle for the cultural interests of the first generation, the paradoxical appeal of the religion for many second-generation members could lie in its capacity to provide a kind of reaction to this sense of marginalization, and, along with it, positive social identity and group empowerment, which partly gives credit to the "religious mobilisation" hypothesis explained above.

Admittedly, such reactive religiosity might entail the creation of oppositional identities [38] and of more radical trends – something which would justify the creation of a fourth subgroup of "fundamentalists", although we do not have sufficient cases of young people holding extremist religious views in our sample. This is the case of people whose religious socialization mainly occur on the internet, within the so-called "Islamosphere", where neo-Orthodox and fundamentalist interpretations are increasingly gaining currency due to their literalism, which makes them appear as more reliable [20]. One of our interviewees well exemplifies this trend, as she autonomously developed a resolute commitment to religion, with a strict observance of orthodoxy, although, she has

grown up in a family that is not characterized by high levels of religious practice - or perhaps precisely because of that. Her sources of information came from webpages and chats predicating literalist views, mainly focusing on what is "licit" (*halal*) and "illicit" (*haram*) in Islam.

7. Concluding remarks

Migration processes usually represent challenges for inter-generational relations within families, as integration in a host society can have a collateral effect on parent-child relations. Indeed, children can interiorize social and cultural values in contrast with what their parents believe in or with how they behave. Among these cultural challenges, religious identity plays an important role. The gradual "coming of age" of Muslim second generations and their increasing visibility in the public arena added a new challenge in the field of interactions across generations.

The outcomes of the religious transmission described above shows the numerous possibilities of managing religious identity among Muslim second generations: indeed, from those who strictly follow their parents' steps without any critical reflection on the feasibility of being Muslim in a non-Muslim country to those who decide to live in a more secularized way, a plethora of positions may appear, with variations according to gender, social class, area or residence, cultural and social capitals, parental attitudes. Both the Secularisation Hypothesis and the Religious Mobilisation Hypothesis are confirmed. Following these findings, several similarities with what is going on within Italian, Catholic families emerge, beyond the different religious belonging [38]: comparing and contrasting native Catholic and migrant Muslim families on the modalities of religious transmission and their effects could be a promising ground for future research. In any case, the experiences of Muslim youths display significant fluctuation among the first and the second generation, overturning simplistic represenations according to which Muslims are all necessarily pious in the same way.

Moreover, besides the question of whether or not young individuals are strongly religious or practicing, the collected interviews show how the management of religious identities among children may create frictions between parents and children [39], and with the extended transnational family, too. As we have seen, parents (or relatives) appear worried or frustrated about the possible absence of religion from their children's lives due to the influence of a secularised context; indeed, the exposure to non-religious lifestyles, which characterize the majority of their peers, as well as being continuously questioned about Islam by a hostile perception of this religion, causes many youths to experience identity crises. At the same time, they often do not feel fully understood by their parents in their attempts to balance the pressing demands of society, or in their quest for "authenticity" beyond ascribed, received identities. Some of these conflicts may cause fractures and sorrow on both sides, but the may also represent the opportunity to find common ground around the re-appropriation of religious tenets, beyond the parents' cultural heritage,. With regards to the relationship with relatives abroad, with their set of demands and expectations, the focus on immigrant families provides an opportunity to study how being closely in touch within transnational families may amplify cultural distances and cause intercultural misunderstanding, especially as far as emotions, sense of belonging and identities are concerned. Such misunderstandings – or possibly new understandings within the definition of new globalised identities – could represent a further interesting line of enquiry.

Lastly, to answer our initial questions, we found continuity, rather than disruption, in the importance of religion from one generation to the other: however, the non-Muslim context in which young Muslims grow up inevitably influences the way they inherit their faith, which leads to transformations and original re-elaborations, that also reflect contemporary tendencies that privilege the self-expression of consciously chosen identities.

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Migrant Families and Religious Belonging
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New Muslim Generation in Italy: Between Believing and Belonging

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Abstract. The growing number of "new generations" of Muslims in Western countries is not only developing quantitatively into a complex phenomenon, but also implies gradual but important transformations within the Islamic communities (starting from families and mosques) and in society as a whole. Only a few of these dynamics are described and studied and rarely with a direct knowledge of the people concerned by them.

Keywords. Italy, Muslims, faith, practise

1. Introduction

Girls and boys originally from Islamic countries and families keep a highly structured relationship with their identity of origin, on the linguistic, cultural and religious level. Obviously, this also depends on the relationship they have with their family, their wider ethnic-religious community and the host country [1] and [2]. Indeed, it is not uncommon that the children of parents who were already involved in religious movements and who are often among the promoters and leaders of Muslim associations in Italy [3], [4] and [5][2] are in turn often members of or responsible for youth associations and, therefore, their respect both of the precepts (e.g., praying, fasting) but also of the norms of dress and behaviour are deeply influenced.

By attending mixed environments it is not uncommon for girls and boys to get to know one another and they are pushed to marry as soon as possible. In this way, from an economic as well as an ideological point of view, they find themselves dependent on their families of origin even more. Yet, there are also quite a few who prefer not to join, or in any case not to engage in, Muslim associations. They prefer to frequent Italian peers and are less dependent on the way of life of their countries and families of origin.

Knowledge of Arabic or the language of the family's native country may be only elementary for communicating with relatives, or much more developed. In fact, the

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[2] In Italy the first mapping of immigrants' associations was done in 2014 by the Centro studi e ricerche IDOS. At present, 1135 associations have been counted [cited 2023 Feb 13]. Available from https://www.integrazionemigranti.gov.it/it-it/Ricerca-news/Dettaglio-news/id/1807/Aggiornata-la-mappatura-delle-associazioni-migranti-in-Italia-. In a recent study a certain amount of information have been collected on 255 Islamic associations spread throughout the country [6].

cultural and anthropological aspects are of different degrees of importance that they determine very different situations: from the case of young Pakistani or Bengali girls who have been murdered for refusing an arranged marriage to those who wonder why violating the fast is considered a crime in the country of origin, while here it is only a sin that does not involve state apparatuses or administrations [7]. Mixed marriages also reveal very varied behaviours: from the claim of a sincere conversion by the Italian husband, to purely formal conversions to please the family, to mixed marriages celebrated in church or only at the registry office, without other conditions.

2. At the beginning

After having experienced the great emigrations to the Americas and vast movements of workers within its own frontiers, Europe has found itself in the front line in receiving important flows of populations from the Muslim world. In Italy, historically [8], the start of a significant growth in the number of immigrants from North African and Middle Eastern countries (mainly Muslims, but alongside smaller numbers of Christians belonging to the various Oriental Churches) dates back to about forty years ago[3]. For a certain period of time it was an almost exclusively male presence for seasonal employment, commuters in precarious jobs who even when they had a wife and children in the host country did not have the intention or the possibility of being joined here by them [9] and [10]. With what they earned some opened businesses or small shops in their home countries and never returned, but the majority were unable to set aside sufficient amounts and returned home periodically, possibly with some relatives or acquaintances from the same area, to make another attempt at a migratory path that was less lonely and hopefully more successful. Their numbers then grew and were differentiated according to origin, language or Islamic movement [11] and [12].

The fact remains that the Muslim presence in Italy has as its characteristic trait a diversification of the countries of origin, therefore it is anything but a monolithic block. Consequently, both at institutional level and on the level of perception, it has more differences than resemblances [13][4]. In addition, the plurality of places of origin also has as a consequence a net complexity in the religious practices that are professed, beyond the traditional division between Sunnites and Shiites. If religious belonging can induce a stronger feeling of aggregation, it is equally true that the religious expression can be filtered through the different ethnic cultures of the countries of origin, the type of interpretation of Islam, from the most traditional to the most modern ones in which the various individuals, groups or bodies identify.

[3] In Italy the most recent estimates reveal a moderate decline in the number of foreign citizens (from 6,222,000 as of January 1st, 2019, to 6,190,000 as of January 1st, 2020) [14]. As far as the number of foreigners and Italian citizens who are Muslims is concerned, in 2018 it amounted to 2.6 million individuals; 56% of these are foreign citizens resident in Italy, while the remaining 44% are Italian citizens [15] and [16].

[4] In 2021 Fondazione ISMU estimated that more than half the foreign Muslims resident in Italy are represented by Moroccans, Albanians and Bangladeshis [cited 2023 Feb 13]. Available from https://www.ismu.org/immigrati-e-religioni-in-italia-i-cristiani-sono-piu-del-doppio-dei-musulmani-comunicato-stampa-22-6-2021/

3. The turning point

As a consequence of economic-industrial cycles and the variable demand for labour, the European Union countries, including Italy, favoured the policy of family reunification[5]. More stable and permanent homes and work induced allowing wives and any children to join the working father.

In the case of very small children or those who were born in Italy and soon went to school here, the problem was clearly very different compared to older children who arrived after having followed at least one cycle of education in their home country. School and any sports activities first, then even attending local parish centres and scouting associations rebalanced the double reference to the family and to other formative agencies, but without solving it completely [17] and [18].

Growing up as Muslims in Italy in this period in history is probably not an easy experience. The climate of intolerance and Islamophobia pervades not only adults but also younger people, arousing profound reactions in particular amongst children and teenagers. There are many definitions used for them: "second generations", "new Italians," "children of immigrants", "half-Italians" and "new Europeans". But it is important to emphasise how there is a vision which accentuates their creative skills as born mediators [19]. This skill is also shown in the relationship with the religious belonging in the multi-faceted expressions typical of these new generations [1] and [20]. There is a social and cultural dynamism which at times clashes with the questioning that it is possible to be "Italians with the veil" or "Italians who observe Ramadan". In the face of these external perceptions there are the choices, either to become assimilated and camouflaged with the surrounding environment, or to retreat within one's ethnic identity. At the same time, this belonging is affected by changes which are nevertheless taking place; for example, as early as 2015, according to the IPSOS study *L'oratorio oggi*, ("The parish youth centre today"), at least one child out of ten in the parish youth centres in Lombardy was a foreigner, of these, one-third were Muslims [21]. This process also has a repercussion in the Muslim communities.

The fact remains that the religious dimension takes on aspects of characteristics of a resource in the experience of many youngsters who have been born and grown up in Italy. However, the numerous aspects of challenge of this belonging in daily life, both in the public space and on the Web [22] and [23], as well as in the family, community and school environment, cannot be avoided [24]. In particular, the public space becomes the arena in which they become the most visible, attracting gazes and debates towards themselves, with the opposite effect to that which the various religious rules would like to generate [25].

In general, settlement in Europe has imposed various transformations, both in the religious practice and in the belonging and way of saying they are "Muslims", in a community which already from the start is plural. The reasons for these transformations could be found, for example, in the material limits, often due to the lack of facilities and effective possibilities of exercising the faith, but also in the different way of living their religiosity in an environment where Islam is a minority religion.

To say that Islam is a plural reality sometimes arouses the angry reaction of Muslims who insist on its unitary nature. If, from the point of view of the basic principles,

[5] See art. 29 of the Consolidated Body of Law on immigration and laws on the condition of the foreigner (published in the Official Journal no. 191 of 18 August 1998) which disciplines the institution of family reunification [cited 2023 Feb 13]. Available from https://www.camera.it/parlam/leggi/deleghe/98286dl.htm

it is true that all the followers of Islam agree on an essentially homogeneous nucleus of beliefs and practices, it is, however, equally obvious that we are in the face of a complex and highly structured world. Although the Arabic language and culture have been for centuries the fundamental vehicles to spread Islam and continue to enjoy a sort of privileged position, only about 20% of Muslims are Arabs, many other linguistic-cultural areas can be identified in the Muslim world. However, their demarcation is often uncertain due to the overlapping of various ethno-linguistic and geographic criteria, also because they are areas which have known over the centuries major movements of population and the spread of cultures.

In the light of this, what does it mean to be a "Muslim"? Attempting to answer, we could say that there are some who identify themselves in the Islamic tradition because they are closely linked to it from the experiential point of view, some who, on the other hand, have a detached relationship with the practice or who develop only some elements of the theological tradition, or there are even those who experience the religion as a mere fact of identity, without necessarily respecting the practices. Therefore, belonging to Islam presents a clear sociological complexity, as it can be intersected by a plurality of analytical levels, a characteristic feature which deconstructs a fairly widespread image of it, based on only the sense of belonging and observance [26].

The biographies of Muslim children/youngsters and their families show the variety of individual memberships of the Islamic community. The equivalence between an individual of foreign origin coming from a context of a Muslim tradition and an individual who self-defines as a practising Muslim and who concretizes this belonging with membership of a Muslim organization cannot be taken for granted. Belonging culturally to the Muslim universe includes a plurality of types of individual relationships which are expressed [10]. Often vast and ambivalent terms such as the West and Islam have been used in an essentialist or monolithic way, forgetting their complexity and plurality. To speak about Islam, therefore, does not mean bringing together under the same label situations, people, families and groups that are very different from one another, thus risking contributing to the "ethnicisation" of Muslims. On the contrary, it means trying to take apart this vision from the outside which risks simplifying complex realities. As a consequence, in educational contexts, it is important to remember that in the widest meaning of critical interculture, education on intercultural relations remains an indispensable option, on condition that it is not understood as "pedagogy for foreigners" and above all that it is developed taking on a position that is aware not only of the difference but also of the inequality between people [27]. In addition, the religious question must concern schools and teachers [17]. It is clear how schools that completely refuse to accompany pupils on the paths of religious identity fail in their educational task [28], [29] and [30].

The concept of family for the populations of the southern shores of the Mediterranean has not yet been reduced to only the mononuclear couple (parents + children) but continues to include a large circle of other relatives, friends, acquaintances and even neighbours often called "uncles" or "aunts", with a predominance of belonging to this group compared to individualities, whilst in the post-modern West, this relationship is significantly different if not completely overturned [31] and [31]. It is obvious that in a migratory context things change, but contacts by phone and holidays in the place of origin keep alive to varying degrees this network of relations in which the new generations often find themselves in midstream, perceived here as Italians, but not 100% and there as Europeanized or Westernized Arabs, which they also feel themselves

when questioned in this regard or when they reflect on the question of their identity [33] and [1].

However, in recent years, the spotlight trained on the so-called second generations, both by academia and experts in the sector, and by political deciders, has begun to weaken. It is sufficient to think of the debate which has been archived for some time now on the revision of the law on citizenship (law no. 91 of 5 February 1992), despite its obsolete nature being given widespread consideration [35]. In addition, the economic crisis becoming more acute on the one hand and the accent on the landings and on asylum seekers on the other, have put the daily condition of children, teenagers and young adults born and who have grown up in Italy in the background [34], after a period when essays and reflections on their condition had multiplied [36], [37], [19] and [38].

Walking through the streets and squares, boys and girls of the Muslim faith discover their identity as a minority[6]. The public space appears as a place for revealing one's minority identity, for boys but in particular for girls, in particular those who wear the veil and are more easily the target of discriminatory and violent actions. This experience takes on macroscopic features in the media context, where violence is expressed in words but with effects that are often profound and lacerating for those enduring them in the first person. However, the resources implemented by boys and girls are multiple, especially when, entering young adulthood, they become capable of "playing" with their identity, with irony and self-irony, defusing at times even hate speech, therefore managing their multiple belonging creatively and dynamically. As a consequence, extraneousness can become a game [39].

4. Women and children

Although reduced numerically, the family continues to be the fundamental reference. The role of the mothers contributes greatly to this, as they are mainly housewives, have reduced and minimal relations with the local population, follow TV programmes on Arabic satellite channels, know and practise Italian less than their husbands who for work learn it more quickly [40] and [41]. Until the children start going to school, things are not all that different from the country of origin, even though at times the children act as interpreters for their mothers simply when going shopping or in the playground, but also at the doctor's or in contacts with the public offices for information and/or documents. Primary school marks the start of change and then gradually in the subsequent phases of the educational path there is inevitably a major change: the pupils spend more time in an Italian-speaking context, the mothers' help in doing homework is gradually reduced and as the boys and girls grow up they often spend time in places of study or leisure that are complementary (after-school clubs or local parish youth clubs [1] and [42].

However, the picture is anything but homogeneous: for example, if the Egyptian wives/mothers are overwhelmingly housewives, this is not the case of the Moroccan women who at times immigrate alone and do not have family here or, if they have one they often work outside the home at least with part-time jobs, thus in situations which are more similar to those of many local families [7] and [41].

If the sensation of a danger of invasion exists with the natives, with respect to the large arrivals of foreign immigrants, the concern of the latter of not being assimilated is

[6] Twine [43] speaks about "boundary events", i.e. episodes that appear as bland references to a difference, for example racist insults, in the street, or on public transport.

no less present. The religious aspect plays a dominant role in this question: not only teachings and rites, but also dietary habits and clothing of the places of origin are encouraged and the mosque becomes a place of aggregation, keeping interpersonal, associative and at times linguistic bonds with, for example, courses of literary/Quranic Arabic [44], [45] and [46]. This aspect, on the contrary, is almost totally absent, for example, amongst the Egyptian Copts, who consider their language too closely linked to the Muslim identity, which is the reason why they do not make any efforts to keep up its knowledge.

The distance between the different ways of speaking of the individual countries and Classical Arabic (used only in writing) complicates things more; it is not simply a question of keeping the mother tongue, but learning a third language, which is artificial and not used in daily life, especially at the weekends which some would prefer to spend elsewhere rather than the spaces in the mosque used for this purpose [17].

For some, then, there is an additional problem: every year the Egyptian state sends inspectors to Italy to set examinations in Arabic on all the subjects in order to help the reinsertion of the pupils in Egyptian schools if they ever return to the home country. Always dreamed of, this perspective is however rare and students therefore have to do the whole school syllabus in two languages, with high costs for private lessons and great efforts required by the students who at times are distressed and feel a sense of refusal at the double effort imposed on them without a realistic purpose. There was also a brief experience of teachers sent to some schools in Lombardy at the expense of Morocco, but their way of speaking could not be understood by other Arabic speakers and they did not speak Italian which prevented them from speaking to their colleagues or other local school staff.[7]

5. Anthropological questions

The challenges that Muslim boys and girls have to face in the places where they have to give their name and surname are very different and more insidious. In the first place, there is the management of the relations in the family [20]. The greatest problems arise in particular circumstances of family and community life, such as the month of Ramadan, or when girls are asked to wear the veil or on the choice of a partner. It is at these passages of life that the youngsters, and more often the girls, have to confront the expectations of their parents, not infrequently facing up to conflicts and differences of opinions, adopting strategies to succeed in pursuing their objectives without losing the confidence of the adults of their community.

The question of relations inside and outside the family is clearly more on the anthropological level than the purely religious one.[8] We have already mentioned the hierarchy of group > individual, typical of "traditional" societies, but alongside this there is also that of adults > young and male > female. The respect due to brother who is older only by one year or the decision-making role of fathers and uncles does not have any equivalence in the post-modern West and is being transformed at worldwide level, especially in urban and educated environments [31] and [31]. The fact remains that

[7] From the school year 2005-2006 courses of Arabic were organised in a number of Italian schools [47].

[8] Zhou [48] speaks in this regard of "generational dissonance", when the children do not correspond to the aspirations of their parents, generating intergenerational conflicts which have an influence on the formation of the identities of the second generation.

taking on attitudes of defiance or addressing adults with disrespectful expressions, more than prohibited is even unconceivable, as it was during our childhood and adolescence, which was not in the Middle Ages.

It cannot be defined in a generalized and uniform way to what extent and how these conditionings can influence the relations between the new Arab and Muslim generations with their families [1] and [7]. It is nevertheless true that in rare but dramatic cases, fatal outcomes are reached: we only have to think of the Pakistani girls killed for their refusal of forced marriages. But there are also very different cases: a young Muslim girl who became pregnant and whose Italian "fiancé" left her decided not to abort. The family did not repudiate or punish her, although of course they were not pleased with what had happened, but the media were not interested in speaking about this case.

The topic of religious faith for youngsters from Muslim families is certainly a further element of complexity. One discriminating factor is definitely the difference between those who adhere to a "private Islam", only going to the mosque on important holidays, for whom religion even risks being a "burden", or those who play an active role in associative life. They are the ones who consider themselves "Italian Muslims": youngsters present and active in local life, in networks with others of their own age, both in the European migratory context and in the countries of origin; they can be considered representatives of an Islam "influenced" by the confrontation with the reality of Italy [49].

It is important to consider the character of fluidity of religious belonging. Culture can effectively take on different forms, like a non-Newtonian fluid which on contact with external agents can appear in solid, gaseous or liquid form [50]. In the same way, Muslim youngsters can, in specific circumstances emphasise rites and practices, whilst in others soften those same aspects or not give any importance to them. From the educational point of view, it is important to know these dynamics to give value to the religious experience of the boy or girl, even when they do not seem to give it great importance, and on the other hand to be able to defuse possible reactions of defence or emphasis on specific aspects of religious practice.

6. Phases and malaise

Except for the rare cases of families who provide independently for the education of their children or send them to the few Arab-speaking schools, during primary school the problem of the identity of immigrants in state schools remains, so to speak, "latent". This is not so much because there are no references to the culture of origin, but because those directly concerned coexist with their native peers naturally, without the different colour of the skin, exotic names, dietary or other differences creating problems of tensions [51].

The phase of adolescence is more delicate: it is a period when everyone has to face a complex period of formation of the personality, often experienced in opposition, or if not, at least in a dialectic relationship with family, school and peers [52, 53, 54].

If studies continue to university level as well, it can be noted that the questions of identity are generally overcome, but a clear preference can also be seen, by students and their families who can afford it, for technical and scientific faculties which anticipate a more satisfactory and professional future, which is an understandable choice. However, by avoiding the humanities, this choice risks leaving those concerned without the adequate knowledge and instruments to check and consciously make choices regarding belonging and the self-definition of identity.

The question of the education of religious leaders in loco is part of this enormous problem which in the regime based on the agreement between the Vatican and the Italian state, cannot find a solution, while in other parts of Europe the presence of non-confessional Faculties of Divinity offer at least an alternative to imams who are "imported" or even "parachuted" into places they know nothing about or to improvised imams.[9]

The cases in which some of the young and not so young people we have just mentioned look for or are sent for psychological help, a phenomenon which so far is little known and studied as it actually deserves, are not rare.

7. The "continuers"

The difference of origin and also of location in Italy are variables that are too different to be able to propose a generalised evaluation, but in one specific case, some common and significant elements emerge, namely second generations belonging to families of figures engaged in Islamic centres [55] and [56]. Naturally they are "traditionalists" who have always ensured that their offspring respect not only the observance of the rites but also the habits and customs of the country and culture. Often activists in Islamic movements at home, they are often the promoters of associations and places of aggregation and worship in the country of immigration [6]. To state that these young people are forced to follow in the footsteps of their parents would be inaccurate and misleading. Many of them sincerely admire the commitment of their parents to the service of the community and are not unaware of the oppression they had suffered at home due to their activism. The fact that these centres of aggregation are often points of reference for the concrete needs of new arrivals increases their value in the eyes of young people sensitive to socio-cultural topics [45] and [46]. Despite their respect for the "Islamic way of life", they are however influenced by the environment in which they live: the Muslim youth groups do not have separate places for boys and girls and the latter at times take on leadership positions that are formally recognised and the girls are often more numerous and active than the boys. The other side of this medal is the handover from fathers to sons as figures of reference of the group almost with the creation of dynasties. Habits and behaviour ingrained from their growing up in Italy nevertheless remain and are so obvious that at pan-European meetings of Muslim youth associations,[10] on their arrival they are immediately recognised as coming from Italy due to their gestures, the way they express themselves or dress.

From the point of view of integration, the effort of acculturation and harmonisation of the ways of understanding and interpreting reality, of deconstruction/construction, adaptation, is similar to that of other youngsters of immigrant origin, suspended between attitudes of openness and desire for integration. But the religious difference profoundly marks their growth and the processes of integration in the surrounding environment. Youngsters who are born and brought up in Italy are aware of their "Italianness" and have more cultural instruments; however, difficulties can remain in discovering their identity, For some, faith is a heritage from which they can slowly be freed, for others it

[9] For a training course for imams and Muslim ministers of religion, see the *PriMED* project; https://primed-miur.it/ [cited 2023 Feb 13].

[10] The Forum of European Muslim Youth and student Organisations – FEMYSO, for example, is a pan-European network of 32 Member Organisations across 20 European countries; see https://femyso.org/ [cited 2023 Feb 13].

is a key element in their life. Like many Italians of their own age, they can keep a religious identity as a "façade" without actively taking part in the community as a piece of the mosaic of their identity [49]. However, the characterisation of the Muslim in external eyes remains significant and has an impact on their processes of growth. For them there is the risk of always being considered foreigners in their own country.

In the case of a more or less direct engagement in politics, it is more common that these youngsters belong to left-wing formations or parties, which is not surprising if we take into account that on the right-wing there are often positions that are definitely contrary to migratory flows or even fully-fledged forms of xenophobia. It is rarely pointed out, however, that for the traditional values they express (order, family, the role of women and religious institutions…) they would seem potential partners for conservative movements.

Another very "particular" type of second generations of Muslims are the children of Italian converts, of whom we do not intend to speak here but from the point of view of their political positions offer a very wide range of variable positions: their parents were often activists in movements of the extreme right-wing or left-wing in their youth and seem to have adhered to Islam as a new form of opposition to the West and/or to Christianity after the crisis of the great ideologies.

The phenomenon of the many mixed couples (with one Christian partner and the other Muslim) is sometimes a private question between only the couple, who nevertheless have to decide on the religious education of any children they may have: if some prefer to leave the choice to their children when they are adults, others celebrate the holidays of both religions, but the cases of "absorption" of one of the two into the faith of the other are not rare. As is generally known, a Muslim man can marry a Jewish or a Christian woman without her necessarily having to convert, in the opposite case, religious and also civil law in many Islamic countries demands at least a formal conversion by the man to be able to marry a Muslim woman. At times this occurs in Italy today without there being any real interest by the bride, not to upset the parents, to consider the religious rite aesthetically preferable to the simple notarial act of a registry office wedding and so on. There are however groups of mixed couples who wish to live bringing out the best of their respective religious differences and they have been meeting periodically (under the guidance of a priest or an imam) for this purpose for several years. If we bear in mind that often families would prefer a candidate that is not only of the same religion but Arab, the existence alone of these couples reveals the profound changes that are taking place [57] and [58].

8. "And yet it moves"

The experience of common reflection and education carried out with a group of boys and girls from the association *Giovani Musulmani d'Italia* ("Young Muslims of Italy" – GMI) is however, completely different has been however, completely different in some meetings on Sundays 15 years ago to share and comment together their experiences. Born in Italy, or having arrived here very young, they attended Italian schools and feel Italian. They are seeking the right ways to remain faithful to their belief, without giving up being youngsters like others. The work done with them was stimulating for various reasons. In the first place they are youngsters, by their very age in an intermediate position, between the reassuring certainties of when you are young and of the family on the one hand and on the other the typical concerns of personalities who are still being formed and

perspectives still not very clear with regard to their future. In these conditions there is also the fact that the principles and values of their families' cultural and religious traditions do not correspond exactly with those around them and indeed, they are perceived as problematic. Moreover, especially in recent years, they have taken on further negative values due to events which concern the whole world and which seem to be directing it dangerously towards a perspective of conflict. Nobody seems able to take on their demands: the language and attitude of those who lead the Islamic centres are inadequate for youngsters born or who have grown up in Italy, especially for those of them who attended Italian schools and now feel similar to their Italian classmates [59]. Following in the footsteps of their fathers, they often decide on specialisations of the technical-scientific type and therefore remain impoverished on the humanistic side, which makes them easy victims of two phenomena: belonging to Italian culture as "poor relatives" on the one hand and a poor awareness of Islamic civilisation itself [60].

In these meetings there were about a dozen young Muslim boys and girls from Milan and other cities in northern Italy. There were six encounters, held on a Sunday, as for many of them, still at high school, having to travel on other days would have meant missing school. The meetings were held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. We dealt with the problems typical of their age and their particular condition. The work carried out shows a strong demand on them to have points of reference for their maturing together with a different perception of the self with respect to the adults that remain more strongly linked to the habits, customs and mindsets in the country of origin. An outstanding need to clarify ideas about some controversial points of the Islam-modernity confrontation also emerged, such as the female question, politics, the relationship between faith and reason… and the desire to be liberated from a marginal and defeatist image of the world of origin, aiming at full integration as Italian citizens of the Muslim faith who can play an active role in society.With them we produced the DVD *Conosciamo l'islam: Giovani musulmani italiani* ("*Let's get to know Islam: young Italian Muslims*") to present their reality. In the pages of the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper it was criticised as a "sugar-coated" video which conveyed an idyllic vision, attacking the parents of the youngsters interviewed. They were, in any case, youngsters who were trying to commit themselves in new directions. One of them, of Syrian origin, appeared in the footage as he conveyed the solidarity of his community to the Jews who each year commemorate the departure from Milan's Stazione Centrale of the convoys for the concentration camps, an event which was repeated the following year as well, with the presence of a Palestinian girl. The video also featured a girl of Egyptian descent, who was born and grew up in Italy, who had not asked to be exonerated from the lesson of Catholic religious education in her high school and had accepted doing volunteer work in the parish youth centre of her neighbourhood. Her father collaborated with the Franciscan missionaries in their charity work in the poor countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Obviously no mention was made of these situations in the indictment which condemned this film without the possibility of appeal.

The most recent initiative undertaken with the youngsters of the GMI, but also with young Christian Arabs and non-religious Arabs was that of publishing, once a month, some pages written by them and hosted by the weekly magazine *Vita*. The supplement was called *Yalla Italia* (which in Arabic means "Come on, let's go… Italy!") and its aim was to give a voice to this new generation who has such a lot to say but does not know how to make itself heard [1].

The first issue was dedicated to humour, which actually offers infinite and very funny examples [61] and [62]. "*Smile at the world and the world will smile at you!*" Who

would ever have thought that this is an Arabic proverb? Or another one which says, "*Keep away from evil and pull faces at it*"? Yet, the obtuse gazes of the fundamentalists are dangerously spreading the image of a whole world that is incapable of irony. The offspring of an ancient civilisation based on the "word", the Arabs love having fun with language. Yet, when exasperation makes us lose control, in the East as in the West, it is precisely about sacred things or simply in the usually prohibited semantic fields, that language makes us go beyond the limits. Arabic is no exception when, to tell someone to get lost, they say "May your religion go to hell!", which means that you have made me so angry that I spit on what is most sacred for you.

The second issue of the supplement, on the other hand, was on the relations between fathers and children, who inevitably have different visions to the same questions. When a young girl from Milan, the daughter of an Egyptian woman and an Italian father, was offered an Arabic course at school, she answered with slight annoyance: "I'm no immigrant!" Others were very pleased to attend these courses, but they were mainly children from primary schools or teenagers at high school. When they are at middle school, it is well known that teenagers will carefully avoid anything at all that can make them seem different from their peers. This means that the problem of identity has to do with many variables. In short, like all human questions, it is not about applying principles or theories, but accompanying a complex and at times contradictory process of evolution, in continuous change, full of risks and of surprising potential. It is above all families, who are often disoriented, and schools, already weighed down by a problematic amount of work and very seldom supported by orientation and means that are suitable for adequately facing the challenge, that deal with this. This means that our society is already a great laboratory, where a continuous mediation between different cultural and religious traditions is taking place, which are not to be conceived as predetermined entities, but interwoven elements of which each one of us is the place of a very unrepeatable synthesis. There is effectively the risk that on both fronts the least noble and most ephemeral aspects of the massification which characterises this grey epoch of ours, prevail. For Europeans, the slightly degrading role of the affluent, concerned above all that the poor relatives are not too much of a disturbance, willing to support them on condition that they are willing to carry out the humblest tasks and sharing in at least some collective rites to show that they are not completely uncivilised. For the immigrants, especially if they are Muslims, that of reactionaries anchored to a medieval, theocratic and sexist vision of the world, to be removed as soon as possible to show that they can soon become similar to us. Reality is already well beyond this type of simplification.

The third issue covered holidays. For many youngsters of the second generation of Arab immigrants in Italy, it is a sort of regular appointment with the country of origin of their parents. Their grandparents are there, together with a more or less boundless number of relatives, different habits and customs which are curious and at times bizarre, but always mediated by the fondness that from a very early age has been instilled in them for a land to which each of them has their own way of belonging. How many times have they heard Mum and Dad or at least one of them telling the story of something "there", often with an approach between the fabulous and the exotic, as often happens to memories which are filtered by the heart before reaching the brain to at last emerge on the lips? Here they are then, facing a past which they have not chosen for themselves, which is part of cumbersome luggage but of which at times they are also proud, disoriented on both sides of the Mediterranean, too Arab to be completely Italian, too Italian to be fully Arab.

How can they deal with it? In the oldest and wisest way: by getting by as best as they can, avoiding the sharp edges and slipping away from confrontations that are too open and harsh.

9. Talents marked 2G: "Second generations"

For many years the voices of young people were almost completely absent from the periodicals, book or publications of Italian Islamic Centres. Their age, linguistic problems and lack of adequate backgrounds have certainly played a role in this phenomenon. But so have the already mentioned generational "hierarchy" and the command of Italian by converts who have often had a past of "activism" that has made them the main or even the only authors of what is printed: from occasional leaflets to newsletters that come out with varying regularity.

9.1. The female writers

More recently, some books written especially by young Muslim women of the second generation have nevertheless appeared on the independent editorial market. Perhaps it is not a surprise that the first to emerge did not belong to any group of association. Randa Ghazy was born in Italy in 1986 to an Egyptian family and obtained a degree in International Relations from the University of Milan, As early as 2002 she published *Sognando Palestina* ("Dreaming of Palestine") [63], which was then translated in 16 countries. Only three years later, with the same publisher, she wrote *Prova a sanguinare: Quattro ragazzi, un treno, la vita* ("Try and bleed: Four kids, a train, life") [64] and in 2007 *Oggi forse non ammazzo nessuno: Storie minime di una giovane musulmana stranamente non terrorista*, ("Today maybe I won't kill anyone: Small stories of a young Muslim woman who strangely enough is not a terrorist") [65]. This book is certainly more autobiographical, in which she deals with the stereotypes she has to face, but is no less explicit on the customs and habits of her country of origin, especially on marriage. She has been working for some time now for an important NGO, but in London (the brain drain does not make any distinctions), where she has married an Englishman, while her sister – who has stayed in Italy - is married to an Italian.

Widad Tamimi (born in 1981), the daughter of a Palestinian who fled after the 1967 war and an Italian of Jewish origin from the USA, published in 2012 for Mondadori *Il caffè delle donne* ("The women's café") [66] in which she seeks to find her identity tracing the past of her "plural" family, was destined to even wider horizons, as she now lives and works in Slovenia.

"Older" than them (born in 1967) but who came to writing later is Rania Ibrahim, of Egyptian origin, married to an Italian and the mother of four children who, with her *Islam in love* [67], tackles the topic of a mixed couple (like her own) but setting the story in Great Britain between a veiled woman (as she is not) and a boy with xenophobic tendencies who amidst a thousand disagreements and paradoxes are able to crown an apparently impossible union.

Sumaya Abdel Qader, born in Perugia, Italy, in 1978, the daughter of a doctor, a Palestinian imam of Jordanian nationality, was one of the founders of the GMI and is very active in Muslim associative life. With her first book, *Porto il velo, adoro i Queen*, ("I wear the veil and love the Queen") [68] while highlighting her religious practice, she also ironically challenges prejudices and stereotypes, to which she returns in a more

constructive way with *Quello che abbiamo in testa* ("What we have on our head") [69], again starting from the hijab which did not stop her from being elected to the city council of Milan in the local elections.

The most recent is Francesca Bocca-Aldaqre (born in 1987) a convert. After studying at the Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele, she took a doctorate in Munich in Neuroscience but in the meantime travelled around the world learning Arabic and becoming a Muslim. In 2016 she became head of the Istituto di Studi Islamici Averroè, with manuals in Italian which she herself edits in a project, the guidelines of which are collected in the book *Un Corano che cammina: Fondamenti di pensiero educativo, didattica e pedagogia islamica* ("A Quran on a path: Foundations of educational thought, Islamic education and pedagogy") [70]. In 2019 with Pietrangelo Buttafuoco she published the book *Sotto il suo passo nascono i fiori: Goethe e l'Islam* ("Flowers grow under his steps: Goethe and Islam") [71]. She then continued with *Nietzsche in Paradiso: Vite parallele tra Islam e Occidente* ("Nietzsche in Paradise: Parallel lives between Islam and the West") [72] and with the late Massimo Campanini, *Manuale di Teologia Islamica* ("Manual of Islamic Theology") [73].

9.2 The rappers

American Hip Hop in the 1980s gave a voice in its various expressions - Mc'ing/Rap, Dj'ing, Writing/Graffiti and Breakin' - to different minorities, especially of colour or immigrants, who expressed at the same time forms of social exclusion and the vitality of the young in a form relating to their identity. As time passed, the phenomenon spread elsewhere, including to Italy, where quite a few rappers are of Arab origin and some have achieved considerable fame.

Amir Issaa, who was born to an Egyptian father and an Italian mother in Rome in 1978 and was brought up there, started as a breaker and writer in The Riot Vandals collective in the 1990s. His first album as a soloist was *Uomo di prestigio* ("Man of prestige"), with EMI/Virgin in 2006. After other productions he started his own label, bringing out *Grandezza naturale* ("Grandezza naturale") and, together with *The Ceasars* composed the soundtrack of the film *Scialla! (Stai sereno)* ("Easy!") by Francesco Bruni, being nominated for a David di Donatello award and the Nastro d'Argento. He is also well known for his work in prisons and collaboration with social initiatives together with well-known NGOs.

Maruego, born in Morocco in 1992, arrived in Italy at just over a month old.

Karkadan, "rhinoceros", was born in Tunis in 1983 but arrived in Milan when he was about twenty and rapped first in a Frenchified Tunisian Arabic and then in Italian, making several albums.

Zanko El Arabe Blanco, born in Milan to Syrian parents in 1983, is also a multilingual rapper (Italian-French-Arabic) who has made several albums and in particular two videos: *Vu Raccumandà* and *Made in Terraneo.*

Mahmood (Alessandro Mahmoud) was born in a neighbourhood in the outskirts of Milan in 1992 to a Sardinian mother and an Egyptian father who then separated. He stayed with his mother, who taught him Sardinian and a love for her native island and he studied singing from when he was a child, subsequently coming into contact with the world of music production where he had the opportunity of collaborating with other artists and receiving initial recognition. His career was crowned by his victory at the Sanremo Festival in 2019 with the song *Soldi* ("Money"), which also came second in the

2019 Eurovision Song Contest 2019. His style has been defined "Morocco-pop," a mixture of Italian pop music with influences from Arabic music.

10. Conclusions

According to a well-known saying, "From close-up, nobody is perfect". The adjective which concludes the sentence is intended as ironic, alluding to something strange or bizarre… but it also applies if understood in another meaning: "common", "similar or even mass-manufactured". This applies to everyone, but even more so to those who have some element of diversity that is theirs more through fate than by choice. The brief considerations set out here have the intention of showing this. Also and above all, those who belong to "migrant" generations following the first one are often a jigsaw, first of all for themselves and in their "own" environment. Like the others, but in a special way and each one in their own way, they are human beings, therefore a mystery for themselves which can certainly and must be tried to be understood, by observing and above all accompanying them in their unique path, but without the illusion of being able to completely discover their secret.

The social private sector already started a few years ago to try and at least improve some of these situations, but a huge amount still remains to be done, systematically and as part of a global project. In the meantime, the institutions should equip themselves to carry out their dutiful action of control, verification and legalisation. Initiatives undertaken in emergencies, to break the circle of isolation and the spiral of involution, have achieved results that are anything but negligible, but have not yet sparked off the virtuous circle of emulation, also because of petty and instrumental controversies that have sometimes discouraged those who have honestly tried to work hard but without offering any contribution to alternative solutions, and thus providing the alibi for those who do nothing, leaving the field open to adventurous bunglers. The logic of welfare culture can hold up only in the short term and for extraordinary situations. If it becomes the rule, it risks not solving the problems, but making them chronic. Ambitious and complex projects, with clear purposes and well-defined stages, guided essentially by the goal of offering a service of quality to users and certainly not inspired by the logical notes of "remission" , is still missing. In the meantime, a critical mass has been reached which no longer allows shortcuts. Or further extensions. Parallel initiatives, which are not coordinated, partial and extemporary when not risky would end up by producing a confusion in which the final objective would fatally be lost sight of and would encourage ambiguous compromises. A healthy and responsible democracy cannot make do with palliatives and must be able to promote and reward the best practices, otherwise it loses all credibility, becoming lost in sterile disputes which are more effort than they are worth. Institutional bodies which have the skills, the means and the wish to intervene remain the only solution to reclaim that insidious no man's land which is getting larger and where too many have already risked getting lost for too long.

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Migrant Families and Religious Belonging
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Migration and Religious Radicalization: A Family Issue?

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Abstract: One of the crucial issues of radicalism lately has been the involvement of family members in acts of terrorism. But families and their role in the radicalization process have not yet received proper attention from researchers, despite the growing interest shown by policy makers in several countries. This chapter provides an overview of the role of families in radicalization. Both research literature and policy and practice consider families as a potential risk of radicalization, as well as a source of protection and rehabilitation. Finally, the chapter highlights the importance of prevention, even a family level. Families may not notice change in family members who are undergoing a process of radicalization and specifically youngster may be at risk of radicalization, because of the long time they spend online.

Keywords. migration, family, radicalization, religion, parenting practices and beliefs, mental health

1. Introduction

Religious radicalization is one of the main threats that 21st century societies must address. It is indeed an intricate psychological and social process, fostering people's extreme beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies, and promoting the use of violence to pursue their goals and impose their own world view [1, 2]. Therefore, violent radicalization is extremely dangerous for some social groups and for society as a whole [3].

According to Ali Imron, one of the perpetrators of the 2002 Bali attack that produced 202 victims, there are three main elements driving a person to become radicalized, and a member of an organization inspired by *jihad*: family, education (Islamic schools and colleges), and the *a'wah* (the "calling") [4]. One of the key factors of religious radicalization is, then, the influence exerted by families. As a matter of fact, even though no single factor can fully explain the radicalization of an individual, family's influence, as well as the impact of other close social relations, seem to be quite effective for the recruitment of many members in the Islamic network.

On February 26, 2018, Mark Rowley, Chief of Scotland Yard, made a formal request that the children of "*those convicted for terrorist offenses and those who have been radicalized*" might be removed from parental care. In fact, despite the efforts made lately

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by family courts and social services to defend and protect children being raised in a terrorist, extremist and radical environment, Rowley asserted that more should be done to protect children from parents "*teaching their offspring to hate*".

Rapoport [5] was the first one to introduce the idea of different waves of terrorism, strongly connected to radicalization, and identified four waves: the anarchic wave (1870-1920), the nationalistic wave (1920-1960), the new leftist-marxist wave (from 1960 to 1980), and the religious wave (from the end of 1970 to-date).

The phenomenon of internal terrorism observed in some immigrant communities of the diaspora became a real concern for national and European political leaders only at the beginning of the XI century, after the USA-England operation against immigrant groups in Iraq. This military action was considered a specific attack against a Muslim country and caused unrest in many Muslim young people living in Western Europe, making them more vulnerable to a possible recruitment from Islamic terrorist organizations. After September 11 and the subsequent US attack against Iraq, the USA as well as other European countries manifested no clear interest in assessing the real causes of violent radicalization. However, after the shift that took place in the public debate from the Western involvement with the Muslim world to the Islamic involvement with young Muslims living in the Western world, adopting strategies of radicalization and recruitment, some basic factors of homegrown radicalization, such as the role played by some mosques and other places of recruitment like jails, have finally been investigated.

2. The notion of radicalization

Radicalization is a multifaceted and questioned concept, which is frequently associated to producing terrorism [6].

Current investigations highlight that susceptibility to radicalization encompasses several factors, which can be classified as psychological, behavioral, political, ideological, religious, socio-structural and those related to socialization [7]. Many scholars have located unlike emphasis upon diverse vulnerability factors. For example[8,9] has focused on psychological and socialization factors; [7] has stressed the importance of focussing on cognition and behavior, how ideas and action are related; Baker [10] has highlighted the importance of examining Islamic legislative expressions and terminology to understand terrorism enacted in the name of Islam; and in a recent European research document, Gaxie et al [11] stress the importance of different social and political contexts. Both Bartlett and Miller [12] and Githens-Mazer [13] make a distinction between radicalization that leads to violence and radicalization that does not, stating that research needs to look at both to better understand the concept of radicalization.

It is also significant to emphasize the fact that the empirical basis supporting radicalization research is very reedy [14,15], with radicalization mostly being viewed as something negative rather than positive [13, 16].

Nevertheless, up to now the study of radicalization has mostly focused on the "vulnerable individual" that is somehow manipulated to become a terrorist. Consequently, "the suitable environment" has not been considered as important as the "vulnerable individual". And regarding the meso-level even less attention has been given to factors present at a macro-level in the radicalization.

In addition, for a proper investigation it is necessary to come up with a clear definition. Nonetheless, despite more than a decade of studies, there is no consensus regarding the definition of "radicalization".

According to us, the definition of radicalization suggested by Schmid [17] seems to be one of the most appropriate:

> An individual or collective (group) process whereby, usually in a situation of political polarization, the normal practices of dialogue, compromise and tolerance between political actors and groups with divergent interests are abandoned by one or both sides in a conflicting dyad preferring instead a growing commitment to engage in confrontational tactics. These may include (i) the use of (non-violent) pressure and coercion; (ii) various forms of political violence other than terrorism; (iii) acts of violent extremism in the form of terrorism and war crimes. The process is, on the part of rebel factions, generally accompanied by an ideological socialization moving away from positions determined by dominant trends or the status quo towards more radical or extremist positions which imply a dichotomous world view and the acceptance of an alternative focal point of political mobilization that is outside the dominant political order, as the existing system is no longer recognized as appropriate or legitimate.

There are many other definitions, and also many different ways to consider this issue. Radicalization can be seen as a process of political socialization towards extremism. As an alternative, radicalization can be considered a process of conflict escalation, meaning an increasing use of illegal methods of political action while facing an opponent. It can also be viewed as a process of mobilization and recruitment, carried out by political and religious leaders and skillful manipulators. Lastly, it can be considered as an overall process of conversion, a life's transformation, shifting from a personal more individualistic identity to a more communitarian one, making the vulnerable individual more open to requests from an extremist religious cult, by making him believe that he belongs to a superior group of "true" believers. A further definition of radicalization, suggested by Spalek [18], who in turn takes it from Githens-Mazer [13] underlines instead the idea that it is «a moral obligation, which is collectively defined but individually supported, to be involved in direct operations». This definition includes both the individual and social dimension of radicalization, and also provides an opportunity to consider the role played by families in radicalization, because the family context can be considered as a space where moral obligations are collectively defined and usually passed on.

In investigating and presenting the role that families may play in a context of radicalization, however, this chapter refrains from presuming or suggesting negative opinions on Muslim families, as well as dismisses any natural link among Muslim family, Islamic radicalization, and terrorism. The existence of radical opinions within a family does not pose any specific problem, because it does not necessarily mean a direct tie to violence.

3. Studies related to the role of family in the process of radicalization

Despite the growing number of research on radicalization, studies focusing on family's real incidence in this phenomenon are still at their initial stage. A specific focus on family, including parents, brothers, children, spouses, and other members of the extended family, might be very helpful to understand the direct and indirect influence of family on radicalization.

There are several reviews of studies on radicalization, but none of them have specifically directed their attention on family-related variables and interventions. A systematic investigation on the protective factors against extremism and violent radicalization was published by Lösel et al [19]. This study examined 15 databases and involved different individual, family, school, peer, community, and social factors related to radicalization. Among the family factors outlined, as protective factors were identified: parenting style, the presence of non-violent significant relatives, and owning a house. However, as Zych and Nasaescu pointed out, [20], even though this study provided valuable information on this topic in reviewing the different databases, no family-related search terms were included. In addition, family-related risk factors were not taken into consideration. Therefore, the work done by Lösel et al. [19], despite its unquestionable value, is not really complete, also because many studies specifically focusing on family and radicalization have not been mentioned [20].

Another interesting review [21] investigated more the risk and protective factors connected to radicalization. Parents' educational involvement as well as their being married were found to be a preventive factor against radical attitudes and behaviors.

The "*Protocol for a systematic review of family-related risk and protective factors, consequences, and interventions against radicalization*", proposed by Zych and Nasaescu [20], mostly focused on family. This protocol is different from the review published by Wolfowicz et al. [21], due to its inclusion of protective factors, consequences, interventions, and specific family-related search terms. Nonetheless, this is just a protocol, and not a systematic review.

So far, there are no systematic reviews wholly focusing on family and radicalization, providing keywords, searches, inclusion and exclusion criteria, specific encodings and analyses related to family, but rather reviews that are extremely valuable, but not exhaustive.

A global vision and a complete understanding of family-related factors and interventions will enhance a decrease in risks and an increase in protective factors and implement anti-radicalization practices that can be really effective.

4. Family influence on radicalization

As Scremin [22] noted, despite the extensive research devoted to causes and pathways of radicalization, there is very little evidence-based theoretical knowledge regarding the role families may play in the radicalization process. Some experts argue that family members can have a direct influence on radicalization, as they can pass on, both vertically (intergenerational transmission) and horizontally (intragenerational transmission), formalized ideologies explicitly advocating violence and terrorism. Other scholars, instead, consider family influence only an indirect factor, meaning that, in peculiar instances, problematic family conditions could somehow foster the

radicalization process. Finally, other scholars see no family influence at all in the radicalization process.

Nevertheless, some findings do suggest that family may have a direct influence on radicalization. According to Bornstein [23], parents can directly influence their children through their genetic heritage, belief systems and behaviors. Similarly, Valtolina [24] argues that some parents' attitudes and behaviors, mainly parental punishment, can affect the development of aggressive behaviors. Likewise, Bart Duriez and Bart Soenens [25] pointed out that there is an intergenerational transmission of ideology, which includes the direct transmission of xenophobic opinions from parents to children. Amy-Jane Gielen [26] argues that "radicalized people often share their parents' extremist viewpoints". However, several scholars [22] do point out that the parents' ability to effectively hand down their beliefs to their children has not always been confirmed by research. As Copeland [27] highlights, only in a few cases radicalized individuals get extremist dogmas from their parents. Furthermore, even when this phenomenon seems to be taking place, these values often represent only a partial incentive to radicalization.

Families, however, seem to play a very important role in the recruitment process to join extremist groups. In Islamic groups, Edwin Bakker noted that family relationships –mostly made up of siblings, cousins, and kinship through marriage– had an important role in the formal affiliation of 50 people out of 242 jihadists.

In addition to the direct influence already mentioned above, a more indirect family involvement on radicalization also emerges from other studies. Cowan and Cowan [28] stated, for example, that home conflicts can negatively affect the quality of interaction among family members, and when these conflicts become stifling, they could be detrimental for intergenerational relationships. As a result, parents may not notice the first signs of radicalization in their children or may find themselves in a situation of potential radicalization they usually do not know how to handle. Similarly, other professionals pointed out that family instability, such as the loss of family members, troubled marriages, divorces, family violence, psychiatric problems, and substance abuse within the family, can fuel the radicalization process.

Furthermore, many adolescents and young people looking for belonging are enticed by radical groups [29, 30] being searching for substitute family, especially for father figures.

According to Tore Bjørgo and Yngve Carlsson's [31], young members of extremist groups have had very little or no relationship at all with their fathers and usually with their own families. Hence, challenges like joining a radical group may be considered an adolescent way of gaining family attention, with older members of the group often filling the void of the missing father figure.

There are also scholars arguing that parents do not influence the radicalization process at all. In his work on the psychology of radicalized jihadist individuals, Silke [32] discovered no real connection between formal affiliation to radical groups and family history marked by deprivation or poverty. A similar conclusion also emerges from Christmann [33] systematic review: violent and nonviolent Islamists often come from very different family backgrounds. Finally, Botha [34] research on al-Shabaab recruitment shows that parents do not usually represent the role models for their sons and daughters. Specifically, Botha argues that most young people become radicalized not because of their parents' influence, but because they follow other routes that have no connection with their parents' political or religious views.

5. Family-related psycho-social risk factors

Literature on radicalization, as already being mentioned, has addressed the issue of family very little, and, while studying the family role in the process of radicalization, its psychological and socialization risk factors for radicalization are usually highlighted.

From an identity and trauma perspective, families play a psychological role in radicalization. Specifically, some researchers have suggested that in terms of identities and values there might be a gap between individuals who have been radicalized and their families, and this distance increases the risk of radicalization [35, 36]. For example, according to Gielen [35], young people at risk of radicalization are usually looking for an identity and may feel alienated from their parents and relatives. Therefore, their bent towards radicalization may be determined by a desire to belong, to have an identity making them feel at home [35]. It is possible that radical groups intentionally cause conflicts between young people and their families to strengthen the identity of the radical group and consequently the attachment to the group of the young member concerned [16].

As Spalek [37] points out, individuals can become radicalized due to "cognitive openings" developing after psychological crises. Such "cognitive openings" lead people to seek new ways of understanding and relating to the world, which may involve adopting radical ideologies. Wiktorowicz [38] lists several critical conditions that can trigger a cognitive opening from emotional distress, and a death in the family is considered one of the main factors. Githens-Maze [13] has analyzed the radicalization of North African immigrants in Britain. He argues that the brutal effects of the colonization in North Africa, combined with the current harsh economic and political conditions, including the violent state repression of Islamic political parties in Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia, with torture and violence, have left a devastating legacy. Such repression might have caused an ongoing unrest leading to unceasing anxiety about the fate and loss of one's family.

In addition to psychological factors, socialization may also be a key element where families can be involved in the radicalization process. Sometimes the very family members have radical views shaping and influencing the opinion of young people. It may also occur that family members engage in activism and have access to networks that young radicalized can draw on [16]. According to a study conducted by Bigo [39], in some EU countries, networks of family and friends can play a significant role in the recruitment of young people to become "extreme activists", and in some cases that can lead to terrorism. Some of them have also experienced considerable family hardships, which directly contributed to their radicalization process. For instance, for one of the terrorists involved in the 9/11 attack, Zacarias Moussaoui, tried in 2016, his childhood was a significant element to understand his radicalization. In fact, the jury in Moussaoui's trial argued that he should not have been sentenced to death, on the grounds that he had a difficult childhood, with no home life attention and care, little emotional support, few financial resources, and a father with a violent personality [40]. Another family issue which was considered in Moussaoui's radicalization process is the fact that his family never practiced Islam at home and therefore, when he turned to Islam as a young man, Moussaoui did not develop an adult and stable identity, but was highly influenced by extremist rhetoric at the most vulnerable stage of his religious upbringing.

Also, in the case of young British Muslims who joined Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), a radical Islamist group, it has been suggested that families are to be considered an important factor to better understand radicalization processes [36]. The social class of families in

which HT members grew up and the cultural gap between the first and second generation may help explain HT membership. HT members usually belong to the middle-class, living in white suburbs even though they are predominantly of South Asian descent. Although HT members may come from stable and loving families, the differences in cultural values between parents and children play a relevant role in the radicalization of young people, looking to find value systems that are independent and separate from their parents' ones [36].

However, according to some studies it must also be stressed that families can be a protective environment against radicalization and enhance the rehabilitation of individuals who have been radicalized. Individuals reconnecting with their family are more likely to be successful in the de-radicalization process [41, 42]. If families are considered a valuable support for de-radicalization, then providing radicalized young people an opportunity to reconnect with their family members is important to help them reject violent ideologies and behaviors. For example, in Indonesia, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, and Malaysia, government-sponsored de-radicalization programs give special attention and support to families and individuals who are being deradicalized [43].

Family members can offer radicalized youth the motivation they need to disengage. In Great Britain, a study on a mentoring program aimed at supporting individuals considered at risk of radicalization emphasizes the essential role families play in supporting these young people [42] and how family is also crucial for de-radicalization.

Female figures do play a significant role in these processes. According to Hearn, [43] women can prevent their children from becoming victims of predators trying to radicalize them, because of the special bond with their children. However, research on radicalized young people [16] shows that parents often take little interest in their children's opinion and ignore the risks their children run into by being influenced by radical ideas. Furthermore, most parents never discuss or try to influence their children's opinions, or never seek help from third parties, such as other family members, social services, or the school. Interestingly, while some parents were totally unaware of their children's attention to radical ideas, many of them were aware of it but had no idea how to handle it. Nevertheless, those who sought help from social workers, or from the school, did not get any valuable help. In this study it is strongly suggested that parents should be more interested in their children's viewpoints and discuss their opinions [16]. The internet was also considered a key factor in the radicalization of the youth involved, providing for them images, words and discussion forums that shaped their mind. Many of these young radicals spent a long time on the web. In this research, it is suggested that good parental education might help and give direction to young people, so that instead of becoming violent radicals, they can turn into more critical and politically aware citizens [16].

However, whether family can lead to less violent radicalization is still a much-debated issue, as radicalized individuals are influenced by a large number of different factors, and not just their families [44].

All these elements should be considered especially while looking at countries like France and Belgium, where the attacks were mainly carried out by young people who grew up in the country ("homegrown terrorism"), and not by foreigners who were raised in their Islamic country of origin, as in the case of the 9/11 attacks in the United States. The work of Khosrokhavar [45] points out that these young people mostly came from immigrant backgrounds and lived in ghetto-like neighborhoods. Their families were often very chaotic, broken, and large, and especially in France, they were once patriarchal families, but now the father is practically absent or considered worthless. In

this situation, violence seems to be a suitable substitute for the inexistent family authority, within a degraded subculture.

6. A multilevel model of Islamic radicalism: Moghadam and Scremin

Only a few scholars [17] have systematically organized and analyzed the causes of radicalization on different levels –micro, meso, and macro–; and an even smaller number have set up an integrated framework to better assess the family role in the radicalization process. Since family influence on radicalization is better understood by using simultaneously a multiple level approach, Scremin [22] has proposed an addition to the framework inspired by Moghadam's [46] multicausal method to study suicide terrorism, which consists of four levels of analysis: the individual, organizational, familial, and environmental levels.

The first level of analysis, the individual one (L1), has been used to investigate the indirect influence that families can exert on radicalization. Specifically, L1 tries to identify some personal factors contributing to Islamic radicalization and indirectly shaped by family background. These elements include, for example, abuse in the family, divorce, an absent father, loss of a close relative, a desire for revenge, spiritual and material rewards for family members. While such family circumstances cannot by themselves explain the drive for radicalization, they are nonetheless considered important, as they can provide a fertile ground for radicalization.

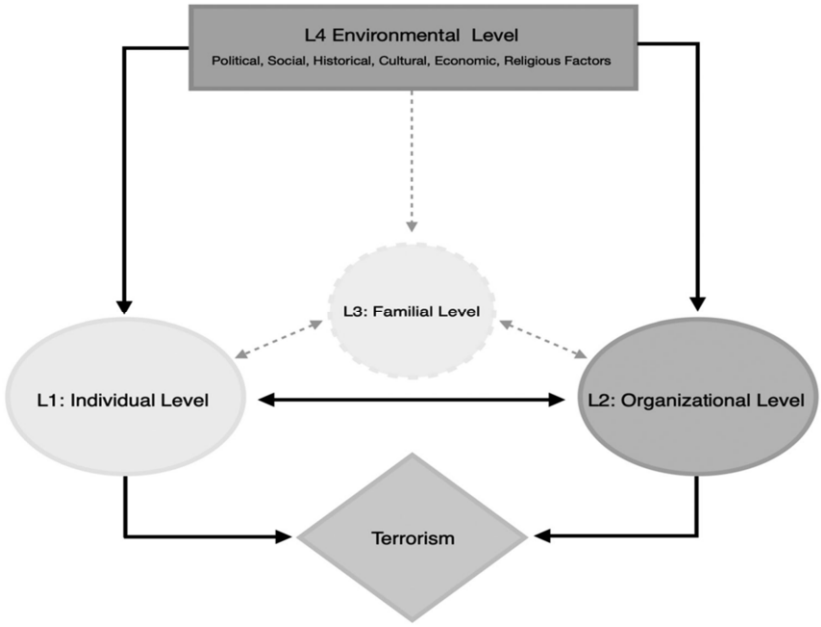
The second level of analysis (L2), proposed by Scremin [22], focuses on Islamic terrorist organizations and how they operate in terms of recruitment and proselytism. Indeed, not only can terrorist groups become a substitute family for individuals looking for a sense of belonging, but through the *da'wa* (proselytism) Islamic terrorist organizations can also shape their own social context, thus creating an environment more suitable for their activities. Since family is a subsystem within the larger community system, it is important to firstly understand the nature of the relationship between an Islamic terrorist organization and its immediate social environment, that is essential to explain why some families are more willing to encourage the involvement of their relatives in terrorist activities in certain contexts more than others.

The purpose of the third level of analysis, the family level (L3), is to investigate its direct influence in the radicalization process. This includes the family role both in conveying extremist beliefs and in recruiting members into Islamic groups. It is important to note that, even though cases of involvement of extended families in violent radicalization are mentioned, this section mainly focuses on nuclear and fragmented family structures that include married and unmarried couples, with or without children. The fragmented family is a type of household where father, mother or both parents are absent from home due to separation, divorce, or death.

Finally, the fourth level proposed by Scremin [22], the environmental one (L4), is essential to uncover the various structural factors that provide the context for the other levels of analysis. Since individuals, groups and families do not exist in a vacuum, but are influenced by the environment in which they live and operate, addressing the broader social, religious, historical, and cultural conditions is necessary to understand how and why these people interact with each other more in some situations than others.

Interactions between these levels of analysis are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Interactions between levels of analysis



Source: Scremin [22]

The most important environmental factors (L4) directly affect the individual (L1), organizational (L2) and the familial levels (L3). This is described in the figure by the arrows coming down from L4 to L1, L2, and L3. Nonetheless, the individual, organizational, and familial levels also interact with each other, sometimes producing synergetic effects. This occurs because some of the motivations coming from L1, L2 and L3 are similar, stemming from the same context. For instance, a country with a strong religious practice and commitment is more likely to have many religious individuals growing up in very religious families, as well as it forces many terrorist groups to take on a religious fashion. While both the individual and organizational levels are prone to an actual engagement in violence, the familial level may serve as an important mediating variable between L4 and L1/L2. Firstly, families can channel environmental influences on the individual. Specifically, an important principle to keep in mind to understand the relationship between L3 and L1 is that what affects the family system can affect every family member. Likewise, what affects each family member can also affect the entire family system. Regarding the interaction between L3 and L2, the organization can shape the social environment from which L3 emerges. However, family ties and background can influence the decision-making process of Islamic groups, especially when it involves recruitment. Family networks may offer exposure to terrorist ideology, recruitment, funding, training, and operational opportunities more easily than those outside the family structure [47]. In the intimate and trusted environment of their families, radicalized people can confidently share information and doctrines to their family members. And when recruitment takes place through the family, it can allow for even more freedom and make their commitment stronger.

It is necessary to say that the central position of L3 does not mean that family is at the center of the radicalization process. According to Scremin [22], the smaller size of the familial level and the dotted arrows from L3 to L1 and L2 serve precisely to make it clear that family is no more important than other factors in explaining Islamic radicalization and it makes a difference only in some cases.

It is important to point out that the purpose of his analysis is not to detect all the possible influences that family networks have on the radicalization process, but to stress the fact that an adequate analysis of family influences on religious radicalization requires an approach that considers all the four levels he suggests.

Focusing on the level of familial analysis (L3), the scholar's objective is therefore to investigate the direct influence that family can exercise in the radicalization process, starting from the intergenerational transmission of an extremist ideology. As it is well known, parents play a crucial role in the socialization of their children, as they provide them with the initial framework to better understand a complicated world. They also pass on to their offspring family culture and the broader traditions, norms, and values of society they belong to [23]. Most likely, in some family circumstances, this transmission may include attitudes and values that somehow foster radicalization, such as narratives of victimization, persecution, grievance or hatred [27]. Furthermore, when parents have radical beliefs, they directly pass them on and thus explicitly support violence and terrorism. There are several examples of parents who have played an obvious role in the transmission of a radical ideology. As Scremin reported [22], in May 2018 Dita Oepriarto, the leader of an Indonesian ISIS-affiliated organization based in Surabaya, staged several suicide attacks in the city, involving her four young children, all aged between 9 and 18 years old. Oepriarto exposed them to jihadist literature and pro-ISIS speeches made by Indonesia's most vocal extremist ideologues, and all of this offered them the ideological environment to foster terrorism. Children growing up in terrorist zones are more likely to become terrorists themselves, as they are exposed to an extremist ideology and experience personal traumas leading them to adopt a violent behavior later on life [48, 49]. Due to the indoctrination and combat training which they are exposed to from an early age, these young people are much more vulnerable to the lure of radicalization. In Palestine, as some scholars highlighted, parents have often raised their children since an early age to be familiar with Islamic groups. Likewise, in countries such as Kurdistan and Chechnya, in several families, father and son have become extremists and joined violent groups like the Chechen Liberation Movement or the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). These cases may represent further examples of ideology diffusion from father to offspring. However, as Scremin [22] points out, ideological transmission is not exclusively a matter between parents and children, but can occur from uncle to nephew, as well as from grandfather to grandchild. «In addition, there may also be intragenerational transmission between siblings, cousins, and spouses» [22].

The multilevel approach proposed by Scremin, as he himself emphasized, is a preliminary framework, supported by several cases, but this has yet to be empirically tested by further studies. However, despite its limitations, this approach makes an important contribution to understanding family influence on the radicalization process.

7. Parental weakness and vulnerability to radicalism

Moving from Erickson's eight-stage framework of psychosocial development [50], Luthfi Zuhdi & Syauqillah [4] offer another interesting perspective of how the parent-child relationship can play a major role in introducing in introducing youngster to a vulnerability towards radicalism.

Since in the first four stages of personality development, from zero to twelve years, the parental role is of paramount importance, the authors point out that if –in that period – children cannot establish a positive relationship with their parents, they are very likely to experience distrust in the world, low self-esteem, mistrust about their own abilities and failure to develop their potential. Under these circumstances, it is very easy for a youngster to be enticed by radicalism that offers them assurances and values. Radicalization can lead young people to strongly believe in an ideology, to improve their self-esteem, to feel superior and always right, to go beyond their own abilities [51].

In the later period, between the ages of twelve and eighteen, marked by the search for identity to avoid confusion of roles and to obtain what Erickson called "loyalty", there is an upheaval in most supporters of radical groups. This is the transitional stage from childhood to adulthood, when a boy and a girl must learn the "role" he will play as an adult and clearly define his own identity. A successful experience during this phase will increase the "loyalty" value. Conversely, the inability to form his own identity can bring confusion regarding the actual role the person has in his/her own environment and feel insecure about himself/herself or his/her position in the society.

Therefore teenagers, after junior high school, might feel bored with their regular school education and more drawn to studying religion, or decide to "migrate" to Syria or Afghanistan, to be more compliant with Islamic teachings and committed to Islamic authorities.

According to Luthfi Zuhdi and Syauqillah [4], if young people have been exposed to radicalism during their adolescence, in agreement with their parents or even encouraged by them, it is very likely that in life they will experience great difficulties in practicing values such as love, care, and wisdom.

The father's role finds its fulfillment in educating children. In an extremist environment, the father's responsibility as teacher and role model is fully realized when he can help his wife and children to embrace a radical mentality. This father's goal, in addition to education to Islam, is also to teach practices and beliefs that should lead his children to independently develop an interest in *jihad*. Furthermore, when a husband is radicalized, his wife is very likely to follow suit, and in turn the mother will teach her children to do the same. Children are also indoctrinated with violent movies and magazines the father provides for them. In addition, he persuades his family by using the "*hujjah*", which originated from the Quran and the *hadith*. "*Hujjah*" means "proof" [implied: proof of God] and is usually used to refer to a single individual in any given human era who represents God's "proof" to humanity. The "*hujjah*" is a prophet or an Imam who possesses a relationship with God that is greater than anyone else. Consequently, his behaviors and values highly influence his children's upbringing, as several studies have shown [52]. Conversely, the father's absence in a child's life (both as a caregiver and a role model, protector, and resource), can also influence a young person's decision to become radicalized. Lack of communication in the family can lead to a loss of the father's authority in front of the son; and, since the father is not a respected figure, then his advice or reproaches are usually ignored. This specific situation seems to be one of the main factors making young people –both male and female– very

independent when they have to decide to join radicalized groups [53]. In other words, the combination of lack of a respected head of the family with no communication between father and children, and no control over the children's behavior can be considered a risk factor for radicalization.

The mother figure is also important in radicalization processes. Especially in immigrant families from traditional societies, her main role is to provide childcare [54]. She looks after them by meeting their basic needs, providing care, giving love, monitoring the overall children's health and general conditions. Therefore, given the mother's important role in caring for the children, when she becomes radicalized, her children find themselves slipping almost unconsciously towards radicalization.

8. The importance of prevention

As Spalek [18] reported, in 2008, the UK Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCFS) prepared a document entitled "Learning to Be Safe Together", outlining the risk factors that professionals need to be aware of in dealing with radicalization. The hypothesis that families may be playing a pivotal role for radicalization is attested in at least three risk factors affecting children and young people: identity crisis, personal crisis, and personal experiences. As far as identity crises, adolescents may feel disconnected from their parents' religious and cultural heritage, thus struggling to establish a sense of belonging. In relation to personal crises, significant conflicts may exist within families, «which produce a sense of isolation in young people from the traditional certainties of family life» [55]. Regarding personal experiences as a risk factor, the document points out how events affecting families in their countries of origin can also increase in young people a sense of alienation, moving away from the values of society in which they live [55].

The 2011 UK strategy "Prevent" also briefly mentions the link existing between families and radicalization, especially in terms of child protection [56]. The document stresses that families may not notice any behavior or view change in family members who are undergoing a process of radicalization and that children may be particularly at risk of radicalization, because of the long time they spend online [57]. Regarding Northern Ireland, this document also states that "*ideology is rarely the only factor in the process of radicalization and recruitment. Recruitment is often personality-driven or dependent on family alliances*" [56]. Following the 2011 "Prevent" strategy, in 2012 the UK Home Office introduced a Vulnerability Assessment Framework for agents like police officers, youth workers, health and social workers, to better assess a person's vulnerability "*while getting involved in a group, a cause or an ideology* [57]. According to the Vulnerability Assessment Framework, in addition to factors such as feelings of resentment, the need for identity and the desire to dominate others, even the involvement of family or friends in extremism is considered a risk factor. The Vulnerability Assessment Framework is part of the so-called "Channel Program", a controversial national project set up to support vulnerable individuals to reject any recruitment perpetrated by violent extremists, taking advantage of the resources and expertise of a wide range of professionals providing ongoing support to them.

9. Final remarks

So far, families and their role in the radicalization process have not yet received proper attention from researchers, despite the growing interest shown by policy makers in several countries. Nevertheless, finding out the driving factors that lead an individual to become radicalized, especially within a religious context, has been proven to be crucial to identify appropriate strategies to prevent this phenomenon. The pushing factors of radicalization are many and very different: from socio-cultural to political, from situational to familial, from neurobiological to psychological. But none of them seems to be sufficient or necessary. Most of the radicalized terrorists in France and Belgium were local people, born to immigrant parents, often raised in chaotic families and in problematic and stigmatized neighborhoods. These vulnerabilities are risk factors for behavioral disorders, violence, and addictions.

They can also promote processes of violent radicalization, in a dynamism of identity fusion with an ideal but wholly unreal –often only virtual– community, to the point of demanding the death of enemies, even if this involves the sacrifice of one's own life.

Family is an intricate system, which includes many different roles and is culturally mediated. Any de-radicalization and counter-radicalization initiative must consider the different complexities highlighted in this chapter.

Motivations pushing young people to radicalize are many, starting from their cultural, religious, psychological, and gender dimensions. In the process of radicalization, family factors are like two sides of the same coin. Therefore, families can either be a powerful source of radicalization, or a very effective protecting factor against radicalization.

It is, then, important that future research should consider whether there are significant differences regarding the impact that different family members have on the radicalization of children, especially in host countries. Indeed, it is possible that while some family members play an active role in the radicalization of family members, other members instead play a protective role. Within a family there may be significant conflicting opinions whether a son or daughter is radicalized. There may also be tensions among family members in believing whether radicalization can be considered as something positive or negative. These differences within families and among families require further in-depth investigations, to counter a phenomenon that makes young people prisoners of an ideology both extreme and lethal altogether. The prevention and treatment of the radicalization process do not necessarily entail repressive policies, but a better understanding of the causes and contexts in which this phenomenon could develop. And the migrant family is one of these contexts. Only with prevention, in fact, it will be possible to protect the most vulnerable young people with migratory background and build a more cohesive host society, able to foster a peaceful and rewarding inter-ethnic coexistence.

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