CJD Eutin

"Young Muslims in Europe – new questions of identity"

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The INTI Young Muslims Project

Introduction

What does it mean to be a Muslim in Europe today? To what extent is it a religion? A tradition? A culture? What role does it play in law and politics? These are questions that echo throughout social, political, and academic debates. They are also questions that are likely to resonate with Muslim youth in Europe, many of whom were born and raised in Europe and, even when lacking citizenship rights, are essentially permanent fixtures. These individuals have the potential to straddle two worlds that are often deemed incompatible: the world of their parents and grandparents, which is rooted in a certain Islamic practice and tradition, and the world of Europe in which they live everyday. The relevant question is how do they go about doing this? What form does the self-discovery that adolescents go through around the world take amongst this particular group of individuals? Is there, as Tariq Ramadan argues (1999), an evolving European Muslim identity that weaves together Islam and Western culture? How have the events of 9/11, through their impact on Muslims and non-Muslims alike, shaped this process? These are the primary questions that this paper seeks to answer through a study of young Muslims, the parents of young Muslims, and the teachers and social workers who work closely with these youth in four European countries (Belgium, Germany, Italy and the UK).

In the midst of a growing Muslim population in many European countries, fear of terrorism and apparent cultural differences, there is no dearth of media coverage, books, articles, and scholarly research on Muslims living in Western countries. Despite all of this attention, there are still major gaps in our understanding of the evolution of Islam and Muslims in Europe. Is Islam, as some have argued (e.g., Huntington, 1996, also see The Runnymede Trust,

1997), really incompatible with Western culture? What makes it so? A 2006 survey by the German Marshall Fund found that the majority (56%) of Europeans[1] and Americans feel that Islamic values are incompatible with the democracy in their country. A finding that is echoed in the Pew Report (2006). The German Marshall Fund Survey, which included three of the four partner countries, is of particular relevance to this project illustrates some striking differences in attitudes amongst the partner countries. One of the partner countries, Germany, has the highest percentage of individuals who feel that Islam and democracy are incompatible (67%), while Italy is close behind at 62 percent. On the other hand, the UK has the lowest percentage of individuals who feel that compatibility is an issue (41%)[2]. It should also be noted that while 60 percent of Europeans who see an incompatibility between Islam and democracy attribute this to the existence of fundamentalist groups, variations by country are notable. While this view is more prominent in the UK (69%) and Germany (62%) than in Europe overall, Italy, at 49 percent, represents a clear tendency to associate the difficulty as existing with Islam in general rather than with fundamentalism (The German Marshall Fund, 2006)[3]. The Pew Report (2006) also found differences between Germany and the UK[4] in that 70 percent of Germans feel that being Muslim is incompatible with living in a modern society whereas in the UK 54 percent feel that way. Interestingly, Muslims surveyed in the two countries indicate the opposite in that only 36% of German Muslims see a conflict whereas 47% of Muslims in the UK feel that this is the case.

The survey findings indicate a clear sense of incompatibility between Islam and democracy (or modernity) amongst the majority within European countries with the exception of the UK. Interestingly, Muslims living in these countries tend to

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[1] The countries included are: France, Germany, the UK, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Turkey.
[2] This is even lower than Turkey where 45 percent of respondents felt that democracy and Islam were incompatible (German Marshall Fund, 2006).
[3] Belgium was not included in the poll.
[4] Italy and Belgium were not included in the Pew Report.

have the opposite view. It appears that there is a tendency for Europeans to see Muslims as the out-group that cannot be assimilated, whereas Muslims are much more optimistic about the potential for Islam and modernity to co-exist. Given this, the question arises as to whether the current situation is really any different from that experienced with other groups that were deemed incapable of assimilation (e.g., Jews in Europe or Irish in the U.S.)? These groups, which were once deemed too different, have since become part of the fabric of society while maintaining aspects of what makes them unique. The contention here, as demonstrated by the words of the young Muslims and those around them, is that the same is possible for Muslims – that a Muslim identity and a European identity or, more specifically, a British, Italian, German, or Belgian identity, is not necessarily mutually exclusive.

The project includes partners in four European countries (Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the UK), all of which have substantive Muslim populations. These populations, however, are far from homogenous and each country has a unique immigration history in regards to Muslims. While Belgium, Germany and the UK have well-established populations with youth belonging to the second- and third- generation, their origins vary as does the settings in which the immigration took place (e.g. Muslims in Germany are largely of Turkish origin who initially immigrated as "guest workers" who still face difficulties in being accepted as permanent residents whereas Muslims in the UK are generally of East Asian origin who have citizenship rights). In addition, the resulting communities (e.g. level of integration, social and financial success), and politics (e.g. whether head scarves are allowed in schools, state funding for mosques, laws regarding Islamic schools) also vary. Italy differs from the other countries in that immigration and the growth of the Muslim population are both relatively new, which means that while young Muslims in the other three countries tend to

be second- or third-generation, in Italy most are either immigrants themselves or second-generation.

The present final report is divided into two parts. The first part contains a detailed description of the methodological approach employed in the project. The target group is described, the number of interviews given and reference made to the problems that our investigation entailed. The following also documents detailed interview analyses in the national reports of each of the partner countries; these analyses summarize the main points of the findings and draw conclusions regarding the question of identity of young Muslims.

The second part of the report consists of the so-called conference paper, which served as the basis of discussion at the conference held in Brussels in October. The paper deals with the interview findings from each of the partner countries and summrizes them with regard to similarities and differences. Based on the statements made by Muslims, teachers, and social workers, the paper investigates the topics of the media, discrimination, differences between the generations and the question of the European or national identities of young Muslims.

Methodology
The INTI project employed a standard research protocol in conducting a series of focus groups and interviews. Focus groups, the primary means of data collection, were conducted with four categories of individuals: young Muslims, parents of Young Muslim, teachers, and social workers. Interviews were carried out with selected individuals to supplement the information gathered in the focus groups and explore certain issues in greater detail.

The selection of the four groups was based on a desire to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the youth in regards to Islam than that which

would be obtained solely by talking with the youth. While a number of professional groups could be deemed appropriate as sources of information on Muslims, teachers and social workers were chosen for a variety of reasons. Schools create an environment in which a professional group has regular and close contact with young Muslims, making teachers a potentially rich source of information. In addition, schools have become part of the debate as the location of certain conflicts (e.g. the wearing of headscarves). This places teachers in the middle of the discourse both as witnesses and participants. Social workers represent a more ambiguous category in that what constitutes a social worker has not been clearly defined and the partners in each country in order to incorporate individuals who work extensively with young Muslims, determined who to include based on the situation and exigencies in that particular country or city. Thus, for example, in the Italian research the social workers are cultural mediators whereas social workers in Germany work in youth centres or social services agencies in areas with a high Muslim population. In the Belgian research, the social workers are school or cultural mediators as well as educators who work in youth centres, in community houses and public services. This variation has its benefits in that each country was able to include individuals deemed most appropriate within this category. On the other hand this variation limits the ability to draw comparisons between countries since discussion of social workers is subject to what is meant by this categorization.

Focus Groups

Focus groups were selected as the primary means of data collection due to the opportunity that they offer in terms of gaining insight into the thinking of a group of individuals, yet with minimal influence on the part of the researchers. Supplemental interviews provided the opportunity to explore certain issues in greater depth with focus group participants and/or talk to individuals who had not participated in the focus groups. Each partner selected three different cities

in which to carry out the research in order to include Muslims who live in various settings (e.g., major metropolitan areas and smaller urban centres). A total of 56 focus groups and 34 interviews were carried out in the four partner countries (see Table 1).

Table 1:

Focus Groups and Interviews conducted in Belgium, Italy, Germany and the UK

	BELGIUM Antwerp Brussels Charleroi	ITALY Milan Rome Turin	GERMANY Berlin Cologne Kiel	UK Bradford London Manchester
Focus groups				
Young Muslims	4	3	5	6
Parents	5	3	4	5
Teachers	4	3	3	0
Social workers	5	2	4	0
Total	*18*	*11*	*16*	*11*
Interviews				
Young Muslims	0	5	4	0
Parents	0	5	0	0
Teachers	3	0	2	0
Social workers	1	4	1	0
Representatives of Muslim organisations	3	3*	1	5
Total	*7*	*14*	*8*	*5*

*   These individuals also fall in the categories of parents or young Muslims and hence are not included in the total number of interviews.

The means of organizing the focus groups differed in each country and sometimes from city to city. Despite theses differences, for reasons of convenience and targeting, to seek Muslim participants were reached via Muslim organizations and mosques even though this resulted in certain limitations to the research. In Belgium, the Muslim participants were contacted by direct and indirect acquaintances via NGOs and the University of Brussels and attempts were made to involve individuals with diverse national origins (e.g.

Moroccan, Turkish and Albanian) in order to include a wide array of experiences and perspectives. In Germany, it proved quite easy to contact Muslim participants through youth clubs, religious organizations and students' associations and it was often possible to contact Muslim parents by speaking with the youth who had already participated in the study. In the UK respondents were recruited through Mosques and Islamic cultural centres and care was taken to ensure that respondents were recruited from various ethnic groups.

Secondary school teachers were recruited via school districts that have a relatively high presence of Muslim students while social workers were recruited in various ways depending on the country and city. For example, in Italy the researchers employed local individuals in Milan and Turin to organize the focus groups and interviews due to the logistical difficulties of doing so from Rome.

In Belgium, social workers were recruited on the basis of their degree of contact with the Muslim population (see above for additional information). In Antwerp and Charleroi the researchers collaborated with some associations and community houses in recruiting local social workers.

The focus groups with teachers and social workers posed the greatest challenges. The only focus groups which were difficult to organize in Germany were the ones with teachers. One reason relates to the daily activities of teachers which means that it is difficult to leave the classroom during the school day. Another reason for the reluctance of teachers to participate in our research can be attributed to the effect of the Pisa study. The consequent focus on schools and teachers prompted some searching questions about the role of teachers and contributed to a defensive attitude on the part of some teachers. Similar difficulties were experienced in Italy in regards to teachers in that it was difficult to bring a group together during the day due to their classroom duties. Italy also experienced difficulty in regards to social workers, with the result that in Turin it was decided that interviews, rather than a focus groups were the only solution. In Belgium it was difficult to organize the focus groups with parents, especially

those with mothers, largely due to their lack of time and poor knowledge of the local language (French or Dutch).

Validity, Bias and Limitations

Qualitative research methods such as the focus groups and semi-structured interviews "are designed to respond to what is specific and contextual to a given phenomenon or interaction" and for this reason they are often difficult to replicate (Silva and Parr, 2005, 65). To argue that the data generated from specific interviews or focus groups is valid in terms of a particular research question requires some consideration of the validity of the interview format, the selection of interviewees and so on. Some typical problems which could be encountered include

- how the focus group participants are chosen ;
- the terms of the original question or questions;
- unexplored assumptions which underlie either the questions asked, or the terms of the investigation itself;
- the means of developing the subjects for discussion;
- consideration of how researchers present the questions;
- how researchers represent what interviewees and focus group participants say.

Though focus groups and interviews allow individual Muslims and groups of Muslims to speak for themselves we should not only be aware that what is said in such circumstances may be influenced by the way the focus group or interview is organised and conducted, but we also need to take great care in how what is said is then interpreted by researchers.

In the conclusion of our mid–term report, we observed that much of the wider debates surrounding Islam are bereft of actual Muslim voices. That the findings presented here include these voices is of course a great advance. Never the less

the words of the participants as they are recorded and as they are presented by us must of course, also be understood as themselves contained within the terms of the research project as a whole. Only through such an understanding is the reader able fully to grasp the success and the limitations of this or any research project that utilises interviews and focus groups.

Two issues in particular are relevant here: the first involves the choice of 9/11 as the starting point. The choice to allocate an arbitrary starting date runs the risk of obscuring not only the long gestation periods which typical accompany shifts of identity and historical being-ness, but it also imposes a certain framework upon the material and thus affects the answers that can be derived.

In this case, investigating as we are questions of Muslim - as distinct from ethic - identity we run the risk of over emphasising the importance of Muslim identity at the expense of various identities which may be conflated with it or which may be of greater import to the people interviewed.

Further, the choice of such of date does give credence and tacit support to a debate which locates Muslim-ness as crucial. In the conclusion to the mid-term report certain elements framing the post 9/11 debate about Muslim-ness were questioned. Here it was noted, for instance, in that conclusion that the debate concerning the veil for instance long predated 9/11; further that the linking of micro issues such as the wearing of veils with both specific wider debates such as the failure to integrate and the so-called 'clash of civilisations' thesis, has certainly transformed what were previously micro and local issues into exemplary manifestations of a wider and more heated debate; a step which in turn has elevated the entire issue of Muslim-ness to the centre of the debate, and has done so moreover in a way guaranteed to engender even greater intensity.

This elevation of Muslim-ness to a central place in the debate has effects on a wide range of issues. Principally of concern to us is its effect upon the response of the focus group participants, many of whom, faced, by what they regarded as media demonisation of Islam, perceived the focus groups as an opportunity to

present the other 'side' of Islam – what they regarded as the 'good' side of Islam'. Further, such close attention on Islam may in turn have lead the participants to over emphasis the place of Islam in the construction of their own identity and conversely underplay for instance, questions of ethnicity, or social class.

We tried to guard against this in two ways. First, we used detailed questioning to probe the views about Muslim identity of our focus group participants. Secondly, we endeavoured wherever possible to include various ethnicities in our focus groups (though the geographical concentration of certain ethnic groups in specific areas sometimes made this difficult to achieve).

What does need to be grasped here is that the initial choice of a date such as 9/11; a date many Muslims find quite contentious, does in itself tend to steer the results in a particular direction.

A more basic issue is how far the results of qualitative research, such as focus groups and semi-structured interviews, illuminate the experiences and opinions of young Muslims more generally. This is an important matter even though the ability to generalize is not the only relevant issue for judging validity. It is important to recognise the utility and limitations of qualitative research (e.g., by means of biographical data and individual experience) in seeking to understand society and present findings in a manner that demonstrates the richness of the data while acknowledging their limitations.

The wider point of the terms of investigation should be borne in mind here as well. As anthropologists like Sandra Wallman have observed, to isolate and elevate one element of identity and to focus upon that isolated element will almost certainly distort the place of that element within the results obtained. In our case it will over emphasis the place of Islam within the elements which compose identity for these young people. A good researcher will attempt to avoid this by asking a mix of question so that extraneous factors are

incorporated into the research, thus allowing the results to fully reflect competing elements within the formation of youthful identity. This is what the researchers have tried to do. Moreover, the contacts with parents, school teachers and social workers also work to provide balancing elements and differing perspectives to that presented by the youth themselves.

Indeed, the fact that there was no control for social class or educational background actually served the investigation well because it allowed varied elements to 'play' inside the focus groups, which in turn, served to broaden the general picture of identity formation and present it in conjunction with other elements of identity.

Qualitative research, like all research, presents advantages and problems to the conscientious researcher. As with all Social Science research, researchers need to take care in drawing conclusions and making generalizations on the basis of their studies. Something which is particularly true in the case of research on Muslims given, first, the debate surrounding the existence and extent of Islamophobia ("defined as…prejudice against or demonization of Muslims which manifests itself in general negative attitudes, violence, harassment, discrimination, and stereotyping"[5]), and second the sensitive nature of this topic and the potential for the findings to be misused in the media and public discourse in order to support a given position[6]. Researchers need to think not only about how they present their findings, but also about how those findings might later be used by interested parties. We believe that the researchers on this research project have taken great care in its terms of investigation and its use of evidence.

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[5] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Muslim. Also see The Runnymede Trust (1997).
[6] The misuse of research findings and statistics is not a new phenomenon and often accompanies coverage of highly sensitive issues (e.g., Best, 1988; Nathan, 1988; Prewitt, 1987).

Notes on Youth in the Modernisation Context

An illustration of the present social structure of modern European Societies and the trends of conditions, situations and styles of life the members of these societies are leading inevitably requires to apply the standard social categories of differentiation, pluralization and individualization of life modes, but also of "terms, (which are) implying the end of Modern Age: de-traditionalization, de-structuralization, de-differentiation, de-powering of the subject, de-modernization, de-rationalization, de-limitation, de-sensualization etc " (Griese 1999: 471).

These processes of a continuously progressing modernization are reflected in the life, work and contact modes of the individuals and naturally the adolescent; and – in a seismographic manner – are very often displayed in expressive articulations of the adolescent and their youth cultures.

Parallel to this process of differentiating the conditions and modes of life an analogue development can be detected in social institutions and organizations, which again influences the former. The institutional differentiation into the social areas of economy, politics, religion, education, leisure time, supply etc. with their particular institutions and organizations was/is responsible for a partial loss of function of the family. Each of the partial institutions and organizations is built up according to "system specific" rules and requirements and makes specific demands on those who are participating in it. Above all these systems are superimposed, influenced and permeated by the mass media, the entertainment industry and the information technologies.

Parallel again to the partition and differentiation of the various partial systems the curriculum vitae consists of increasingly shorter and hardly separable phases of life. (see Kohli 1998). Each of these phases is accompanied by specialist institutions responsible for socializing functions, which "besides the family"

perform „essential tasks in support of the process of individuation and integration" (Hurrelmann 1995: 290).

Each of these institutions and organizations again has certain rules and demands on behaviour which the adolescent have to submit to for the time they are part of it.

The depicted processes of differentiation explain how the patterns of acting and behaviour of the adolescent are related in a modernized society: the institutional de-segmentation and partly arbitrary requirements within the acting segments of education, of consumption, of information, of partnerships etc. require the effort to search for an individual path and efforts towards social integration. Depending on integration respectively assignment to the acting segments the adolescent obtain - at different times and under different social conditions - a certain degree of autonomy or a certain age specific status. The adolescent are largely relying on themselves when mastering the passages of status or defining the patterns of orientation and acting, adequate to different institutions and organizations.

As the reservoirs of meaning in the traditional culture are increasingly used up a sphere of social structural indefinition is continuously spreading, a de-traditionalization and de-structuralization in the conduct of life, resp. a trend towards an individualization of the situation and a pluralization of lifestyles is showing up. The result is a self-focused and biographed plan and way of life, because the central areas such as religion, morals, sexuality, culture and fashion are not underlying binding rules any more. Instead an (individual) "identity labour" (Keupp/Höfer 1997) becomes necessary. The pros and cons concerning the areas have to be decided individually.

The change from a production to a consumption orientated socialization is lying above those processes of transformation and brings about a number of alterations on the level of experience and awareness of the adolescent and young adults. This provides a structure favourable for the development of orientation in age specific stylizations and articulations.

A life performance which is increasingly de-traditionalized and provides less binding and enclosing values and standards, makes it especially difficult for non-privileged groups and environments without possibilities of choice or participation concerning new degrees of freedom and an increasing variety of options respectively structure of chances to cope with the more and more complex conditions and alternatives.

Such coercions of individualization whose "conditions of competition (make) stylization and shaping an individual personality the predomineering task" (Eckert 1990: 13) support a reversed movement back to (imaginary) communities offering "conceptions (which are) turning back the wheel of modern life and (are also) reducing the complexity and differentiation in society" (Ferchhoff 1993: 49). The fact that these offers are in many cases accompanied by drug consumption, (youth) criminality, fundamentalism and extremism are the "dark side of individualization" (Heitmeyer a.o. 1995).

And also the experience of unemployment, not any longer subject to a minority, cannot be estimated negative enough, especially at a young age. If, however, "by attaining a satisfying job or profession (…) even today nearly everything in the development of the adolescent" (Baethge 1986: 115) will be decided, or if rather the large amount of the adolescent of the 90th and 2000th, who experienced unemployment, "wait loops", low-skilled jobs or the non-realization of the desired profession, have to be seen as forerunners in the accomplishment of the

sustaining crisis in the job market, can only be judged in due time. Nevertheless it seems to be appropriate not to regard job and profession as the only and universal basis to develop a stable identity any more. A job, though, is still going to be the essential factor of general adolescent anticipation, but the question is, to what degree it appears sensible or possible for – especially disadvantaged – adolescent and those with a migration background to "build up prospective job and professional orientation, which could be controlling behaviour and would make it sensible and rewarding to arrange life activities around it" (s.a.:116), if due to structural actualities the probability to take the profession of ones imagination or dreams is difficult to realize.

The participation in age group specific articulations, which in this study may imply the performance of religion, offers the adolescent not only in this but also in other situations – which are perceived as problematic – guidance and to the same degree a platform to articulate individual problems, express them symbolically, discuss them in the peer-groups or just suppress them.

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National Reports

National Report Germany

Introduction

The aim of our investigation is to highlight the perspectives of young Muslims and also to shed light on the following questions: has the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in Germany become more complicated since 11 September 2001 and the subsequent events? If yes, does this have consequences for the formation of the identity of young Muslims? Are there more experiences of discrimination, and if so, what form do they take? What strategies do the young people develop in order to deal with negative experiences in the majority society? How can the Muslim identity of the younger generations be defined? Finally, to what extent do they identify themselves with on a national or European level?

As already described in detail, to this aim we conducted qualitative interviews and focus groups with young Muslims, the parent generation, social workers and teachers. This report, from Germany, has been produced essentially to allow young Muslims to express their thoughts and views. Since experiences of discrimination, especially since 11th September 2001, play an increasing part in the lives of youths and have an influence on their sense of identity and belonging, this subject has been given particular attention at the beginning of this study.

This discrimination occurs as negative experiences with strangers "on the street" or on the underground railway, and is based on increasing mistrust, fear, prejudice and partly feelings of aggression towards Muslims living in Germany. The stories told by young Muslim women who wear a headscarf are a stark reminder of how religious clothing can become a stigma. The headscarf, which for Muslim girls and women embodies first and foremost religious freedom and individual lifestyle, symbolizes for the majority society submission and

fundamentalism. A particularly serious form of exclusion experienced by those who wear the headscarf is on the employment market.

In the subsequent chapter on the influence of the media it will become clear that these factors play a significant role in the worsening relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims. It was notable in our interviews that the media were criticized for presenting Islam as the enemy and stereotyping Muslims. This applies on the one hand to domestic reporting, in which direct links between Islam, violence and terror are made, and on the other to accounts in Turkish and Arabic-speaking media, which are blamed for conspiracy theories, anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism.

Thereafter, we describe the extent to which these external factors actually influence the identity of the youths and how these define what being a Muslim is for them.

The increasing level of hostilities means that the younger generations are more than the first generation required to examine their Muslim identity and position them in this society. Since they are influenced by their socialization in Germany they distance themselves from their parents' view of religion, interpreting Islam in a less "traditional" and more "individual" and "emancipated" way. Furthermore, as a consequence of increasing public attention and debate Islam has taken on a more public and political meaning. For this reason, younger Muslims feel forced to face up to questions and criticism and to defend and explain their view of Islam publicly.

The political components of Islam are clear above all among headscarf-wearing women who consciously (and confidently) display their faith. For them self determination stands in the forefront as embodied by the headscarf - to decide for or against the headscarf and practise Islam as each individual thinks fit. At the same time, they have to defend themselves against the preconception that

they are forced to wear the headscarf, as well as deal with acute discrimination (especially on the labour market).

Finally, we discuss the question of how a European identity can be defined for young Muslims in view of the diverse socio-cultural living conditions and the heterogeneity of Islam, and what chances connect young Muslims to a Europe that is growing together.

Discrimination

Muslims perceive discrimination more strongly since the events of 11 September 2001, even if this is in a differentiated way.

Many interviewees have the feeling that they are labelled as scapegoats for actions for which they are not responsible. *"We are not to blame"* was frequently to be heard. At the same time they distance themselves from the aforementioned events on the grounds of fundamentalism having nothing to do with their faith and that Islam strongly condemns such acts. The majority of the interviewees were of Turkish origin, and they distanced themselves from the Islamic terrorists who are to the most part of Arabic origin. Therefore, when sections of the majority society hold them responsible for terrorist acts, their sense of shock is even greater. Many experience rejection and disapproval by non-Muslims in the form of distrustful and disapproving looks on the streets or in the underground. The focus groups with the Muslims have shown that the subjective feeling of discrimination among the first generation of migrants is different from that experienced by the second and third generations. This is due to the completely different living conditions of this latter generation.

The first generation came to Germany with the expectation that they would, especially by means of work opportunities, be able to improve their economic situation and build a secure future for their children. The majority have a poor school education and little professional training, have a low professional status and their command of German is also inadequate: their

Chances of taking part in the majority society are therefore low.

Those who migrated to Germany as so-called *Gastarbeiter* did not have the intention of staying until retirement age, but to return to their homeland as soon as they had saved up enough money to do so. As it became clear over time that their savings would not be enough for a return to Turkey, and that too much time had passed for them to go back with their children, they came to terms with their situation in Germany and concentrated their expectations on a better future for their children. They do not perceive discrimination so strongly, since the demands of integration in the host country are not as great as for subsequent generations; the first generation lays the focus on a stronger orientation towards the country of origin and the preservation of its culture.

Most of them "commute" between the "old" and the "new" homeland and dream of a return to the country of origin in their retirement, "as soon as all the children are married".

Unlike young Muslims most Muslims of the first generation are more strongly integrated in their community of origin than in German society. Against this background, it is understandable that the expectations of this generation with regard to the host society are different from those of subsequent generations.

The parents' generation of Muslims are faced mainly with experiences of discrimination in everyday life, such as low-qualified jobs and material disadvantages, poorer living conditions and difficulties with the integration of their children.

The labour market in Germany, which has taken a turn for the worse, was cited as the greatest difficulty. The opportunities on the labour market for the *Gastarbeiter* who came to Germany in the 1960s due to the lack of manpower in Germany at that time worsened in the 1990s. As a consequence of the deterioration of the economic situation and rising unemployment after German reunification, it was above all the less-qualified workers who lost their jobs. It

was therefore migrants in particular who were among the losers as a result of reunification. One interviewee described the sudden loss of his job as follows:

"I worked for the same company for 30 years. Then suddenly I'm told I'm not needed anymore, because they've got to save money. How am I supposed to find another job at my age without decent qualifications? As a foreigner I really am last in line, whatever anyone says."

As well as having fewer opportunities on the jobs market, older migrants also feel disadvantaged due to their poorer living conditions and social isolation. Most of those questioned live in disadvantaged areas characterized by low income, high unemployment, poor educational conditions and a lack of leisure and recreational facilities for children and youths.

Muslim parents complain, therefore, that their children go to schools in their neighbourhood in which there is a higher potential for violence and there are greater social tensions than in other areas. [7]

One criticism is that the schools, which frequently have a high level of migrant pupils, do not sufficiently cater for the special needs and difficulties of children with a migrant background (e.g. in the form of help with the German language). Parents said that the teachers frequently showed little support and that, on the grounds of the children's migration background, teachers would often display ignorance and prejudice.

It was conspicuous that most of the older Muslims had few social contacts with the native majority society. These were usually restricted to contacts with Germans in the neighbourhood or with German colleagues at work. The German

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[7] This is particularly true for Cologne and Berlin.

language was often mentioned as the reason for the lack of contact with Germans. One Turkish interviewee said:

> *"My friends are almost exclusively Turkish - the reason is the language barrier. I am afraid of the German language and therefore prefer to have contact with Turks."*

"Coldness" and "lack of interest" as well as the native population's reservations towards Muslims were given as further reasons. Others told of the close friendships they enjoyed with Germans in the neighbourhood, where discrimination on the grounds of descent or religion did not exist at all. The interviewees differentiated between friends who were interested in them and who respected them, and "ignoramuses" who knew little about Muslims and who could not be dissuaded from their prejudices. Some of these friendships were affected however by the events of 11th September 2001. One tearful interviewee reported that a German family, with whom she had been friends for some years, turned their back on her after the attacks and no longer spoke to her because she was a Muslim.

Many parents perceive discrimination of their children more strongly than of themselves. One father was furious that his children were discriminated against daily on the grounds of the dark colour of their hair and their foreign name, even though they are German nationals. Examples of discrimination included frequent police checks, verbal abuse, and above all, the lack of opportunities on the labour market, in spite of their fluent command of German and their socialization in Germany. *"If they send in a job application with a photo, and they have a foreign name and live in a certain area, too, they are not even invited to an interview."*

This statement is supported by the reports made by the young people interviewed. Their subjective awareness of discrimination is far stronger than that of the parents' generation: as a rule, Muslims of the second and third generation have grown up and have been socialized in Germany; they have better school and vocational qualifications, linguistic competence and more chance of participating in the majority society. They have more contacts with Germans and more German friends of the same age than their parents do.

They therefore have more claims to be accepted as part of this society, that is to say, to be integrated into the German education system and employment market and be respected with regard to their religious and cultural values. Unlike the first generation, they compare themselves with Germans of the same age and see themselves as disadvantaged in comparison with them.

The younger generations are also more sensitive to the changes in the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. Many youths told of uncomfortable probing questions or even condemning comments about their religion with which they were faced on an almost daily basis. They believed that since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 Muslims have been handled more uneasily and aggressively than before.

It is obvious that for many people in Germany the headscarf in particular symbolizes the enemy; Muslims who display their religious persuasion by wearing the headscarf are perceived as oppressed, backward and threatening

A young Muslim from Berlin said:

> "They aren't just Bild and BZ (popular press) readers. That's probably a
> prejudice on our part, but we are constantly confronted with it, even if we
> want to avoid generalizations. I am currently doing work experience at a
> large international company and even there I hear it in private

conversations, for example at lunch: tell me, you hear so much, is it true, then? Do you practise your religion because you are forced to? I don't really find it that bad, when someone asks such a question to be quite honest, but there comes a point when you get really sick of it."

Confrontation and discrimination are not just restricted to experiences "on the street" or "in the underground" with strangers whose knowledge of Islam has mainly been gleaned from the popular press and television. More frustrating is the fact that even people from intellectual circles, such as university professors, share these stereotypical views and also let their animosity be felt:

> *"I also had a professor who said to me 'take off your headscarf and I'll give you extra points'. There's a kind of undertone, and you can't work out if it was meant seriously, or as a joke. That's going too far (...). Or some teachers at school often say,' pardon, I can't hear you when you have that headscarf on, take it off.' That is often derogatory."*

A serious form of duress was experienced by a young educationalist doing work experience at a Berlin grammar school. She reported that a teacher had humiliated her in front of 31 pupils by pulling at her headscarf:

> *"She said that doesn't belong here, does it? In front of the whole class, in front of 31 pupils. You should have seen the way they looked. They were incensed, really shocked and they just looked at us. She had a neckerchief on, so I pulled at it and asked her how it felt to be so humiliated. A really crass argument developed and she cried and said I was making an ass out of her, and I said that I didn't need to. And then she said that she was sorry, but only because she felt she had to since she knew that I would sue her."*

The consequence was that the school was provided with a trainee position for the next ten years, after her tutor had supported her in her suit.

The young woman's consternation was the greater, and then a teacher of all people, who is supposed to set an example for the children, had acted in such a disrespectful manner. On top of this, she herself was constantly confronted with the preconception that she, as a headscarf-wearing teacher, would try to indoctrinate the children.

> "So much for neutrality and tolerance in our society. You can see who is more aggressive, although we're always being blamed for being aggressive."

Discrimination at work does not just affect headscarf-wearing women, however. Muslim men also report an increase in negative experiences in the world of work since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. One young man told of how his application to the police was rejected on the grounds that Muslims were no longer being recruited following the attacks on New York. Another young man, who was in the army at the time of the focus groups, told of how he was harassed and insulted by other soldiers and superiors and that he was constantly being blamed for worldwide terrorist attacks: *"Just tell me, why do you Muslims do so many terrible things?"*

Male youths have to deal with the stereotype that they are violent and macho. This is supported not only by the aforementioned police controls, but also by the accounts of the young men, where, for example, they are not welcome in sport clubs because "they always cause problems". It is enough to have dark hair and to stand on the street with a group of young men to immediately arouse suspicions.

Young Muslims sporting beards complain that they are all too easily suspected of being "Islamists". They also feel that they often have to justify going to the mosque to avoid being labelled as "extremists". Male youths are all too often labelled as "lazy" and they often feel that the teachers do not believe that they can pass their school-leaving examination.

The interviews with the teachers have also shown that their view of Muslim youths is very restricted. As a rule it is difficult for them to judge to what extent the behaviour of young Muslims can be put down to cultural, age-related reasons, or if they are actually related to religion. Problems with dealing with them are therefore ascribed above all to the stereotype of the Turkish or Arab "machos", as described here by one teacher:

> *"Particularly among the boys, this affected macho behaviour, it's a kind of mixture of 'omma Turk, man', and 'I gotta lotta friends' and I think these things are difficult to separate; what's a Turk, what's macho and what is religion-based? I can't say that it (the meaning of religion) has gained in significance."*

The youths believe that the teachers in Germany often know very little about Islam or their teaching contains false information, for example about the Koran. The example of the headscarf and the reaction to this during lesson time shows just how great the insecurity is with regard to Muslim pupils. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent certain utterances are based on a lack of knowledge or actual provocation.

In addition to structural exclusion, Muslim youths have to put up with the burden of distrustful looks, insults and the general suspicion of being terrorists, and this on a daily basis. The pressure, as Muslims, to justify themselves and prove

themselfes to be "good Muslims" is enormous. The strategies they employ for dealing with the growing tensions between non-Muslims and Muslims are manifold and depend on factors such as the level of education, social environment and the future prospects of the individual in Germany, as will be elucidated below[8].

Media

> "It's ignorance. Society is bombed by the media with information that is designed to have a certain political effect - they have a specific aim in mind."

It was clear in all of the focus groups that the media have a considerable effect on the tense relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in German society.

The Muslims we interviewed were confronted with prejudices and accusations based on ignorance and above all stereotypes in the media. One Muslim woman from Berlin described media reporting as a "hate campaign".

> "Worst of all are the media. They ruin all of our personal efforts. It's like a kind of hate campaign. They talk so much rubbish that you really start to think well what's wrong with my religion now?"

In this context, some of the other interviewees - including teachers and social workers - made the observation that the mood of the media has become more heated, especially since the murder of the Dutch political film director van Gogh in 2004. Before this murder Islam was treated more as a taboo subject, with more uncertainty, since van Goghs' murder there has been a much more

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[8] cf. chapter on "Muslim Identity".

aggressive attitude towards the religion and Muslims in Germany, which has been fomented by the media in relevant articles and reports.[9]

The interviews conducted as part of our study underline the fact that there are not just "the Muslims", but a multiplicity of various forms linked to different socio-cultural factors. The orientation and practice of the faith are also individual. In contrast, the media increasingly treat Muslims as one homogeneous group that represents a threat to society.

The Muslims we interviewed believe that the increasingly strong reactions to the headscarf also have something to do with media reports where, in addition to the topics of "violence", "war" and "terror", "the oppressed Muslim woman" is a favourite theme. It is no wonder, therefore, that the majority of the population associate these very catchwords with Islam.

It was conspicuous that the headscarf-wearing women were quick to stress that they did so of their own free will. This strong need to justify themselves can be put down to their being constantly confronted with prejudices that largely come from claims made in the media that young women are forced to wear headscarves and are oppressed.

> *"We do it because we want to. We are constantly confronted with such questions, do you want to wear one? Are you forced to wear one? It doesn't just apply to Bild and BZ (popular press) readers[10]. It really depends on how you are asked. I can tell now if someone is asking out of curiosity or want to judge. Regarding the media, too, I know if they want to have something confirmed or if they really want to know."*

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[9] A good example here is the cartoon conflict in Europe initiated by the media that led to worldwide protests (some violent) among Islamic populations.
[10] "Bild" is Germany's largest tabloid, "BZ" the largest in Berlin.

This one-sided picture of Muslims living in Germany is not restricted to the popular press and television broadcasts, it can be found everywhere in the media, especially when the political mood in the entire world at the time allows negative reporting about Islam. The many conflicts and wars in some countries with Islamic influence only serve to bolster the associations made between Islam and violence and terror. The less a person has contact with Muslims in daily life, the more the danger that he/she will be influenced by the stereotypes in the media.

This is backed up by teachers who said, after reflecting on their own behaviour after the events of 11th September 2001, that the media played a significant role. One teacher reported that she herself had to fight against prejudices, how they were presented in the media, and that she was uncertain and biased in the way she dealt with Muslims.

> *"When you look at the media… because that was also quite a thing for me, what kind of a religion says it's peaceful and then propagates such a thing and turns young men and women into murderers. That was my reaction. But then I thought, that's not in the Koran, on the contrary, anyone who kills another is destined to go to hell, and I took that as an important indication to be able to help people of the Islamic faith and also to be able to help ourselves to live in more safety again… not always tarring everyone with the same brush."*

A good example of this are the reports about the Rütlischule, a secondary modern in Berlin-Neukölln[11], which hit the headlines in Mach 2005 after teachers had demanded the closure of the school because they could no longer

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[11] Neukölln is a district with a high proportion of migrants and is regarded as a so-called social hotbed.

cope with the problem of violence there. This was later denied, because the teachers had turned to the Senate and demanded that the school be turned into a different type of educational establishment. The result was that for a period of time the school was placed under police protection and was besieged by journalists. The media described the problems as mainly being caused by the pupils of Turkish, Arabic and Serbian descent. The Rütlischule was denounced as a "school of hate" and the district of Berlin-Neukölln once more presented as a problematic "foreigner district" where above all young male Turks and Arabs represent a high potential for violence and conflict. It has been said that journalists offered pupils money to perform scenes of violence for the cameras. The teachers and social workers we interviewed condemned unanimously this kind of media representation, which made the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims even more complicated and increased bias for example when dealing with Muslim pupils during lessons:

> *"I find it sickening, so politically engineered, I watched a couple of programmes, then switched off after the third. They were so populist and counterproductive, partly so unprofessional, the way they went about it, especially television. And the pupils are said to have got money for what they said as they were being filmed."*

Whilst looking into the influence of the media we must not just mention the German, but also the Turkish and Arab media. The social workers from Kiel reported that the reactions of Muslim youths after the attacks were also fomented by the influence of these media. The increase in anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism is striking: the Americans are depicted as "terrorists", "friends of the Jews" and "the foe of the Islamic world". This picture is also reflected in the utterances of the young interviewees. A significant number of them are convinced by conspiracy theories with regard to the attacks on the World Trade

Center, whereby it is claimed that the Americans had planned and carried out the attacks themselves in order to justify an attack on the Islamic world.

> *"The Americans and the Jews were in on the attacks together. How else can you explain that not a single Jew was killed in them? They then held the Arab world responsible so as to justify the war against Iraq."*

Accordingly, some youths reacted after the attacks with a sense of triumph that the Americans had *"finally been on the receiving end."*

The interviewees were generally very critical of the media: they criticized the propagation of sensational articles first and foremost for profit and political interests. Wars, violence and the oppression of women are treated as cultural aspects and related to Islam, even though these problems are to be found in non-Islamic countries. "Islam" has become a trendy subject in journalism and research out of which a profit can be made.
 Unfortunately this biased form of reporting reinforces the suspicions between Muslims and non-Muslims and contributes, especially on the part of the Muslims, to a sense of exclusion:

> *"Once, we even had a TV crew come to our house. They interviewed and filmed us, but they apparently didn't hear what they wanted to hear, because they didn't show us in their report. It then occurred to me that the media really aren't objective. They only record what they want to show."*

Muslim Identity - new "individual" self understanding

As could be shown so far young Muslims in Germany have the desire to live their own understanding of Islam and be respected for it. Combining their belief with the values and laws of German society is not regarded as a contradiction. Having

transnational identities they are also able to combine the different cultural, linguistic and religious values of their country of origin and the host country.

The changed situation between Muslims and non-Muslims is bearing new challenges for the younger generations. More than their parents' generation they are questioned about their belief and thus challenged to take a stand and defend Islam. Due to the events in recent years young Muslims have apparently been forced to occupy themselves more with their Muslim identity.

Some of the interviewees regard the development positively because Muslims occupy themselves more than before with Islam and gain more knowledge by more intensive studies of the Koran, secondary literature or exchange with other Muslims in Koran circles, Islamic student organizations, etc. The awareness of Muslim identity gains more importance, corresponding directly to stigmatization and non-acceptance by the German society. This is the experience of a young man who is doing his military service at the moment and has suffered massive discrimination:

> *"In former times I had no doubts that I would defend Germany in the event of war. I have grown up in Germany and have a German Passport. But I am not treated as a German, I am the Turk. Therefore I would now rather defend my Muslim friends."*

Again and again it shows up that the feeling of non-belonging has evoked great solidarity among Muslims, a solidarity covering practising and non-practising Muslims who have to defend themselves against the generalized accusations and hostilities of the majority society. These external reactions strengthen the feeling of belonging together amongst Muslims without regard to the significance of religion in their lives.

Muslim identity seems to play an important and constant role in the life of the adolescent, and is regarded as anenrichment. Religion does not only offer support and orientation in life but also an important connection with the original culture. At the same time the way of living the religion is greatly an individual one and different from the point of view of the parents' generation.

> *"I am religious, and having grown up in a religious family Islam was set as a norm, later in life everything would have been questioned and especially religion has always been an issue for me. Having been a natural way of being it is not a matter of life and religion for me, but simply living with my religion."*

Generally members of the second and third generation feel "at home" in Germany. But the question of national identity is more difficult than the one of religious identity. Some see themselves as "German Muslims" whereas others feel more related to their country of origin because they are experiencing a lot of rejection, dreaming of living there one day even if the knowledge about their home country is partly gained from short visits in their holidays.

Apart from German citizenship the feeling of national belonging depends strongly on such factors as chances in education and work, on experiences with the majority society and perspectives for the future they see for themselves. It has become obvious that Muslims with a higher school leaving certificate or are integrated into the employment market feel more strongly related to Germany than those with a low level of education and worse professional prospects. Besides the aforementioned problems, political world events such as the attacks in New York, Madrid and London, the Iraq war or the political discussion about tests for integration in Germany also play an important role. Accordingly, the

degree of national identity is closely related to Muslim identity: the stronger the feeling of having to defend their belonging to Islam and not being able to live their religion, the smaller is the degree of national and cultural identification with the host country.

Muslims from all levels of education talk about experiences of discrimination in which they are not respected as equal fellow citizens but are stigmatized as "second class citizens", who speak German badly and are not integrated. Very often women wearing headscarves are confronted with such clichés as a young Muslim woman proves:

> *"I was at University where there are many who wear a headscarf and foreign students, I got into a lift reading a text on my mobile when a professor commented 'you here no ring ring' and I asked him if he didn't know his German Grammar properly. He replied, 'o, you are speaking German and bla and bla'."*

Even though the adolescents have grown up here being German citizens they are still treated as "foreigners":

> *"You know those typical statements, go back home. And I just ask them where they think my home is".*

As mentioned before the religious understanding of the adolescent differs greatly from that of their parents. Religion is described by the first generation as something "personal" which takes place in private. At the same time Islam is first and foremost a bond to the home culture and the keeping of traditions.

For the second and third generation religion has an additional meaning. Young Muslims also regard religion as an important bond to their home culture and their

parents' home. On the other hand they distance themselves strongly from their parents, finding their religious identity more "individual" and "emancipated" than that of their parents.

They attach importance to self-determination and have the strong desire to form their own picture of Islam independent of their parents. That is why studying the Koran and secondary literature is as important as discussions with other believers. Studying Islam helps to increase the awareness of their own knowledge to find out about the significance of religion for the individual.

> *"I am a Muslim and therefore I know that I should or shouldn't do certain things, all recommendations about what you are not supposed to do. It's not about laws, it's about me as a human being because Islam has been created for me as an individual person and I am lucky enough to know Islam and practise it for myself."*

The developments over the past few years have brought about a more intense occupation with their own religion amongst younger Muslims. Religion is not kept in private any more but has become public, and the increasing number of young Muslim women wearing a headscarf is a sign of the greater visibility of Islam in Germany.

Muslims with a higher level of education understand their belief as a mission to mediate between Muslims and non-Muslims, to inform about Islam and "create a peaceful   co-existence". Women wearing headscarves self-consciously go public with their belief and stand up for their rights. For this they take daily insults or even hostilities into account. But they do not put up with this passively, they defend themselves against them, strike up a dialogue and produce arguments to counteract prejudices.

"Teachers especially talk a lot, if you didn't say anything the whole class would believe it. But it has happened so often that you had to object and the teacher 'oh, really? I have to check that'. I find it really sad if someone spreads his own false opinion to 30 other people. That's how prejudices are created."

Thus Islam has got a public and a political meaning. Higher education is seen as a chance and a duty for achieving a higher position in this society and to act as a mouthpiece, especially for disadvantaged Muslims, and do the utmost to improve the conditions for integration.

A Muslim from Cologne describes her opinions as follows:

"But it is all about the young generation, they (the older Muslims) don't carry out the tasks of the future any more, it's a completely different mentality. It is just sad to see which aims we have, what we would like to achieve and the kind of banalities we have to struggle with. It is really offensive (…) because we have the possibility to achieve a lot as a part of and in this society. Religion has even more meaning in Germany today, we also have a lot of political questions, social structural questions to answer and we have got the potential to tackle the problems together with the majority society, even though I regard myself as part of it. It is frustrating, also such impediments, such as …we are all involved in life, work experience, job, simply great difficulties, and it also means religion to me if I send off my application and receive a thousand rejections."

In public it is possible to represent their own interests and those of the Muslim fellow citizens and keep their distance from terror and fundamentalism. This includes enduring daily experiences (which especially applies to women wearing

headscarves) and to expose themselves to the curious to humiliating questions about Islam. They stand for their understanding of religion and mutual respect, also demanding this from their fellow citizens. The more frustrating it is for them that they do not only meet everyday discrimination but also structural disadvantages affecting them on the job market despite high school qualifications.

For Muslims with a lower level of education it is much more difficult to fight the experiences of discrimination. In many cases they simply withdraw into their peer groups. In the interviews it showed up that Muslim adolescents with lower school leaving certificates only expect poorer professional perspectives. Students of Turkish descent talked about returning to Turkey later, because they expected better professional perspectives. In many cases these opinions were strongly influenced by the experiences of their parents who have been unemployed in Germany for a long time and now hope for better chances in Turkey for their children.

The majority of the adolescents we interviewed commented positively on the possibility of practising Islam in Germany. The number of mosques and Islamic institutions was praised, especially in large cities such as Berlin and Cologne. In Berlin a student said that Muslims are exempted from school to attend the Friday prayers. Female Muslims appreciated the option to decide for themselves whether to wear a headscarf or not in Germany.

The headscarf - Freedom versus Stigmatization

As already mentioned the Muslim women we interviewed put forward the right of self-determination and the free decision for or against the headscarf. The headscarf not only symbolizes a religious conviction, but is also a reaction to increasing suspicions regarding Islam and the visualization of religious belonging. Besides the religious, it also acquires a political meaning.

The reasons for wearing a headscarf are very different. The influence of the family or friends is not inconsiderable.

In both focus groups with headscarf-wearing Muslims it was most interesting that the women set a high value on the individuality and variety concerning their decision for or against the headscarf. It mattered a lot to them to make clear that they have decided for it by their own free will and without pressure from the family. The headscarf symbolizes the religious belief as an important part of their identity that embraces all areas of living. Many interviewees had not taken the decision easily. One young woman decided at the age of 22 only to wear a headscarf because she found it too irritating to take it off each time after prayers, a feeling as if she was denying her Muslim identity.

> *"I had always intended to dress more in the Muslim way and hadn't dared to do so until 2002. I had already been praying before ... I still pray at uni and taking off my headscarf each time after prayers was a great burden for me. It was stifling and I couldn't bear it emotionally."*

She decided for it even though her father had warned her of the possible consequences:

> *"My father asked me if I was really sure. He also said that I would have problems during my studies and later in a job. He was later happy about me wearing the headscarf, but he also wanted to know if I was sure about what I was doing. It is great responsibility and a heavy psychological burden somehow."*

The negative consequences that the wearing of the headscarf can have were described in the previous chapters: derogatory comments, discrimination by

teachers and university professors, even duress at school. Reactions to the headscarf have become stronger and more aggressive since 11 September 2001. The first two years were especially difficult. The atmosphere was described as extremely tense and full of hate and fear. Faced with daily reports about "Islam" and "Terror" in the media, the young women felt constantly observed "from top to toe" in those days.

Also the chance to get a place of work has become more difficult. Besides the incident at a Berlin school[12] some well-trained Muslim women reported that they were openly not chosen for a job because they refused to take off the headscarf at work. The firms have clearly stated their attitude.

For the Muslim women we interviewed taking off their headscarf at work would have meant a betrayal of their belief:

> *"I wouldn't do it for any job. I would have the feeling of fooling myself and wouldn't be able to look into the mirror any more. Religion is a part of myself."*

The experiences of the young women lead to the conclusion that some of them decide consciously for the headscarf as a means of protest against the negative reactions and stereotypes against Muslim women. Especially for women of higher education the claim to inform about the meaning of the headscarf plays an important role. They want to show that they don't comply with the cliché of the victims who are "oppressed" and "have no free will" victims, but are educated, successful professionally and live a self-determined life. The deep certainty of their belief provides them with the power to go on fighting against prejudices and endure negative experiences.

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[12] cf. chapter entitled "Media"

Even if the reasons for deciding to wear the headscarf are manifold, they have in common that they stand for the freedom of decision. They strive for recognition despite the fact that their appearance is strange for the majority society. In spite of the perceptible disadvantages these women regard this right to self determination as a huge gain compared with the stricter rules of their country of origin.

European Identity

Even though young Muslims are confronted with rejection and the feeling not-belonging they regard Germany as their home country. Here they were socialized and went to school, have their family and friends. Despite many negative experiences with the majority society the adolescents can identify with the values in Germany and Europe. For Muslims of Turkish origin the discussion about a European identity was rather incomprehensible because they see Turkey more or less as a part of Europe.

For the most part the picture they have of their home country was quite idealized and restricted to memories from holiday visits. Even if specified knowledge about the individual states within Europe was not always present the young people had clear visions about living together in Europe. Without exception they had positive associations concerning Europe, such as the rights of freedom, tolerance and democracy. Also positively valued was the living and growing together of different cultures and people of different origin and religion living peacefully together.

For some Muslims the process of Europe growing together is the chance for an increasing network of different Muslim communities which has the aim to make

their own interests public, Europe-wide and to achieve a higher level of tolerance from non-Muslims.

The study shows that the interpretation and the practise of Islam depends on individual, socio-cultural factors and origin. "The" Islam and "the" Muslims do not exist. The   religious forms   and ways of living of Muslims are very manifold. Even though the Muslims regard themselves as a unit their different beliefs and ways of living are heterogeneous. That is why it is impossible to talk about homogeneous national or European identities amongst Muslims.

Independent of the religion an identification with the country and the region in which they are living takes place. Conformity on a European level is expressed in the fact that a positive attitude towards the European Union prevails amongst young Muslims. A identification with Europe happens insofar as the European basic values are incorporated and have an identity- creating effect.

National Report Italy

"I went to Europe and found Islam; I came back to the Arab world and found only Muslims."[13]

Identity is complex, often rooted in and shaped by the situation in which we find ourselves. As the above quote suggests, familiar and unfamiliar contexts play a role in masking and unmasking the true underpinnings of an identity as some environments encourage us to explore who we are while others allow existing conceptions of self to go unquestioned. Situations in which everyone shares the same identity can allow one to forget the true significance of an identity or an aspect of that identity. In contrast, situations in which one is part of a minority group can challenge individuals and groups to question what they might otherwise take for granted causing them to re-assess the significance of a given identity. This can be seen in light of Barth's (1969; 1981) argument that identity is the result of an interactive process in which the differences between groups help define identity (also see Triandafyllidou, 2002). In contrasting ourselves with others, defining what we are not, we define what we are; we establish the markers or vessels that are central to that identity. These markers represent different forms and activities with varying levels of importance and relevance within a socio-cultural system (Barth, 1969). As such, vessels of identity offer a means for understanding the significance of the characteristics of an identity and its construction both by the identity holders and others. The position taken here is that in trying to understand the delineations and boundaries of an identity it is useful to look at the vessels from different perspectives, examining how these perspectives influence each other and ultimately the identity in question.

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[13] Statement by an elderly Muslim sheik as quoted by a Muslim youth in Milan. Translated from the Italian by authors.

This study, which is part of a larger European project entitled "INTI: Young Muslims in Europe—New Questions of Identity" with studies carried out in Belgium, Germany and the UK, explores the evolving identities of young Muslims in Italy who are primarily first- and second-generation immigrants. Given that the target population is largely comprised of immigrants, it is composed of people who Triandafyllidou (2002) has referred to as individuals who neither belong to their country of origin, nor to their host country. The lack of a clear national identity is likely to contribute to the search for an alternative primary identity. The case of young Muslims in Italy provides a unique situation for understanding the role of other identities in the absence of a dominant national identity. This study seeks to understand the evolution of those identities and the role that religious and supra-national identities (e.g. a European identity) play as young Muslims discover and establish their concepts of self and social identities.

Fixed and dynamic conceptions of identity

There are different schools of thought regarding the malleability of one's identity. Some hold that an individual's identity is fixed at a relatively early age (according to the psychoanalytical school) whereas others, within the sociological tradition, see identity development as a constantly evolving process in which our experiences and the social context influence who we are (Hall, 1996). Jamiesson describes this position in noting that:

> "Interactions with others, the symbolic exchanges of gestures and language in which meanings are negotiated, shape and perhaps even make possible the inner dialogue that people have with themselves….Our sense of self is an ongoing product of everyday social interaction." (2002, p. 4)

According to this view, identity is not just who we are, but is constantly evolving and represents the culmination of our experiences as we influence and are influenced by the environment around us. Within this dynamic and fluid conceptualization of identity and identity development we pose the question of how the identities of young Muslims in Italy are transforming in relation to living in a predominantly Catholic country and coming of age at a time when Muslims are under more scrutiny than they have been in recent memory due to the events of 9/11 and subsequent attacks. These attacks represent one of the focal points of this research due to the worldwide ramifications of the events, especially for Muslims who have become subject to much greater scrutiny in the Western world. One can hypothesize that coming of age during such a time presents unique challenges, especially for a population that already faces an uncertain identity in terms of national belonging.

Methodology

This section spells out the specifics of the research carried out in Italy whereas a more comprehensive discussion of the methodology, its strengths and limitations, is provided in the introduction to this report.

Data collection was carried out using a combination of focus groups and open-ended interviews. The focus groups represent the primary means of data collection and were conducted with four categories of individuals: young Muslims, parents of Young Muslim, teachers, and social workers. The interviews were carried out with select individuals to supplement the information gathered in the focus groups and explore certain issues in greater detail. The individuals who participated in the interviews represent a mix of focus group participants and others who did not participate in the groups. This combination allowed the inclusion of a wider mix of people and the possibility

to explore issues in greater depth and touch on themes that people did not want to discuss in a group setting.

Table 1: Focus Groups and Interviews Conducted in Italy

	Rome	**Milan**	**Turin**	**Total**
Focus groups				
Young Muslims	1 (7F, 2 M)	1 (3F, 9M)	1 (5F, 5M)	3 (15F, 16M)
Parents	1 (8 fathers)	1 (5 fathers)	1 (9 mothers)	3 (13 fathers, 9 mothers)
Teachers	1	1	1	3
Social workers	1	1	0	2
Total	*4*	*4*	*3*	*11*
Interviews				
Young Muslims	1 (male)**	1 (female)	3 (1F, 2M)	5 (2F, 3M)
Parents	1 (father)	1 (father)**	5 (2 mothers, 3 fathers)	5 (2 mothers, 5 fathers)
Teachers	0	0	0	0
Social workers	0	2 (1M**, 1F)	2* (1M, 1F)	4 (2M, 2F)
Representatives of Muslim organisations	1* (male)	2* (1M, 1F)	0	3* (2M, 1F)
Total	*2*	*4*	*8*	*14*

* These individuals also fall in the categories of parents or young Muslims and hence are not included in the total number of interviews.

** Also participated in a focus group

The focus groups and interviews were carried out in three cities: Rome, Milan and Turin. Each city has a sizeable Muslim population although there are some variations in terms of immigration histories, the biggest difference being that the Muslim communities in Milan and Turin are relatively more established that the community in Rome where nearly all of the young Muslims interviewed are first-generation immigrants. In total, 11 focus groups and 14 interviews were completed (see Table 1). The focus group with social workers in Turin was not conducted due to organizational difficulties; additional interviews were carried out in that city in an effort to compensate.

In total 35 young Muslims participated in the focus groups and/or interviews. The age ranged from 14 to 27 with the vast majority being between 16 and 22 years old. Countries of origin include: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Somalia, and Syria. Sixteen (46 percent) of the young Muslims were born in Italy, 10 of which live in Milan. Morocco represents the primary country of origin for young Muslims in Turin (9 out of 13) whereas the participants in Milan are primarily of Egyptian origin (9 out of 13). In Rome the participants are more varied in terms of the countries of origin; Morocco and Tunisia represent the two primary source countries.

The focus groups and interviews involved a total of 28 parents, none of whom, with the exception of one Italian mother who converted to Islam, were born in Italy. This composition is fairly representative of the Muslim population in Italy in general (see Country Report for Italy), which is largely made up of first-generation immigrants from the Maghreb. It should be noted that in nearly all of the cases both parents are immigrants, the four exceptions being the Italian mother mentioned above and three Muslims (2 fathers and 1 mother) who have married Italians. In two of the four cases the Italian spouse did not become Muslim.

Target Group and Limitations

Recruitment of participants placed certain restrictions on the participant pool and hence limits the ability to generalize to a wider population of Muslim youth. The youth were recruited via a mosque (Rome) or an association for young Muslims[14] (Turin and Milan), which limits the participants to those who are not only practicing, but also quite active in their communities. A few individuals were recruited for interviews outside of these structures, but they did not participate in the focus groups. Parents were similarly recruited via mosques

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[14] Giovanni Mussulmani d'Italia (GMI) or Young Muslims of Italy

(Rome and Milan), a women's organization (Turin) and through community networks (interviews only).

Secondary school teachers were recruited via school districts that have a relatively high presence of Muslim students while social workers were recruited in various ways depending on the city, primarily utilising contacts through institutions that work with immigrants. These groups proved to be some of the most difficult to organize due to scheduling conflicts during the regular workday. Participation was lower than expected, but the consistency in the responses suggests that the findings are nonetheless valid and representative of the experiences of teachers and social workers who work with young Muslims in Italy. The findings also tend to support those of the young Muslims and parents despite being an "outside" perspective on the Muslim experience. It should be noted that while the vast majority of the social workers were non-Muslim Italians, there were some Muslim social workers who were also parents. The social worker who expressed the most divergent opinions in regards to the situation of young Muslims in Italy was an immigrant from a largely Muslim country who identified herself as being Christian.

Language Considerations and Interviewers

All of the focus groups and interviews were carried out in Italian. This did not prove to be an obstacle for most of the young Muslims since they had an excellent or very good command of Italian. It was however an issue for some of the parents and non-Italian social workers. These individuals expressed themselves relatively well in Italian, but had difficulty at times, which could have led to some misinterpretation and/or misstatements.

The quotes presented below are based on the authors' translations from the transcriptions. Efforts have been made to clarify the intent of the statement.

Thus, in the case that someone did not speak Italian well, the translation attempted to capture the meaning rather than translating the individual's difficulties with Italian. The intent was to best capture the significance of the person's words.

Findings

Identity markers need to be understood both in terms of the individual to whom the identity belongs as well as in terms of others in his/her social environment who may or may not share that identity (Barth, 1969, 1981; Triandafyllidou, 2002). For the purpose of this discussion we will focus primarily on identity markers for individual Muslims and for others in the community who do not share that identity (most of the autochthonous population in Italy). This essentially divides the discussion into two parts, that which relates to young Muslims and that which relates to the non-Muslim population in Italy. There is also a third aspect that involves the interaction between these two groups or, in the absence of direct person-to-person interaction, the influence that they have on each other through the media and other means of communication. Thus, the following report outlines the vessels or markers of a Muslim identity as seen by: (1) young Muslims and parents of young Muslims; (2) the non-Muslim population (based on reports by social workers, teachers, parents, and young Muslims); and (3) how these perceptions or notions of the markers of a Muslim identity interact and influence each other in what can be seen as a mutually reinforcing process. This means that the viewpoint and behaviours of non-Muslims, both in personal interactions and through the mass media, influence those of Muslims and vice versa resulting in what appears to be a polarization of opinions (and identity) in that the young Muslims either embrace their Muslim identity to a greater extent, as is true for many of the participants of this study, or increase the distance between themselves and Islam. This latter group was effectively excluded from this study due to recruitment methods, but were

mentioned by all four groups of study participants (i.e., young Muslims, parents, social workers, and teachers) suggesting that this is a very real, and sizable, segment of the Muslim population in Italy in need of future study.

Vessels of Identity

The markers of a Muslim identity can be placed on a continuum that goes from visible (public) to non-visible (private or personal markers). While most markers can be seen as falling in the middle of the continuum in that they are both visible and non-visible (e.g., prayer is a personal activity that becomes public and visible when carried out in front of others), it is important to note that the salience of a marker, especially for non-Muslims, is largely connected to its public visibility (e.g., the veil) and the extent to which it conflicts with Western values (e.g., the oppression of women). As a result, the relative importance attributed to any given marker appears to derive from a mixture of the visibility of the marker and its significance for "Western values". The discussion below addresses the various markers as seen by young Muslims, parents of young Muslims, teachers, social workers, and, indirectly, the media and general public.

The Veil and Other Visible Vestments of Islam

> *"For [non-Muslims] women always represent Islam. They are more apparent; they have the veil."* (Young Muslim male in Turin)

The veil is perhaps the most visible marker of a Muslim identity for women if not for Islam in general in that, as the above statement implies, women are seen as representing Islam due to the visibility granted them by the veil. The veil then becomes a powerful symbol of what Islam stands for, with Muslims and non-Muslims often arriving at different conclusions. Amongst the Muslims, the wearing of the veil is first and foremost seen as an individual choice made by

girls and women. This stands in opposition to the Muslims' perception of the "Western" view, which holds that the veil represents the oppression of women and, especially in the period immediately following 9/11, associates the veil with terrorism. This led to some cases in which Muslims who wear the veil were reportedly referred to as "Bin Laden" or "daughters of Bin Laden". It is within this context, which combines the choice to abide by a religious duty in adhering to the "rules of Islam" with the demonisation of Islam and its visible manifestations that the veil takes on a new meaning. It is no longer simply a matter of religious practice, but has become a vehicle for expression and communication in the Muslim world. It is a means of rendering the condemned *more* visible in order to demonstrate what is repeatedly referred to as the "true Islam" and the "behaviour of true Muslims towards non-Muslims".

The choice of whether or not to wear the veil in Italy appears to be quite complex with various outcomes and reasons for the choices made. Young Muslims who choose to wear the veil do not necessarily face an easy decision, a fact that is exemplified by one girl in Milan who decided to delay wearing the veil due to 9/11 and the social reaction that followed:

> *"…9/11 happened and so I began wearing [the veil] during the second year of high school and so, nothing. I didn't begin wearing it during my first year because I was a bit…not afraid, but I thought that it would be better to wait until the second year. Also because this was my first year of high school. Going there, the events of 9/11 had just happened, this story with…the daughter of Bin Laden...I said to myself, no, we'll avoid these problems and so I began wearing the veil during the second year. But, for example, in regards to the fact that I feel proud, I feel very proud with the veil, while I walk…I like wearing the veil. I like it a lot! I like, anyway, obeying God. At the same time it's not… perhaps at the*

beginning I had some problems, but now, after five years, I am extremely happy that I decided to wear the veil…This is different from the girls who don't wear it…"

This young Muslim faced her own struggle in deciding whether to include the veil in her life largely due to concerns about the reactions of non-Muslims following 9/11, concerns that were not necessarily unfounded as demonstrated by her experiences in using public transportation while wearing the veil in which people did not necessarily say anything, but she felt that they were afraid of her – a sentiment also expressed by others in relation to wearing the veil in public. Other girls who faced similar decisions did not necessarily reach the same conclusion although the vast majority of the study participants wear the veil. The few who choose not to wear the veil either feel that it is not a religious obligation or feel that it makes them objects of "*looks that are not very 'nice'*". This latter group expresses a desire to wear the veil, but elects not to do so due to social discomfort and perceived prejudices. There is a general sense that the veil elicits a fear response amongst non-Muslims and hence contributes to hostility and tension, even if expressed in silence via facial expressions and physical position, especially in confined spaces such as on public transportation.

Two other groups of young Muslims bare mentioning here in regards to choosing whether or not to wear the veil following the events of 9/11 – (1) girls and women who previously wore the veil and have *stopped* doing so and (2) girls and women who started wearing the veil *because of* 9/11[15]. These are examples of Muslims who have either rejected a marker of their identity as a means of decreasing their visibility or Muslims who have embraced a marker in order to increase their visibility. The former group is discussed by the

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[15] There is also an instance of a Tunisian immigrant who was forbidden to wear the veil in her country of origin, but does so in Italy, for which she is grateful. In a similar vein, several of the first-generation immigrants stated that they have more freedom to practice their religion in Italy than they did in their country of origin.

participants, but, as mentioned previously, not included as participants themselves. The latter group, however, expresses an attitude that is in line with many of the young Muslims, male and female, in terms of the reaction to 9/11. This group of individuals, whether male or female, whose members have decided to externalise their faith by reaching out to non-Muslims in an attempt to demonstrate what it means to be Muslim (in addition to deepening their own faith and understanding of Islam). For this group of individuals, the veil and other visible features of Islamic practice represent means for young Muslims to show that they are proud of their faith, placing Islam in the public spotlight while attempting to move it away from the shadow of terrorism and associations with "*the few [Muslims] who use Islam to do things [that are prohibited by Islam]*" (young Muslim, Turin). Nearly all of the young Muslims express a strong desire to distinguish between the perceptions of Islam that arise from the actions of the few who misuse it, but have captured the media and public attention, and the "true Islam" that "*teaches us peace [and] respect for others regardless of their religion*" (young Muslim, Milan).

Young Muslim males are less affected by markers linked to appearance since wearing a beard does not appear to be very common amongst the Muslim population in Italy (only one father did so) and only a few discussed the repercussions of doing so. The beard is still pointed to as a marker of Muslim identity though, especially in relation to non-Muslims' views on these markers. The participants perceive the beard as being prominent in the minds of the non-Muslim population for which the beard is associated with terrorism and Bin Laden, as this father illustrates:

> "*I came here in '91 before the mosque was built. There were only some places for prayers and there were no problems until 2001. From 2001 up to today everything changed for the Muslim*

community…everyone is afraid of everyone, because maybe one dark person is a terrorist, but above all someone who has a beard is really, the look, the appearance of the person with **the beard is, for [non-Muslims], immediately Bin Laden, kamikaze…"** (Father in Rome, emphasis added)

The beard then seems to be more a part of the idea of a Muslim man rather than a reality for Muslim men in Italy. As such, its relevance as a marker of a Muslim identity in Italy is more imaginative than real.

Clothing may be considered another highly visible marker of a Muslim identity, but this was given scant mention apart from the discussion about the veil. However, as with the veil and beard, clothing appears to be a more significant issue for the female Muslim population, particularly amongst the mothers who emphasized the importance of abiding by the verses in the Koran calling on women to cover themselves up. The mothers in the focus group in Turin argued that the veil liberates women and that it is Western fashion and the obsession with appearance that oppresses women, treating them as sexual objects for men rather than valuing them for their intelligence and who they are as people. It was also noted that wearing the veil, or in the case of one the mothers, the burka, elicits respect. However, this viewpoint was far from unanimous as illustrated by one mother who recounted the shame that her son felt in her presence, dressed in traditional garb, and his reluctance to be seen with her at his school due to things said by his peers[16]. Clearly, the reality of the situation comprises positive and negative experiences, both of which illustrate the relevance of the veil and to some extent clothing as markers of Islam. The veil then can be seen

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[16] This mother went on to recount that upon discovering the reason for her son's shame she decided to speak to her son's class, an idea that was initially rejected by her son's teacher. She spoke to the class despite the teacher's disapproval at the end of which the students came up and hugged her, asking forgiveness and saying that they "didn't know".

as the primary issue given the tendency for young Muslim women and girls to wear Western clothing, regardless of whether they wear the veil.

Prayer

> "*It's not easy being a practicing Muslim that is a Muslim who prays at the correct times.*" (Muslim youth, Milan)

Religious observance through prayer has both public and private dimensions. Practice of the daily prayers is reportedly important to many of the participants and considered essential for "being a Muslim". In fact, one girl in Milan went so far as to say that someone who does not practice and observe the rules of Islam, particularly in regards to prayer, is not a Muslim. Others expressed similar views albeit less strict, emphasizing the importance of prayer and some of the difficulties that they have encountered due to the lack of mosques and prayer halls. And yet others asserted that it is not necessary to practice in order to be a Muslim. These contrasting viewpoints show different attitudes towards prayer with greater tolerance evident amongst the older generation. This difference may be generational, or it may be due to the unique composition of the young Muslims who participated in the study—very active practitioners who on the whole appear to have become more observant since 9/11.

The place of prayer is also important, and this perhaps says more about the nature of Muslims in Italy than whether or not they pray. While many of the youth and parents desire a mosque or prayer hall in their local community, this is not necessarily seen as essential. As so many of the participants noted, "*We can pray at home*". What is perhaps more important is the sense of community that accompanies communal prayer, especially the calling to prayer. Several of the first-generation immigrants talked about the difficulties associated with not hearing the calls for the prayers and not being surrounded by individuals

engaged in the same practices. This speaks to the importance of prayer (and other Islamic practices) in constructing a community and subsequently a common identity. Within this context, hearing the calls to prayer and accompanying others in doing so conveys a sense of common belonging and identity. The absence of such an environment does not necessarily change the desire to pray, but can influence the salience of prayer and other practices as manifestations of their faith. In the absence of these shared experiences, people not only continue to pray, but may become more adherent to prayer and /or other practices that they did not observe in their country origin as a means of compensating for the lack of community. This may manifest itself outwardly (e.g., women who begin wearing the veil) or inwardly as individuals engage in self-reflection and deepen their faith. One young Muslim (22 years old) in Turin expresses this in talking about his faith since coming to Italy at the age of 11:

> *"When I came here I became more attached to my religion because when I arrived I found people who had a faith that differed from mine. For example, during the period of Ramadan, everyone celebrated Ramadan [in Somalia]. The stores were closed and you didn't see people eating in front of you. Here during Ramadan you see everything open and people eat in front of you and do everything that they want in front of you—the non-Muslims. All of this makes you become more attached to your faith because you are the only one in the midst of a thousand people, and this increases your faith."*

He articulates a feeling that was evident amongst other first-generation immigrants in talking about the significance in being one of many versus being the only one (or one of few). Community resounded as an underlying theme as to what people want and what they feel is lacking. The community helps define

the boundaries of a Muslim identity and establish the markers of such an identity within an environment that has been constructed to support Muslims. The apparent irony that study participants suggested, however, is that the same environment that supports a Muslim identity can in fact be overly supportive and leads people to feel very comfortable, effectively going through the motions without necessarily exploring the meaning of those actions or their faith for them as individuals. Being removed from a well-established Muslim community may feel like a deprivation for those who are accustomed to hearing the calls to prayer everyday, however, it also seems to create conditions under which people are no longer sustained by their rituals and fellowship with other Muslims, but must find the meaning of Islam for themselves. There is, as suggested by the elderly sheik quoted at the beginning of this report, a propensity to discover Islam on a personal level that can then be shared with others as Muslims (re)discover and (re)define themselves as individuals and a group within the Diaspora.

Language

As described in the National Report on Italy, the vast majority of the Muslim population in Italy has its origins in Arabic-speaking countries, which means that the religious and cultural languages often overlap. Given this, it is not surprising that language is presented as such an important marker of identity for parents and youth alike. Before going into what the respondents said in regards to language, it is important to consider some of the features of Arabic that contribute to its cultural and religious significance. The complexity of the Arabic language and its multiple written and spoke forms renders it quite unique in that the written (classical and modern standard) and spoken Arabic differ notably. While there are numerous spoken forms of Arabic (30 regional/country dialects), the two written forms do not differ by region or country[17]. Classical

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[17] See http://www.omniglot.com/writing/arabic.htm

Arabic is the original language of the Koran. It is said that translations, including those in modern standard Arabic, are not only translations, but also interpretations, the implication being that the Koran written in classical Arabic is the only true version[18].

The participants in the focus groups and interviews did not always separate religion and culture in their discussion about the importance of language. What became most evident in regards to the parents was the distress they feel over the lack of adequate opportunities for their children to learn Arabic, whether spoken (some expressed their disappointment in not having a place where their children can learn Arabic after noting their own failure to teach their spoken dialect at home), written or unspecified. One father in Rome expresses this general sense of lack in talking about the absence of Arabic lessons or schools:

> *"The difficulty is not that I can't find a place to pray; the difficulty that I encountered is finding a place for my children, where they can study our language and religion. This is the primary thing that I suffer from. The religion can be practiced at home, but the difficulty is that the children cannot study Arabic."*

This father separates learning the religion from learning the language, but there is an implication on the part of some that being able to read Arabic is a central part of being a practicing Muslim as stated by this mother in Turin:

> *"[My oldest daughter] is a practicing Muslim. She has also attended the Arabic school. She knows how to write, because for us there is the Arabic language and the dialect. The Arabic language, someone who has not studied it cannot understand*

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[18] See for example http://www.witness-pioneer.org/vil/Articles/quran/ieb_quran_chittick.html

it…and someone who has not studied…anyway, she has studied Arabic. She can read and write in Arabic. She is able to read the books directly without help."

While parents differ in their emphasis it is clear that they tend to see the spoken and written forms as very important for their children if they are to maintain the central aspects of the culture from their country of origin as well as practice Islam. There is a suggestion that the language is somehow so integral that its importance does not need to be explained as indicated by a father who simply stated, "*[My children] certainly feel Roman, but they speak Arabic.*"[19] This seems to indicate that the language one speaks "makes" the identity – a notion that was often mentioned by young Muslims who speak both Arabic and Italian (see discussion that follows).

Amongst the youth language appears to serve different purposes. It is both a means for them, personally, to identify with a specific nationality (e.g., Italian or Egyptian) and a means for group inclusion and/or exclusion. On a personal level, Muslim youth, and to some degree parents, see a link between the language being spoken and the individual's identity in that context. For example, one Moroccan boy noted the following:

We who have multiple identities know how to manage those identities based on the context. When I am in a Moroccan context, in that precise moment I feel Moroccan. Whereas when I am with a group of Italians I don't see why I have to think in Moroccan. Also when I'm in class and the teacher asks me a question. In that moment I am Italian. I think in Italian and respond in Italian.

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[19] This father's children were born in Italy and have an Italian (Roman) mother, but, according to the father, have taken a great deal from his culture (Palestinian) and are practicing Muslims. He sees his children as combining the best of both cultures.

His self-identity is rooted in the context and means of communication and thus varies as the context varies. The same concept was expressed by other young Muslims who linked the language spoken with a certain environment or situation and hence with identity. Thus, they may spend most of their time speaking Italian, but speak Arabic at home or with family in which case they identify more with their country of origin and feel Moroccan (or Egyptian, Syrian, etc.) rather than Italian. Language helps them navigate their various identities and serves as one more means of delineating one from the other as well as re-enforcing the corresponding identity.

Language is also related to group boundaries as it can be used as a means of excluding non-Arabic speaking Muslims. This usage was not discussed by most of the study participants, who speak Arabic, but was mentioned by the few who do not. In one instance there is the case of an Italian boy who became intrigued by Islam following 9/11 and then adopted[20] the religion. He reported that youth in the local mosque would switch from Italian to Arabic when they wanted to exclude him remarking that:

> *"I have never felt like I was one of them…There is a sense of exclusion when they speak Arabic or when they don't want you to be in on the conversation, they begin speaking in Arabic amongst themselves."*

This is only one case, but it demonstrates the power and importance of Arabic as a marker of a Muslim identity, albeit, a Muslim identity that primarily has its immediate origins (the youth are either first- or second-generation immigrants) in the Arab world.

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[20] The word adopted is used here rather than converted since the participant stated that he had not technically converted. Although he had been raised in a Catholic environment he did not previously identity himself as Catholic. As a consequence, he says that he went from not having a religion to becoming Muslim.

In the other case, an Italian-born Muslim girl of Somali origin asserted that she does not like going to local Muslim youth centres or participating in associations because she does not speak Arabic and feels excluded because Arabic is often spoken. She, however, did not indicate that the other youth spoke Arabic with the intent of excluding her or others. These are two quite distinct cases, indicating both intentional and (presumably) unintentional forms of exclusion, nonetheless, they demonstrate the power of language as a marker of group belonging and how it can be used to delineate within group differences.

The Non-Muslim View on Language and Immigration

"*How is it possible that you, a Muslim, speak Italian so well?*"
(Young Muslim illustrating what some claim is a commonly held stereotype amongst non-Muslims.)

Whereas speaking Arabic can be said to be a marker of a Muslim identity for the Muslims in the study, *not* speaking Italian well is said to be a marker in the minds of non-Muslims. Several of the youth talked about encounters with teachers and peers in which individuals are surprised at the fact that the individual is a Muslim *and* speaks Italian well:

"*I see this with my friends at university. We can discuss things in a relaxed way, even for an hour, and everything is fine. Then when it's time to present yourself, because at times it happens that introductions are made after having discussed things a bit, when they understand that I'm not Italian, that I'm not even Christian, that I am Muslim, some are surprised. Others ask why I speak Italian so well. Others begin to change their attitude and there's nothing you can do.*" (young Muslim)

There appears to be an underlying assumption amongst the autochthonous Italian population that Muslims are by nature foreign. In fact, place of birth and country of origin are both significant markers, in the minds of Italians, of being Muslim.

Place of Birth and Country of Origin

Place of birth in combination with where one grows up is often considered a determinant of nationality. This reasoning is quite clear in the minds of many parents who see their children as being Italian or, put in a somewhat different way, as having Italy as their home due to the fact that many of their children were either born in Italy and/or grew up there. In this sense, Italy and Italian culture is what the children know, whereas the parents' country of origin represents a place for holidays. A father in Rome makes this point quite clear in talking about his own son for whom he cannot imagine a life outside of Italy:

> *"My son is 21 years old. He is currently attending a training course to become a pizza baker…this boy wants to do something…He grew up here and works here. [Boy's name] doesn't want to return to Morocco. I swear, where can this boy go? He is staying here. He will marry here…"*

On the part of the parents there is a sense that place of birth and where children have gone to school outweigh other factors in determining their children's national identity[21]. This, however, does not necessarily correspond with the perceived attitudes of the autochthonous population for whome place of birth and childhood experiences may not be enough to outweigh the apparent foreign and Muslim markers such as names[22] and skin colour. The result is a conflict

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[21] Parents also express a desire for their children to maintain aspects of the culture from the country of origin.
[22] One of the fathers recounted the story of a young man named Mohammed who decided to leave Italy and return to his country of origin because he felt completely ostracised by Italian society despite the fact that he had

between the views of young Muslims and their parents and how the majority of the population views them. One father speaks of this contradiction in the following way:

> *"...when the children find themselves faced with contradictions, lets say, when they find themselves in a society where respect doesn't exist, where one is accused because one's name is Mohammed, because of one's name, one's [skin] colour, because of one's origin. Naturally these children who are born here, they're not Algerian or Senegali or Egyptian. They're Italian and want to be treated as such."*

From the parents' perspectives their children's nationality should not be a marker of a Muslim identity, whereas it appears that the autochthonous population associates race/ethnicity and country of origin with being Muslim. This is supported by reports by all groups of participants who emphasize that in the Italian mind Arabs and only Arabs, especially Moroccans, are Muslim. In the words of one social worker in Milan, "*Islam is Moroccan, a Moroccan is Islam*". This means that members of the non-Muslim autochthonous population are often surprised when they encounter someone who is Muslim and an immigrant, but is not Arab, as has been reported by Muslims of Somali origin. It also places young Muslims in difficult situations as they are blamed for and questioned about things that do not involve them. As social workers in Milan recounted, the youth often respond to these situations with statements like, "*What do we have to do with all of this?*" or "*This means nothing to us!*" There is a sense of injustice and indignity in the young Muslims' responses as they feel compelled to answer for the actions of others solely because they claim the same religion. Some question why this is the case when Catholics do not have to

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been the best student in his class, had "done everything". The young man attributed the treatment he received to his name—Mohammed.

answer for the actions of the IRA in Ireland, thus underscoring the apparent absurdity of the situation.

This association between foreignness and being Muslim also places young Muslims who were born in Italy in a difficult situation in that they are neither fully accepted as Italian, even if they feel Italian, nor accepted in their country of origin. They are to some extent stateless, as expressed by this young Muslim in Turin:

> "*In the sense that you live in Italy, everyone views you as a foreigner. Then you go back to Morocco and say, 'maybe this is my home', but you never feel at ease and you realise that this isn't your home either. And so, you ask yourself, 'where is my home?'*"

The implications of this lack of a clear national identity young Muslims are not entirely clear. While there are some who express uncertainty about who they are, there are others who state that they embrace both national identities as well as their Muslim identity without difficulty. The consensus that emerges irrespective of confusion in regards to a national identity is that the Muslim identity is primary whereas national identity may be more contextual as expressed by this youth:

> "*When I am with Muslim friends I feel more Syrian than Italian. When I am with Italians, I feel more Italian, but I always [feel] Muslim.*"

Amongst this group of youths being Muslim appears to have trumped other identities although it would be incorrect to say that it is the only identity that matters since conflicts between Muslims with different countries of origin are

reportedly not uncommon in schools. In fact, teachers see the conflicts as being a more significant issue than problems between Muslims and non-Muslims. According to the teachers a minimal amount of conflict exists between their Muslim and non-Muslim students whereas discord between Muslims belonging to different national groups is relatively common. On the one hand there appears to be a sense of common purpose that ties Muslims together regardless of where they come from. On the other hand, the study participants point to other markers, such as nationality, that can divide individuals within the Muslim community.

Gender Roles

Gender roles represent a difficult aspect of a Muslim identity with apparent inter-generational differences. While the Muslim participants said relatively little in terms of gender roles, apart from decrying the image of Muslim women as oppressed, their participation in the focus groups was more revealing. In comparing the focus groups with young Muslims with the groups with parents, there appears to be a marked intergenerational difference in terms of the interactions between men and women, boys and girls. The groups with young Muslims did not necessarily illustrate any significant differences in terms of the level of participation in the discussion. While there were some differences in the gender-balance of the various groups (e.g., the group in Rome was predominantly female whereas the group in Milan was predominantly male), this does not appear to have had any significant impact on participation as both boys and girls participated actively in the discussion in all groups. There was also vehement opposition to the notion that Muslim girls and women are subservient or submissive (by both genders) and discussions about the veil inevitably led to the affirmation that it was *their* choice whether or not to wear the veil.

The parents, however, represent a different reality. None of the groups included both mothers and fathers as participants. The groups in Milan and Rome included only fathers even though the researchers were initially informed that mothers and fathers would participate. The focus group conducted in Rome is particularly interesting in that both parents arrived at the home where the interview was taken place, but the mothers spent the time in the kitchen and only the fathers participated in the group, claiming to be speaking for their wives as well as for themselves. The reason for the absence of mothers in Milan is not clear as they did not show up for the focus group and none of the participants seemed to know why. The only group that involved mothers was all female and took place in Turin where the participants, who were very engaged in the focus group, noted that they would not have spoken if their husbands had also participated.

These mothers also emphasized the freedom that the veil (or other covering) grants them and asserted:

> *"Western women are conditioned, conditioned as to how they have to be, how to dress…they are submissive in the sense that men have to want them."*

As another mother put it, Western women are "*slaves and objects for men*". In the minds of these women, the ignorance in regards to Islam and perception that "*Muslim women are submissive*" should in fact be reversed in the sense that the behaviours and practices that are seen as oppressive of Muslim women are in fact liberating whereas the Western obsession with external beauty and fashion is a marker of a society and culture that represses women by sexualizing them and rendering them objects who have to make themselves desirable in the eyes

of men. The mother of Italian origin (in Turin) explains the changes that she experienced in the following way:

"Before I became a Muslim I saw a lot of things that did not work well and asked myself why. It was all about who was skinniest, who was blonde…They were all conventions and I didn't believe in these conventions. Islam has finally set me free. God tells me to reveal myself only in front of my husband. It's like a train that practically hits you, because, for my culture it wasn't like that. In fact, it was anything but that".

Gender roles are one area where culture and religion become nearly inseparable as religious duty and local tradition have become intertwined over the centuries. Confusion about what corresponds to religion and what corresponds to culture is not limited to the non-Muslim population as the mothers illustrate in their discussion about a highly controversial gender issue—female circumcision. This practice, they argue, is not supported in the Koran, which says that women should derive pleasure from sex, but had become linked with Islam and taken on significance to the point that "*if a woman wasn't circumcised, no one would marry her. She was excluded, marginalised. It was a taboo*" (Mother in Turin). In this case, culture and tradition eclipsed religious edicts in creating a tradition that was associated with Islam despite having its roots elsewhere.

The interconnection of religion and culture in regards to gender roles and the oppression or freedom of women makes it incredibly difficult, if not impossible, to clearly identify the extent to which Islam dictates female subservience. It is however an incredibly important consideration due to the controversy and conflicts that arise from media portrayals of Muslim women as oppressed and subservient (as reported by Muslim and non-Muslim participants) and the

general view that they are forced to wear the veil (as opposed to doing so as an act of obedience to god) and controlled by their husbands, fathers and brothers. The Muslim participants in the study have repeatedly underscored that this is damaging for Muslims and unfairly represents them whereas some of the teachers expressed concern about the control exercised over Muslim girls. Irrespective of these differences in opinion, is evident that some gender roles in which the husband speaks for the wife do exist, at least amongst the parents. What is less clear is the extent to which this applies to the current generation of young Muslims and how gender roles will play out as the current generation of young Muslims marry and form families.

Terrorism and Stereotypes

"The mass media plays an important role in propagating fear. The mass media wants to frighten people. Many Italians who had friendships with Muslims of foreign origin have broken off these friendships. They're no longer friends. It depends a lot on TV. They see a woman with a foulard and she is perceived as a kamikaze or something similar." (Father in Rome)

As discussed above there is a fair degree of overlap between the markers of a Muslim identity in the minds of Muslim and non-Muslims; however, there are some markers that are unique to non-Muslims. The most notable of these relates to the demonisation of Muslims as terrorists, which, according to all of the participants, is largely the result of ignorance and portrayals of Muslims by the mass media. Muslims and non-Muslims alike are unanimous in their contention that the mass media has enormous negative influence on the public image of Muslims. The overall picture portrayed is one of a mass media that is responsible for the creation and proliferation of stereotypes that generally focus on perceived differences between Muslim and Western culture and the perceived

threat of Islam. Whether speaking with young Muslims, parents, teachers, or social workers, the comments always focused on mass media depictions of Islam and Muslims in which terrorism and Islam are one and the same.

While this represents a marker for non-Muslims it has strong implications for Muslims in that it influences their behaviour and own identity formation. As noted previously, young Muslims tend to fall into groups, those who have distanced themselves from Islam since 9/11 and those who have sought to increase their faith. This can largely be attributed to the negative perceptions of Muslims in recent years and thus represent two polar opposite coping techniques. The young Muslims repeatedly talked about their desire to demonstrate to others that the Islam depicted in the mass media does not accurately reflect them or the "true Islam". These efforts to dispel the myths that they see and hear means that they become more active as Muslims and become more involved, on a personal level, with Islam as this young Muslim in Milano, who was born in Italy, states:

> "*Sometimes [being Muslim in Italy] means having to walk with your head held high and fighting to defend [your] principles and [your] religion. It means getting on the tram in the morning to go to school and feeling yourself being observed by everyone, hearing people express prejudices…or simply being the subject of curiosity. People often ask me why I wear the veil. These are people who watch the news on TV and perhaps think that I am a terrorist without understanding that Islam is a religion of peace. But being Muslim in Italy…means being convinced of why you are a Muslim in order to be able to explain it to someone else.*"

For this young Muslim and others like her, there is a bi-directional relationship between the stereotypes of Islam and Muslim as terrorists and their own connection to Islam. In her case having to explain herself and her religion means that she has to truly understand what Islam stands for and means to her. It is insufficient to accept things on face value simply because it has been done that way in the past, creating the need amongst a group of the youth to personalize Islam as they search for its meaning through a process of self-discovery. This effectively makes Islam more central in the lives of this segment of the population.

Young Muslims and their parents are not alone in seeing things this way. In fact, social workers and teachers both reported observing the same phenomenon following 9/11. One of the social workers in Rome, who is himself Muslim, describes his own experience in explaining the situation that the younger generation faces:

> "*There is another aspect. The return to tradition was also driven by the need to differentiate oneself from the label [of being a terrorist]. It became an argument in dealing with the external environment, traditions and hence the redefinition. As a Muslim I was somehow forced to differentiate myself in regards to particular experiences or reflect on relationships with others and the fact that not all Muslims are terrorists.*"

This social worker emphasises the impact of the association with terrorism on himself and other Muslims by focusing of the efforts to differentiate oneself. While this does not represent all young Muslims, it describes the study participants quite well. However, there is another large group of young Muslims

who, according to the social workers, are not particularly attached to their religion or practice it discretely.

Beyond Borders -- Living the Values of Islam

The universal nature of Islam came up repeatedly. Many of the youth pointed to their desire and efforts to show the world what the "true Islam" is by respecting the rules of Islam. While definitions or articulations of the "true Islam" were often quite vague, there is a strong sense that for young Muslims this means respecting Islam as well as other cultures and religions, while demonstrating the peaceful nature of Islam and its adaptability to any national culture. For young Muslims it seems to mean demonstrating piety, openness, and being willing to engage in dialogue with others about Islam. This comportment represents one marker for Muslims who see it as the "*correct means for Muslim to interact with others*". As stated by one young Muslim in Milan:

> "*I really believe that Islam is a cosmopolitan religion. Because of*
> *this, as a Muslim, I consider the world to be my homeland.*"

This young man, who was born in Italy, exemplifies what might be considered a tendency to go beyond the national. He sees himself as being not only Italian and Muslim, but also a citizen of the world—a feeling shared by other young Muslims who expressed a connection with a community that is not limited to national borders. According to this view, Islam is a universal religion that can be "*lived anywhere*" as one young Muslim put it. Islam, with the accompanying Muslim identity, appears to be the basis for a primary identity that is not rooted in place. This allows those who sometimes feel Italian and sometimes identify with their country of origin to feel as though they have one identity that they can relate to all of the time. As one girl in Milan stated, "*I feel 100% Muslim, Muslim, Muslim*" while her national identity switches between Italian and

Egyptian. While youth differ in the extent to which they feel at peace with multiple identities or feel that they are undergoing an "identity crisis", the commonalities between the cultures and "values of Islam" are seen as helping them navigate the world. Their multiple identities and experiences allow them to "...*bring together two cultures to create a new, richer culture*" (Muslim girl, 15 years old, Turin). This is an idea that was often repeated by parents who see their children as being in a position to take the best from two cultures and create something new.

The fact that some of the youth are having a difficult time dealing with multiple identities cannot be ignored however. For these individuals there appear to be some overlap, but also conflict. They often talk about the benefits of bringing together two diverse cultures and see the potential to view things from a different perspective in that some things have both positive and negative dimensions. A young Muslim in Milan demonstrates this in talking about his internal identity conflict:

> "*Being an Italian-Arab-Muslim gives me the possibility to see the Eastern world and the Western world through a critical and constructive lens. What are the worst aspects [of being a Muslim in Italy]? An identity crisis due to my being both Muslim and Italian...One question torments me. Who am I? Where am I heading?*"

His words suggest that while there may be fair amount of agreement as to what it means to be Muslim, or rather, a practicing Muslim, the internalisation of these markers in relation to other aspects of the self is a much more troubled process resulting in angst and uncertainty. This is certainly not uncommon amongst adolescents and young adults, but the situation amongst young

Muslims in Italy (and Europe in general) is arguably more acute since they face issues of identity that their non-Muslim peers do not.

The data is very limited in this particular study, but it seems that Muslims of Italian origin are likely to find themselves in a different situation as they do not need to deal with conflicts in national identity and are less visible as Muslims. However, they may face another struggle as they have to explain to their family and friends, who are often ignorant about Islam, *why* they became Muslim. The limited data on this subject that is available for this report suggests that Italian youth who become Muslim face difficulty in (1) being accepted by the immigrant Muslim population and (2) in explaining their choice to the non-Muslim population. The result being that they are to some extent outsiders in both communities.

Do Muslim Youth Live the Values of Islam?

It is difficult to generalize from the experiences of one or two people. Nonetheless, the experiences collected for this project offer some insight into in-group dynamics and the importance, or lack thereof, of certain markers. In fact, the Italian Muslim youth indicated that the exclusion and harassment that he experienced (including having the police come to his house after someone from the mosque informed them that he had weapons and bombs in his house and was involved in a terrorist organization) was perhaps partly due to the fact that he, while attending the mosque, often questioned his Muslim peers about their behaviour in relation to the rules of Islam. In the youth's mind many of his Muslim peers do not follow the rules of Islam and are unwilling to engage in a discussion or accept criticism from others, stating that:

"[The Muslim youth] go out dancing, drinking. In this case, what sense does it make to say that you're a Muslim?" (Stated with emphasis)

His assertions do not resonate with the reported personal behaviour of the other young Muslims in the study, but it does agree with comments from teachers, social workers and young Muslims in referring to ignorant Muslims who *"don't know anything about Islam"*. Not surprisingly there is differentiation within the Muslim community in terms of socio-economic status as well as adherence to Islam and knowledge of Islam. This implies that what is an important marker for one Muslim, may not be important for another Muslim as is evident in divergent decisions in regards to the veil: some wear it as a means of obeying god; others do not wear it due to a sense of demonisation and/or discrimination or a desire to distance themselves from Islam; and yet others do not wear it because they do not feel that it is a religious obligation. Similarly, there are some Muslims who argue that one must pray five times a day at the correct times, avoid pork and alcohol, fast during Ramadan in order to *be* a Muslim whereas others do not see the necessity of these behaviours.

The fact that there are differences in opinion does not necessarily mean that the markers discussed here are completely invalid, but that they need to be considered as group indicators and not as individual absolutes. Despite the often heard refrain that there is "one" Islam, there is great disagreement about the proper interpretation of Islam. The resulting image of the young Muslim community is one in which the message presented to outsiders includes the concept of universality and in-group differences. This occurs because young Muslims seek to achieve three diverging and contradictory goals: (1) distinguish themselves from Muslims who commit acts that they do not agree with while demonstrating the plurality of the Muslim community, (2) present Islam as a

universal religion and (3) argue that Islam can be adapted in a way that respects the laws and local culture anywhere in the world.

Markers of an Italian or European Muslim Identity

"One of the most important and contentious issues is whether [a European] identity can at all be formed." (Fossum, 2002)

The ultimate goal of this study was to understand the nature of identity development and transformation amongst Muslim youth in Italy in terms of the formation of an Italian and/or European identity. Before addressing this issue it is necessary to consider the statement above by Fossum. If, as is often claimed, a European identity does not exist, then is it reasonable to expect individuals who are considered "foreign" at the national level to develop or have such an identity? Given the lack of consensus as to what such a European identity would entail, one has to wonder how the Muslim youth could ascribe to it. Interestingly enough, the research indicates that while there is not necessarily a strong sense of *having* a European identity, there seems to be a fair amount of consensus as to what it *means* and the belief, on the part of young Muslims with an immigrant background and their parents, that it is possible to form such an identity. It should be noted that the youth were asked to provide written responses in regards to questions about what it means to be a Muslim in Europe prior to beginning the focus group. Thus, any agreement or consensus from this aspect of the research is not attributable to the process of the focus group. Discussion about the subject during the groups with young Muslims and parents is of course subject to exchange that occurred during the focus group.

"Unfortunately [young Muslims] are not very trusting. The youth today, from what I have seen, I don't think that they will [develop a European Muslim identity]. They are either all Muslim or all

European. Unfortunately I see in the young Muslims, at least amongst those in Italy, which is the reality that I know, it's not that they're ashamed, but they tend to become more European and Italian. They tend to act like Italians, that is if Italians go to the disco, then [the young Muslims] go to the disco." (young Muslim in Rome, Italian origin)

The quote above brings out the mix of challenges and tendencies that young Muslims with immigrant backgrounds in Italy face. Is it, as some have argued, possible to take the best of both worlds and create something richer? Or, is it as this young man argues, impossible to merge two cultures, while retaining the core precepts of each? The question remains as to what gets brought into the mix and whether being a European Muslim means adopting the lifestyle of European youth and eliminating the core principles of Islam or retaining the core of Islamic practice with the "Western" values of freedom and respect. This study indicates that both of these processes are occurring amongst different segments of the population. There is a strong belief, especially amongst the parents, that the children can bring together the two cultures and create something richer. For these parents it is possible to maintain traditions at home and live as Italians outside the home as expressed by this mother in Turin:

"...in my house, and this is also normal in every Muslim family, we are Moroccan, Arabs and Muslims. In my house there is my culture, there is my religion and there are my traditions. However, elsewhere we live normally with the others...and we don't have these problems with diversity—that we are Muslims and the others are Italians, no [we don't have these problems]. There is respect on both sides, on my part

and on that of the Christians. We don't have problems. We have never had problems."[23]

This choice between cultures, or aspects of cultures, is not always an easy one though and seems to be the greatest struggle that the young Muslims face as they talk about the desire to be true to their religion while also respecting and embracing aspects of Italian and/or European culture. There is a sense that it is important to not forget what Islam is while engaging in a cultural exchange. Being a Muslim in Europe means, "*…exchanging my cultures with others…it means spreading Islam and showing people the true 'figure' of Islam, not that which it appears to be, but the true Islam*" (16 year-old girl, Egyptian origin, Milan). This sentiment was expressed by many of the youth who see a European Muslim identity as carrying with it a "burden" and great "responsibility" as it is not only about living their private lives, but demonstrating to others that "true Islam" stands in opposition to the common stereotypes and media images.

The desire to demonstrate, explain and enlighten requires a very activist role and is quite possibly a reflection of the characteristics of the young Muslims who participated in the focus groups – all of whom are active in their communities. This is especially true in Milan and Turin where the youth were recruited via an association for young Muslims that devotes most of its activities to changing media images of Islam and Muslims. It is less evident amongst the young Muslims in Rome who were recruited through a mosque. The young Muslims in Milan, almost all of which were born in Italy, were the most strident and vocal in their desire to show others the true Islam. It is unlikely however that generalizations can be made to segments of the Muslim population that were mentioned by the various study participants, individuals who are seen as being

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[23] This mother, while stating that neither she, nor her family have encountered difficulties does note that some Muslims, especially women wearing the chador, encountered problems following 9/11.

in Italy primarily for economic reasons and having neither the desire, nor the skills to integrate themselves into Italian society.

A look at peer relations with non-Muslims further demonstrates some differences between the youth, as exemplified by one girl of Algerian origin,

> *"I don't feel like an Arab-Muslim, I have always lived in Italy. For me being a European Muslim means being like all the other girls who live in Europe the only difference being that my religion is Islam."*

For this young Muslim and others like her there is no incompatibility between her religion and her Italian and European self since nationality and religion are two separate and non-conflicting identities. Others, however, are not so at peace with being European or Italian and seem to want to remain apart. This last group represents a relatively small percentage of the young Muslims who participated in the study and arguably represent another "class" of Muslims that was discussed primarily by teachers and social workers as individuals who only spend time with other Muslims and usually with peers from the same country of origin. These individuals are described as belonging to a Muslim population that is primarily concerned with working in Italy for a period of time and then returning to their country of origin. Hence, they are less concerned with integration and assimilation within Italian and European culture. Deductions about this group in regards to the prospects for a European Islam are difficult to make and highly tentative. What can be said here is that the Muslims in Italy represent not only numerous countries of origin, but also different socio-economic classes and means of practicing Islam. Solely on the basis of the select group of young Muslims who participated in the focus groups it is clear that their experiences range from a sense of complete integration to marginal

acceptance, to an utter lack of acceptance by the non-Muslim Italian population. This latter group tends to not have any Italian friends and sees the Italian population as being unwilling to engage in a dialogue and try to understand where the other is coming from.

At this point it is not evident whether a European Muslim identity will emerge for a large segment of the Muslim population. There is however a clear tendency amongst a portion of the population to seek out the commonalities in Islam and what they see as European values (e.g., respect for others and their cultures) in shaping their sense of self. It is these commonalities that can be seen as markers of a European Muslim identity as it is forming in Italy. As for being Italian, this is an identity that many of the participants report having. For them (and for the parents) this identity is largely determined by where they were born and grew up (in Italy) and by sharing Italian culture in terms of habits (e.g., going shopping or listening to music) or ways of interacting with others (e.g., socially correct behaviour in public spaces such as elevators).

Conclusion

The discussion by some of the youth regarding the special status granted them by virtue of being Muslim and hence having an additional identity and set of experiences or, in some cases, burdens, can be interpreted in light of Taylor's (1994) argument about the impact of dislocation and atomisation on the human need for recognition. The immigrant status of nearly all of the young Muslims places them in a situation where they are not necessarily afforded recognition for their national identities (at least as seen by non-Muslims), a situation that may drive them to emphasize their Muslim identity, with the intent of showing the world around them the "real Islam". These same youth may suffer "if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves" (Taylor, 1994, p. 25). Taylor's thesis

provides an apt explanation for the observed behaviour amongst many of the Muslim youth who gravitate towards one extreme of the spectrum. These are the young Muslims who identify more as Muslims on an individual level and become strident and vociferous in defending Islam publicly in an attempt to debunk the common stereotypes of Muslims (e.g., as terrorists, oppressors of women). This misrecognition by others, as Taylor puts it, appears to be quite influential in shaping Muslim identity amongst Muslim youth in Italy as, at least amongst study participants, their reactions to their environment are not only about behaviour, but are also part of identity development and evolution.

The social context is also an important factor in considering recognition and/or misrecognition. As Barth (1969, 1981) argued, the social context appears to be crucial amongst young Muslims in defining what it means to be Muslim in general and what it means to be a Muslim in Italy. This is perhaps best illustrated by the changes in behaviour amongst first-generation immigrants who have become more attached to their faith after coming to Italy whether in terms of deepening their belief on a personal level or as a behavioural change that brings their Muslim identity into the public arena (i.e., girls and women who did not wear the veil in their countries of origin, but began doing so in Italy). This public display speaks to a need for recognition, which Taylor (1994) and Honneth (1995a, 1995b) see as a pre-condition for the formation of an identity. If one sees identity as the result of interactions with others in which similarities and differences determine not only what an identity entails, but also where the boundaries lie between it and other identities, then recognition by others (in this case non-Muslims) can indeed be seen as essential for identity formation. If one follows this reasoning, then the situation of the young Muslims in Italy at present represents this quest for recognition of what they consider to be their true selves (on an individual and group level) on the basis of the markers that

they value as opposed to the misrecognition that they report encountering on a regular basis.

The primary question is what form this quest takes. Does the search for a clear identity(ies) lead young Muslims in Italy to become Italian or European or does it lead them to separate themselves from larger society? The research carried out in Italy suggests that many of the young Muslims who participated in this study do consider themselves to be Italians. Many of them feel that the only difference between themselves and their non-Muslim peers is their religion. This, however, is not a universally held perspective as evidenced by youth who feel ostracised at times or on an almost constant basis. If we are to speak of young Muslims in general, then we must also consider the young Muslims who did not directly participate in the study—the young Muslims who reportedly do not adhere to Islam or have moved away from Islam in response to the events of 9/11. The overall picture provided by this project is, not surprisingly, one in which the youth in question vary significantly. In answer to the question of whether a European Muslim identity is possible, the answer seems to be yes. The caveat is that it may only apply to a small portion of the Muslim population. A second caveat is that such a supra-national identity may emerge due to the failure of some youth to have a solid national identity. In this sense, the identity confusion that some of the youth report experiencing and sense of alienation can lead the youth to adopt, as a primary identity (see Jamiesson, 2002) either their Muslim identity, which appears to be the case for many of the youth, or a European Muslim identity that would provide them with a sense of geographical as well as religious belonging.

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National Report Belgium

This text summarizes the interviews – collective and individual – that were held in Brussels, Charleroi and Antwerp, between November 2005 and April 2006. The report is organized according to four major recurrent and important themes that arose in these interviews: Muslim identity; social control; discrimination; room for negotiation.

Muslim identity

In all of the groups interviewed[24], and in particular in the interviews of young people, it appears that the general media gives a negative image of Islam and Muslims as a whole, whether they are present in Belgium or abroad. There is no major difference in the handling of these two – the presented image is one of danger and threat. According to the interviews, we are experiencing major demonization.

Seen from the inside

Construction in the media and stigmatization

In fact, if being an immigrant represents a source of discrimination, being Muslim is a second source. In this context, for those interviewed, the media seems to define people originating from countries where Islam is significant by their religious group first and foremost. The presentation of those people is one of abnormalization, meaning that Muslims and Islam are essentially spoken of in negative terms, and when the terms are positive, this is in a negative context.

Muslims, particularly young people, who are subject to stigmatization, attitudes and suspicion associated with the international context, try to break away from

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[24] We recall these were: young people, parents, social workers and teachers. For greater detail, please refer to the methodological note at the beginning of the report.

the "imaginary Islam" relayed by the media (Deltombe, 2005). They attempt to define themselves in opposition to the media's construction of Islam, shown as a danger, and deterriorialized (a factor that is exogenous to them is presented as being endogenous). The logic they adopt is to highlight the value of Islam, and thus of themselves, in a counter-reaction to the stigmatization applied to them on the basis of both their religious group and the fact that they are children of immigrants. "Stigmatization thus contributes to the process of constructing dominated categories […]" (Rea and Tripier: 80).

The way they identify with religion therefore seems to be particularly conditioned by the media, in the perspective of trying to counteract the increasingly negative publicity given to Islam particularly since the attacks on 11 September 2001.

Culture/Religion: between break-off and continuity
In this self-affirmation approach to their Muslim identity, young people seek out a certain religious purism, which takes the form of a very spiritual approach in the three towns studied (particularly in Brussels, an approach stressing individualization and singularity, which leads them to seek further theological knowledge and to revert to written sources) and an effort to visibly show that they belong to Islam.

Vertovec and Rogers (1998: 11) made the same observation in a more general way concerning young Muslims in Europe. This self-affirmation process leads Muslims into an interpersonal struggle confronting the person with his own thoughts, desires and interpretations. However, we should emphasize with regard to the interviews done in Charleroi and some of the individual interviews held in Brussels, that this "reconquest" of Islam by referring to written sources seems to apply more to young people who have a high intellectual capital

(university students and graduates) than to young people from a disadvantaged social environment where their relation to writing is more problematical. The social-economic variable and the possibility of rising in the social stratification should not be neglected in the analysis of this phenomenon, which is too often presented, for a lack of a better explanation, as a "come-back" of religion to the public forum – as if it had disappeared at some point.

Under these circumstances, young people develop different types of behaviour, attitudes and arguments to counter the relation that is drawn between Islam and terrorism, Islam and oppression of Muslim women, etc. Young people develop arguments based on humanistic values of Islam and the major universal principles of individual liberty or again, like certain youth in Antwerp, they make comparisons with biblical texts.

The inadequacy of existing responses and resources with regard to the demand for recognition of Muslim identity; the breakdown in the structures of the communities of origin as they lose their relation to territory; the demonization and stigmatization of Islam; the discrimination of the Muslim community and the social-economic variable favouring a certain "revitalization of belief and practice" (Vertovec and Rogers: 11). This is nothing new, and it is part of the process applying to Muslims and particularly to young people.

The generation of young people is enrolled in an international context which does not facilitate their participation in the society with which they identify themselves. Subjected to socialization by their parents and at school, the younger generations try to maintain a certain continuity with their origin while envisaging changes as a result of their living situation. These young people are the first to be concerned and questioned by a society which does not always send back a positive image of them.

The knowledge of their religion that was transmitted to them via socialization by the parents does not always satisfy the children or those who call them into question. Consequently, they decide to delve deeper into the issue in order to be able to present an argument – it must be as rational as possible, since the religious and sacred cannot be used as an argument in the public forum. This Muslim self-analysis relates to a gap that young people create with regard to the tradition of their parents.

The position of justification that the young people have adopted comes with the role of teaching "true Islam" to non-Muslims as well as to Muslims and particularly their parents. In Brussels, the interviews showed a climate containing an obligation and/or an opportunity to educate non-Muslims in the "real" values of Islam. In Charleroi and particularly in Antwerp, young people experience the situation more as an opportunity to speak out, and above all to defend their religious identity.

Nevertheless, even when they are seeking religious authenticity, in their actions and their social life young people do not seem to be able to move away from their original blueprint. In fact, the education of all children by the parents (particularly by the mothers) durably conditions the individual's behaviour and thought patterns. "The elementary practices that constitute chains from birth, are what mark the individual with his ethnic character most strongly […]; the individual is never totally free of them when he is transplanted into a different class or a different ethnic group" (Leroi-Gourhan, 1965: 30 quoted by Juteau: 98). This confrontation between Islam of the fathers and Islam of the children is part of the inter-generation conflict but it is hard to claim that there is a consistent position in the young generation particularly since the borderline between "Islam as a tradition" and "Islam as a conviction" (Sunier in Vertovec

and Rogers: 54) is much less rigid than it might seem in certain presentations of parents and/or young people.

In addition, ethnic origin is also used as a frontier in Muslim groups. Thus each of the minorities tries to establish a distinction between themselves and the others, with regard to the largest group which is of Moroccan origin or inversely.

All in all, the determination of certain young people to redefine Islam by combining two utopian dynamics – developing internal harmony and harmony with regard to Muslim values using a permissible/illicit logic, and practicing Islam in a non-Islamic environment while remaining loyal to the country of birth and/or residence – gives a better understanding of why the borderline between culture and religion seems hard to define.

Unitary Islam

Young people, and more generally the interviewed Muslims, present Islam in a universal, non-territorial way. They define themselves in a unitary way with regard to the majority group of non-Muslims. But, though the discussion on Islam and its place on the European scene is often opposed to Western universalism, not everyone experiences or understands this dichotomy in the same terms.

The difference can be seen on one hand between young people encountered in Brussels, some of those in Antwerp and in Charleroi, who came from a modest milieu and are working to obtain promotion on the social ladder (high intellectual capital) and on the other hand, young people from Charleroi and a few from Antwerp living in a disadvantaged environment.

The young university students from Brussels, Charleroi and Antwerp think of themselves as players, and not spectators, of society and define themselves as Belgian and European. The idea of creating a Muslim system parallel to Belgian society is far from unanimously appreciated. What they demand, conversely, is the integration of their history, including that of Islam in the history of Belgian and European societies. So here, we are not talking about privatization of their religious identity, but rather a desire to readapt tradition, particularly that of their country, Belgium, in order to create their own Islam, for example.

These young people would also argue in favour of the creation of religious structures (mosques, Muslim schools …) and the integration of some of their religious rules (prayers, wearing a headscarf, holidays …) in existing regulations or those to be defined. The objective would be to create a group where the two universes are not in confrontation, but act together, the two being presented as compatible by these young people.

On the other hand, young people from Antwerp, and to a lesser extent from Charleroi and Brussels (who have little educational capital), have more trouble seeing themselves as full-fledged players in Belgian society. Their relation to Belgian identity and European identity seems more distant than for young university students in Brussels. The problems experienced by these young people in being accepted in the State structures, encourage them to envisage setting up their own Muslim schools (Charleroi and Brussels) or to develop "hidden" initiatives when negotiation seems impossible (Antwerp).

This unitary Muslim identification, although it is experienced and defined differently by Muslims, is still characterized internally by breaches (along ethnic-national lines and inter-generational) observed in all three towns, by both some Muslims and non-Muslims.

Within the group, the Muslim majority seems to consider that Islam is one and universal, and Muslims are defined above all by the Koran, the religious text that provides the groundwork for belonging to the community. Here, no difference appeared among the Muslims, whatever the town they came from. Some of them even talk about an encompassing entity rather than an identity.

However, Muslim minorities, within the Muslim group (people of Turkish, Albanian or Kosovar origin) and non-Muslims, underlined the differences existing between national or ethnic groups. The indicated differences show their own cultural values for each of the groups. The culture and religion propose universal values, but these are implemented in different ways. In Antwerp, people of Moroccan origin are considered as more radical than people of Turkish origin. Moreover, in Brussels and in Antwerp, different reactions were identified by social workers depending on the group: they said that they do not act in the same way with a Muslim from North Africa as with a Muslim from Kosovo or Pakistan.

As for the inter-generational gap, it appears that in Brussels, Charleroi and Antwerp, young people are more devout than their parents. This is not always confirmed by the parents (Antwerp).

Therefore, although from the outside, the image is one of universal Islam that is presented by the Muslims encountered, from the inside, we can see a diversification of religious identities within the Muslim group corresponding to ethnic-national origin, personal experience, and the generation gap.

The discourse of interviewed Muslims shows a broader reflection than can be summarized by the expression "beneath Islam, lies ethnicity" (Cesari, 1998: 17). This would be equivalent to saying that in immigration, Islam as part of the

national identity becomes ethnicity. This postulate has the advantage of giving us a better understanding of the differences between Moroccan, Turkish and Albanian Islam … in historical and cultural terms, not in terms of rituals. This relation with the country of origin and its culture patterns, to which people are attached – particularly in an enculturation process – are what lead to the growing number of types and experiences of Islam. In a way, the religion has been confiscated on behalf of the image of the community to ensure its perpetuation. "The difference lies in subjectivity and the emotional or affectionate attachment involved in the identification practice" (ibid: 17).

However, one must be careful about affirming collusion between Islam and ethnicity. There is an internal dynamic in the Muslim group where confrontation crystallizes on the ethnic-national distinction. This was mentioned more by people in a minority situation inside the country. This takes us back to the country of origin of the individuals and the construction of their national identity: for some (people of Moroccan origin), collective identity is constructed on the basis of Islam, whereas for others (people of Albanian, Kosovar and Turkish origin) it is based on the ethnic nationalism including religion as an element of identity (Kastoryano, 1996).

Internally, national, linguistic and cultural affiliations coexist in the pragmatic relations with the fact of being Muslim. These affiliations are expressed by minorities in the Muslim group given the presence of logic of internal domination. In addition, there is also a desire of the dominated within the minority Muslim group to break away from contamination and stigmatization pertaining to all persons having the same religious characteristics (Goffman quoted by Rea and Tripier, 2003: 80). All Muslims are not called into question in the same way, nor are they all identified as belonging to the Muslim group.

But, the importance of the external presentation must also be underlined since: "The outer face of the ethnic border is what commands the construction of an inner face based specifically on ethnic origin and converts culture into ethnicity" (Juteau, 1999: 165).

If we refer to the "racial cycles" of Burgess and Park (1921), we can see that economic competition that is central in the organization of society, results in conflicts when there is awareness that the other is a rival. By means of this conflict, to reach a decent position in the division of labour, as well as a status in the social order, "a minority group acquires common awareness of its culture" (Rea and Tripier, 2003: 13). In other words, the conflict becomes a socializing force and contributes to the encounter of individuals who were unaware of each other before (ibid: 12-13).

The European discourse and this was well before the attacks in 2001, contributes to this automatic equation between Islam-ethnicity-poverty (Deltombe, 2005: 5). In Belgium, Islam is presented as a consistent group symbolized by the population of Moroccan origin. In addition, many research projects done on the subject of discrimination (Rea (1998), Manço (2004), Brion (2004)) show that the population of Moroccan origin is one of the most stigmatized groups, suffering from discrimination in hiring, employment and housing. This situation has created real ethnic solidarity and has given rise to ethnic minorities (Rea et Tripier, 2003: 73-74). Under those conditions, the ethnic border imposed by the externally dominant group is recovered on its own behalf by the dominated group to transform it into a positive force. "Self-identification as a Muslim therefore in certain cases is the consequence of ethnic solidarity maintained or preserved under segregated social-economic conditions" (Cesari, 1998: 42). This being said, internal minorities are also subject to the postmodern logic of

individualization of religion, and find it even easier to join this ethnic solidarity when they are confronted with situations of discrimination or segregation.

To put it briefly, the claim of Muslim identity reflects a determination to reinforce the ethnic border between "us" within minorities and "the others", particularly when inequality between the groups is strong. To a lesser extent, a parallel can be envisaged with what happened in the United States where the conversion of thousands of American blacks to Islam seems to be a way of reversing the negative stigma and discrimination that applies to them so closely, by creating a spiritual movement (Nation of Islam) where their superiority is claimed (ibid: 43). In this way, the social-cultural and social-economic contexts of which the new generations are a part should be considered "as a determining factor in the process of ego-identity formation" (Kucukcan in Vertovec and Rogers: 104).

Seen from the outside

On the other hand, non-Muslims in Brussels, Antwerp and Charleroi have difficulty in defining Muslim identity, particularly given the internal diversity of the Muslim group, even when they are in continual contact in their professional environment and for some of them in their private lives (Brussels and Charleroi), with the Muslim population.

Some (in Brussels and Charleroi) stressed their fear and the danger that Islam and the Muslims represent, whereas others (in Antwerp and to a lesser extent in Brussels) particularly emphasize the radicalization of young Muslims (particularly of Moroccan origin) and a feeling of superiority displayed with regard to non-Muslims.

However, the interviews done with social workers and teachers in Brussels and Charleroi show that contact between Muslims and non-Muslims in private life seems to favour mutual understanding and to reduce the fear of the others. Proximity and cohabitation in private life with Muslim populations give non-Muslims a possibility to form an opinion on the question of what it means to be Muslim, and also, in certain cases, to dissipate the idea of danger and fear often associated with that identity. Conversely, in Antwerp, the data are insufficient to enable us to draw a conclusion, although some elements do seem to point in the same direction.

Social control

Social control is a mean of controlling behaviours in order to prevent or correct deviant comportment not in compliance with rules.[25] This can be formal exercised by public institutions, or informal, established by primary groups (family, peer groups). In this research project the idea is to talk about informal social control that is exercised by social relations formed from day to day. However, social control appears to be more restrictive and stronger when it is exercised by an individual having great legitimacy or when it is exercised within the primary groups (family, groups of friends, neighbours, etc.). The individual does not exist as a full-fledged person, he is subjected to group pressure that monitors "external compliance of individual behaviours" (Cesari, 1998: 23).

Social control by members of a group over the individuals that make it up, boys over girls and Muslims over non-Muslims, in areas where the former are a majority group, is a recurring element in the discussions and in situations reported by the persons interviewed, essentially teachers, social workers, as well as some young people.

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[25] See the <u>Dictionnaire de Sociologie</u>, "Les notions, les mécanismes et les auteurs", Hatier, Paris, September 1997, Le Robert Seuil, "Dictionnaire de Sociologie", Seuil, Paris, 1999

Group/Individual

The teachers and social workers interviewed stress the existence of social control inside and outside the Muslim group. In Antwerp and in Brussels, more particularly, they indicate a tendency within the Muslim group to try to establish a distinction between a good Muslim and a bad Muslim, between those who practice "true Islam" and the others. This logic is accentuated by ethnic-national differences within the Muslim group, in the sense that minorities inside this group need to establish a distance from the majority (Moroccans) who have a more interior conscience of Islam. In Charleroi, tension within the Muslim group was also observed by the teachers, but in the opposite direction in the sense that some young Muslims who do not wear a headscarf put pressure on others to give up their claim concerning wearing the headscarf.

Boys/Girls

The most unacceptable aspect in the conversations described, seems to be the control of girls by boys. In Brussels, there is a question of religious control by boys over girls in classes, whereas in Antwerp and in Charleroi, this is more of an ethnic control of girls by their brothers and fathers.

Muslims/Non-Muslims

Alongside these two forms of social control (group/individual and boys/girls), teachers and social workers in Brussels and in Antwerp also talk about the appearance of discriminatory and racist comments and actions by Muslims with regard to non-Muslims, particularly when they are in a position of force, for example in a majority in certain neighbourhoods and/or schools.

Finally, although the question of social control refers to the idea that religion could become an ethnic element, it appears to be more complex to identify who

has that control: sometimes these are young people seeking "pure" Islam, sometimes the internal group in majority, sometimes boys. A clearer vision considers that Muslim identity is based on representations constructed "around a standard that claims to have orthodox value. This could result in conflicts apparently based on an orthopraxy" (Tersigni: 40). One woman interviewed in Brussels talked about "communitarization of what it means to believe".

Discrimination

Discrimination is the third element that appeared massively in the testimonies. It seems to affect Muslims as a group and concerns a whole series of places of socialization, integration and daily life: schools, work, housing, among others. The question of the headscarf is central in most situations and experiences reported.

One aspect ran across all the groups interviewed – the certainty shared by the Muslims that they belong to a discriminated minority group. In all three cities studied, discriminations are mentioned by Muslims. By and large they concern the institutions (unequal treatment of religions), the labour market (the headscarf), education (ghetto schools, headscarf) and housing (Brussels and Charleroi).

On this question, young people appear to be more demanding than their parents, in particular in Brussels and in Antwerp. The parents adopt a logic of owing something to the Belgian State and of the rights that had been awarded to them by the State. Young people's thinking runs along the lines of making up for the lost dignity of their parents. It should be noted, however, that, alongside this dichotomy of generations there is a segmentation by ethnic-national origin. It seems that the internal majority in the Muslim group – the Moroccans – makes more demands than the internal minorities, for example people of Turkish

origin. Conversely, in Charleroi, the parents are the ones who are more demanding than the young people. However, the young people make themselves heard via the girls, supported by their mothers, in their fight for the right to wear a headscarf in school and on the labour market.

This differentiation of behaviour and positions between Muslim parents and their children is also part of a transformation of the dominant/dominated relations. Relations between young people and members of the majority groups are no longer what they were between parents and those same majorities. The parents, for the most part immigrant workers, were considered and perceived themselves as being temporary residents, whereas their children are a product of and actors in Belgian society. Consequently "the transformation of this relationship is what will enable the [young] dominated persons to speak out, to drop the mask, and to stand up and be counted" (Juteau: 45).

This recovery of their rights by young people, associated with citizenship in the country where they are living, rights that were lost or never acquired by their parents, comes with a transformation of religious identity and, at the same time, a change in the image reflected back by the community. By and large, the children are the ones who went to school, who constitute the groundwork for what can be imagined as a new elite behind this new awareness and with whom a new project will be developed: putting a Muslim imprint on Belgian territory.

Teachers, and above all, social workers, also insisted on the real stigmatization and discrimination against Muslims. There is no doubt for them that, in all three cities, the status of "immigrant" represents a source of discrimination in fact, and that being a Muslim is an additional source. Certain social workers also consider that in this more or less hostile context, this will determine the positions of individuals. And that faced with a threat, with discrimination, their membership

as a Muslim seems to override their membership in other groups that these people may claim or mobilize. For some teachers and social workers, the threat Muslims seem to represent or the discrimination they suffer, mainly for young people of Moroccan origin, is radicalizing their comments and their attitudes, and causing a return to religious sources. When faced with adversity, differences in reactions and in modes of expression do exist but in the comments recorded in all three towns, Muslim identity apparently takes precedence.

However, teachers are quite discreet about discrimination in schools. They recognize the existence of discrimination against Muslims in the labour world for example, but do not say anything more about the question. In Brussels and in Charleroi, they mention the fear they have with regard to the future of these young people, who were already in a disadvantaged social condition and in technical and professional educational courses.

All insist, however, on a certain perverse and dangerous aspect generated and maintained by the general media by broadcasting a negative image of Islam and Muslims, particularly young people. In Brussels and in Antwerp, teachers described a greater self-affirmation of young people as Muslims and an increasingly radical attitude in some of their positions, practices and demands. In Antwerp, they talked about the appearance of a feeling of superiority of Muslims with regard to non-Muslims, a feeling that is even more present when the young Muslims are in a majority, in schools where there is a high concentration of Muslims. In their mind, this situation is a source of racism and discrimination by Muslims with regard to non-Muslims. Finally, in Charleroi, some teachers note that it is difficult to talk about the question of Islam in class, because on the one hand, this is a subject that creates tension and, on the other, non-Muslims in the class have trouble dissociating Muslims from terrorism.

Certain teachers in Brussels, a few social workers in Charleroi and particularly the non-Muslim interviewees in Antwerp emphasized that some young people took advantage of the situation of discrimination as a pretext not to answer offers for jobs or traineeships or to play a victimized role. The teachers and social workers in Antwerp (particularly from the public network) call on the individual responsibility of the target group, because the discrimination is not so much against the Muslim as against his way of visibly expressing his religious identity.

Room for negotiation

The last part of this text considers the questions of demands, compromises and possible and ongoing negotiations. Teachers and social workers mention a change in demands and attitudes of Muslims – everyone seems to agree on a headscarf and its acceptance as being one of the points of discord.

Social workers feel that in most situations, negotiation is appropriate, whether in school, where young people are considered as victims and potentially excluded, or in other spheres, concerning for example participation in associative activities, the possibility of wearing a headscarf on an identity photograph, among others. For them, the maximum should be done to avoid exclusion.

Conversely, most teachers seem to consider that school is a neutral terrain and should be the "symbol" of secularity. Religious questions therefore can be raised as long as they do not refer to anything sacred, they do not cause exclusion of others or some kind of social control that of boys with regard to girls was often mentioned. By and large, respect of individual liberty constitutes the limit not to be crossed in the three towns.

The teachers interviewed in Charleroi and some of them in Brussels (individual interviews), who are in contact with a fragile and strongly disadvantaged population, tend to adjust to the students in order to maintain contact with them. They insist on the mediating role that schools should play. In Charleroi, this sometimes has a distorted effect that could create a backlash of discrimination, particularly against boys, such as one case referred to where a boy trainee in hairdressing was transferred to another class because of the presence of a girl who wore a headscarf in his class.

It should be added, however, that despite the fact that everything seems to be negotiable for these teachers, they are often limited by new decisions taken by the headmasters of their schools, for example the prohibition of wearing a headscarf on school premises. Moreover the existence of an official text governing the question facilitates a solution to the problem, at least in taking a clear, open and justified decision.

Both teachers and social workers unanimously agreed about refusing the headscarf when the person who wants to wear it is in a position of authority. Generally speaking, opinions were in favour of prohibiting visibility of Islam, but this seems to apply to all religions when there is the position of authority. The reason is the fear of proselytizing.

In this perspective, in Brussels and in Charleroi, social workers identified as Muslims seem to be more demanding than their non-Muslim colleagues. In Brussels, they indicate the position of refusal is better accepted than when non-Muslims announce it, some saying that their colleagues would have been called racists if they had expressed this demand. In addition, in Charleroi, the people encountered seem more open on the question of the neutrality of public

institutions of the State, as shows one case mentioned of a teacher who wore a headscarf.

However, and while this may seem contradictory or paradoxical, most of the speakers considered that the headscarf was a symbol of ethnic identity more than a religious symbol.

The only places where the problem seems to be settled quickly, at least in taking a clear, open and justified decision, are those where an official text governs the question.

This is a consistent and important observation. Generally speaking, when no official text – for example rules of procedure – exists, the treatment is differentiated and discretionary. Everyone decides according to his own vision and values, without particularly feeling that he has to explain them, and sometimes being inconsistent to his own practice. For that matter, some young people in Antwerp felt that the fact that the question of the headscarf has been delegated by the city authorities to the headmasters in schools creates a host of differentiated situations.

The other situations where social workers and teachers indicate that there are more and more demands for intervention concern: halal/haram food, special places reserved for an activity (prayers, swimming pools), the content of certain courses, the refusal of mixed courses.

The majority position for the persons encountered is to try to find a solution that suits everyone, and therefore to negotiate. The largest number of themes for negotiation was encountered in the group of social workers: the presence of mothers during classes in the country and at the seaside, special timetables in

swimming pools so women can swim alone …, nevertheless, generally speaking there are still many reservations.

The first reservation concerns demands that de facto exclude others. For some, Muslims and non-Muslims, "Belgian" values are another reason not to accept to negotiate, for example, it is unacceptable to negotiate the content of certain courses.

In the end, it seems that beyond positions of principle, there is not a lot of room for negotiation. In Brussels and in Charleroi, essentially for reasons concerning personal values and principles, in Antwerp also, but here professionals had the idea that a fair amount of the claims, demands and attitudes resulted from awareness of difference in treatment.

For the majority of the groups encountered, there is a need to move to greater equality, to take better account of discrimination, which would automatically reduce or even eliminate these claims, demands and attitudes.

However, it must be stressed on the one hand that teachers and social workers in Antwerp call on the public authorities to insist on individual responsibility of Muslims and, on the other, these are the same groups (Antwerp, Brussels, Charleroi) where there is a strong feeling that many use discrimination as a reason to refuse to go to a traineeship or to answer an official job offer.

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National Report UK

To understand the present-day situation of young Muslims in the UK we need to begin by saying something about the situation of their parents and grandparents - many of whom had been born in India, Pakistan and (what later became) Bangladesh, and who had come to the UK as immigrants.

The contrast in the experience and outlook in these two groups is very well summed up in a briefing paper prepared for a one-day workshop held in London in November 2004 with the title: "Muslims in Britain: The making of a New Underclass [University of Westminster, 2004]. This briefing paper makes several important points, including:

[a] Until the 1980s the Muslim community "played only a marginal role in British society as a distinct group". This was because, as recent immigrants, early immigrants seemed more interested in events in their countries of origin, because they assumed that their stay in Britain would be a temporary one and for this reason they did not take great interest in mainstream British politics. In addition, their social and economic contribution was curtailed through language difficulties and economic marginalisation. These and other complex factors help to explain why "the Muslim community today is at the bottom of the league on many indices, including political participation, economic status, educational performance and social integration";

[b] A number of seminal events have "catapulted Muslims to the centre of the political stage in Britain". These events include the Islamic revolution in Iran, the Palestinian intifadas, the so-called 'Rushdie Affair' [1989][26], the Gulf War

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[26] Parekh describes the Rushdie affair - which involved death threats against a writer for mocking Islam and its founder - as the "first Europe-wide expression of Muslim anger and a turning point in the European perception of Muslims [Parekh, 2005, 184].

[1991] and, most particularly, 9/11 and the ensuing Afghanistan and Iraq campaigns.

[c] Yet this "growing political activism and evolving sense of identity" on the part of British Muslims "appears to have had a very limited impact on most aspects of Muslim marginality". Despite signs of the emergence of a Muslim middle class, for most Muslims "marginalisation in the economy and society has become more apparent than ever". Thus Muslims make up a disproportionate percentage of the prison population[27] and they occupy "one of the lowest ranks in economic and educational achievement". Moreover, the progressive marginalisation of the Muslim community, if current trends continue, could create a new underclass and lead to a serious deterioration in community relations, and this process could be worsened by a rise in extremism and separatism in certain sections of the Muslim community [University of Westminster, 2004].

It cannot be doubted that the events of 9/11 and 7/7 (the date of the London suicide bombings) have focused attention on the way Muslims living in Britain – especially young Muslims - see themselves and are seen by others. Much of this is played out in media coverage and the effect that this coverage has may be seen as of critical importance. On this question Ansari expresses a widely held opinion in saying that the media's linkage of 'Muslim' and 'Islamic' with words like 'fundamentalists', 'extremists', 'terrorists' and 'fanatics' perpetuates the belief that Muslims and Islam are violent and threatening [Ansari, 2002, 5][28].

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[27] According to the Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, according to the most recent figures available to him, Muslims constituted 9 per cent of the prison population – over two and a half times the proportion of Muslims in the population as a whole [CRE, 2004b]

[28] In a review of its own coverage of Islam in 1999, the *Guardian* (a liberal-inclined national newspaper) found that the adjective 'Islamic' was frequently coupled with the words 'militants', 'extremist' or 'extremism', 'fundamentalism' and 'terrorism', whereas the adjective 'Christian' was coupled with positive or neutral words, like 'tradition' or 'belief' [Runnymede Trust, 2000, 169-70].

According to the Pew global Attitudes Project, almost half the UK general public said they associated Muslims with being fanatical and one third associated Muslims with violence [Pew, 2006, 5]. In this climate, not surprisingly, Muslims may for instance see themselves as being routinely treated as suspects by the police and other authorities under the provisions of anti-terrorism legislation simply for being Muslim (for example, by virtue of their appearance or dress).

In this context, it is worth quoting the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, which reported before 9/11 and presented the following summary of anti-Muslim racism in modern Britain:

> "Its manifestations include discrimination in recruitment and employment practices, high levels of attacks on mosques and on people wearing Muslim religious dress; widespread negative stereotypes in all sections of the press, including broadsheets as well as tabloids; bureaucratic obstruction or inertia in response to Muslim requests for greater cultural sensitivity in education and healthcare; objections and delays in planning permission to build mosques; and non-recognition of Muslims by the law of the land, since discrimination on grounds of religion or belief is not unlawful."

> [Runneymede Trust, 2000, 62]

According to a report in the *Times*, dated 27 September 2001, the immediate period after 9/11 was "a bad time to be a Muslim in Britain". The report described how many Asians, especially Muslims, were scared to go out because "when they venture out on to the streets, many…are insulted, spat at and attacked. Women have had their headscarves torn off and have been beaten up.

Mosques have been set on fire, ringed with pigs' heads and daubed with racist graffiti". Similarly, *Muslim News* stated that its offices had been inundated with reports of threats and assault on Muslims and attacks on mosques [European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, 2002, 4-5, 8][29].

It is also worth quoting from a report about the situation of Muslims in the UK prepared for the Open Society Institute [OSI] published in 2002. This begins by asserting that in the aftermath of the disturbances in the northern mill towns of England (namely, Bradford, Burnley and Oldham) in the spring and summer of 2001 and following the attacks in America on 9/11, "relations with Muslim communities are at a critical crossroads" [OSI, 2002, 1]. According to this report, the lives of Britain's Muslims had come under unprecedented scrutiny and examination, it being commonly asserted that Muslims were isolationist and failing to integrate into British society and "that they are living parallel lives to those in the wider community" [OSI, 2002, 1].

The contention that Muslims in Britain are failing (or as some would say, refusing) to integrate is one that is often heard in European countries with substantial Muslim populations. For example, in an article written by Peter Schneider, a German journalist, entitled "In Germany, Muslims grow apart", which was published in the *New York Times* and the *International Herald Tribune*, the assertion is made that

> "Until recently, most [Germans] held to the illusion that living together with some 300,000 Muslim immigrants and children of immigrants was basically working."

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[29] See also press coverage produced by British Muslims Monthly Survey [*BMMS*] for September 2001, pages 1-3 and *Q-News*, October 2001, Page 8. On the other hand, Malik [2005] casts doubt on the intensity and frequency of such incidents.

In Schneider's opinion, many sociologists attribute the growth of what he called a "Muslim parallel society" in Germany to "the discouraging social circumstances of the third Muslim generation of immigrants, [which was] marked by high unemployment and high dropout or failure rates in public schools". In Schneider's opinion, this explanation is incomplete. He argues that the Muslim middle class has followed the same trend – as indicated by the boom of businesses that arrange traditional Turkish weddings and circumcision in areas of Berlin like Kreuzberg and Neukölln. Schneider also points to the eventual success of the Islamic Federation of Berlin in securing, by means of court action, Islamic religious education for Muslim pupils in local schools. In Schneider's opinion, these religious lessons, which were paid for by the city of Berlin, often did not conform to the lesson plans submitted in German and were frequently conducted behind closed doors in Turkish or Arabic. Moreover, since the inception of these classes there had been, he claimed, a marked increase in the number of girls who attended school wearing headscarves and schools were "inundated" (Schneider's description) with requests to excuse Muslim girls from swimming and school outings.

Finally, Schneider quotes Ates, the author of *The Great Journey into the Fire*, as saying

> "The attacks in London [on 7/7] were in the eyes of many Muslims a successful slap to the face of the Western community. The next perpetrators will be the children of the third and fourth immigrant generation, who, in the eyes of well-meaning politicians will be brought up from birth to hate Western society."

Schneider concludes his article by reporting the view of Kelek and two other named female Muslim authors - that it is Muslim women who suffer most from

what is referred to as "German sensitivity towards Islam" and he comments: "The three authors explicitly accuse German do-gooders of having left Muslim women in Germany in the lurch and call on them not forget the women locked behind closed windows when they rave about the [attractions of] multicultural districts".

This discussion of Schneider's article serves two purposes here. First, it gives clear expression to the view that it is not so much that British or German (or French or Dutch) society has excluded or marginalised Muslims, rather it is Muslims who have rejected the society in which they reside. Second, it serves to raise the question of what view Muslims take of these matters.

It is important to stress that those who have researched Muslim opinion in the UK adopt a very different perspective than that espoused in Schneider's article. To illustrate this, take the following example from a report into the disturbances in several northern English towns:

> "Islamophobia was identified as a problem in the areas we visited and for some young people was part of their daily experience. They felt that they were being socially excluded because of their faith and that this was not being recognised or dealt with. It is [therefore] not simply a coincidence that the Pakistani community were at the centre of the disturbances."

> [Cantle, 2001 40]

Cantle's report draws attention to the extent of Islamophobia, social and economic deprivation and social exclusion of Muslim communities. And a similar analysis is presented in Ousley's report about the situation in Bradford produced at much the same time [Ousley, 2001]. A number of the teachers that

we interviewed in Bradford made the point that the relative segregation of Muslim and non-Muslim children in the city in large measure reflected the extent of residential segregation that had developed in Bradford over many years. Several teachers that we interviewed in London made the point that in addition to the effects on school populations of residential segregation, they had witnessed the way many white (non-Muslim) parents had sought to avoid sending their children to schools with large numbers of Muslim children. The consequence was that eventually the population of some schools in this part of London were now overwhelmingly (Bangladeshi) Muslim and others were overwhelmingly non-Muslim and white

Our focus groups with young Muslims in Bradford did little to contradict the idea that within the city there was relatively little contact between closely knit Muslim communities and the wider population. One illustration of this was that in one of our focus group of Bradford parents (which at the behest of the fathers were segregated by gender), of the nine women present in one focus group, five spoke no English at all despite having all lived in the UK for at least ten years. Though both the young Muslims and their parents that we spoke to in Bradford claimed that the young Muslims had non-Muslim friends (and the parents claimed to encourage such friendships), such interaction was restricted by the almost total spatial separation of Muslim and non-Muslim communities in Bradford and by the consequent segregation of Muslims and non-Muslims in Bradford schools.

In asserting that Islamophobia was a significant issue which had led to their social exclusion and that it had been overlooked by those in a position to influence matters, the young Muslims who expressed their views to Cantle were making an extremely significant point. To explain why this point is so significant we need to go back to the post war arrival and settlement of Muslims

in the UK which got underway in the mid-1950s and 1960s, and the subsequent growth of a sizeable Muslim population in Britain.

Though this has been described and analysed at length in a large number of books and monographs, until recent years this phenomenon, as Joly suggests, was categorised in terms of skin colour or ethnicity ('Asian') and / or in relation to country of origin (Pakistan and, later, Bangladesh), rather than being categorised in terms of religion. In other words, at one time relatively little attention was paid to Muslims *qua* Muslims.

Instead, according to Joly, attempts to combat racial discrimination in the UK did not at first distinguish between those with dark skins. Instead, African-Caribbeans and those from the Indian sub-continent were placed in the same category - as being 'black'.

Subsequently however, this 'conglomeration' met growing resistance. First, those who defined themselves (or who could be defined) as 'Asian', that is to say, those from the Indian sub-continent and those of Indian and Pakistani origin who came from East Africa, began to making specific demands. Later, this 'new community' split along ethnic-national fault-lines into Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis and especially along religious fault-lines into Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims. As Joly went on to argue, "it is within this general framework that the construction of a specific Islamic identity in Britain must be placed" [Joly, 1995, xi].

We can illustrate the difference between categorisation in terms of 'race' and categorisation in terms of 'religion' by quoting one of the participants in one of our focus groups of young Muslims who said:

You've got the police [,,,] who refuse to accept an Islamophobic attack
because they're still working on race relations procedures.

This focus group participant was, in effect, giving support to Joly and also to Modood, who argues that the relations between Muslims and British society have to be seen in terms of agendas of racial equality and multiculturalism and that Muslims have contested important aspects of multiculturalism – notably the primacy given to racial identities and the secular base of much public discourse. According to Modood, while it remains the case that in the UK the legal and policy framework relating to anti-discrimination continues to reflect "the conceptualisation and priorities of racial dualism" (of black and white), the severe disadvantages experienced by those of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin are sufficient to persuade many Muslim activists that "race relations are an inappropriate policy niche for Muslims" [Modood, 2005, 37-9].

Similarly, the Forum Against Islamophobia and Racism [FAIR] argued in favour of the UK Office of National Statistics [ONS] producing a separate report on religion rather than combining this report with its report on 'ethnicity and identity'. FAIR's reasons for taking this position included the following:

[a] An increasing number of people self-define their identity by their religion [as opposed to ethnic or racial distinctions] and that in studies of citizenship and identity self-identification should enjoy parity with - or even precedence over - identity otherwise defined or attributed;

[b] There is a growing body of evidence that religion is increasingly a ground for prejudice, discrimination, exclusion and violence and that more detailed and comprehensive research is needed to establish the impact that this has on people's lives;

[c] Policy makers and legislators are handicapped by the lack of available statistical data on religion.

[FAIR, 2002]

According to the ONS report on collecting ethnic group statistics referred to by FAIR, "One of the most important defining characteristics for some ethnic minorities is their religion" and the ONS accepted that many commentators, especially in what it termed 'the Asian community', thought that the religious dimension should be recognised more explicitly in official statistics. The position taken by the ONS could be supported by a survey of Muslim opinion in Britain, which revealed that 93 per cent of respondents considered that religion was important to them (and of these 78 per cent said it was "very important")[30]. Similarly, the OSI report (referred to earlier) cites an *ICM* Research Poll of British Muslims which seems to show that they consider their religion to be a significant part of their identity. Respondents were asked how they saw themselves first and foremost: 58 per cent responded as "British Muslim", 30 per cent as "Muslim", 6 per cent as "other" and 6 per cent as "British". At the same time, it is significant that the declaration of a Muslim identity is thought by many Muslims to cause unease among the majority population – the same *ICM* poll found that 69 per cent of British Muslims believed non-Muslim Britons did not see Islam as part of British culture [OSI, 2002, 78].

We can distinguish two contrasting perspectives in Ansari's depiction of Muslim identities in Britain. On the one hand, young British Muslims are said to be developing "differing perceptions of national, ethnic and religious belonging, and are negotiating new ways of being Muslim in Britain in which the British

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[30] It should not be overlooked that in this same survey 48 per cent of respondents said that they never attended mosque.

element of their identity often forms an important part of the equation". On the other hand, among young British Muslims "There is still a dominant view that Britishness depends on a shared sense of (post)-Christian, cultural and racial unity, and imperial history [and accordingly] Muslims in Britain have had to think of themselves in reaction to being rejected and constructed as the 'Other'". [Ansari, 2002, 2]. Another and perhaps starker way to put this comes later in Ansari's report, where he argues that

> "While there now seems to be a greater propensity to engage with the myriad cultural forms of contemporary Britain, and to adopt many of the attitudes prevalent across Britain, it seems likely that the shaping of young Muslims self-identity will be circumscribed partly by beliefs and values they are socialized into at home and in their communities, *but primarily by racist notions of difference which pervade much of the white population.*"

> [Ansari, 2002, 14; emphasis added]

Contrary to widely-held and even prevailing images of Muslims in Britain as being undifferentiated, fundamentalist and resistant to change, Ansari argues that one of the most striking aspects of British Muslims is their diversity, which reflects their different ethnic backgrounds and their various geographical origins [2002, 6]. In the *Preface* to Ansaris' report, Muslims in Britain [Ansari, 2002], the Director of the UK Minority Rights Group International described the diversity of the lives and experiences of Muslims in Britain in these terms:

> "[Ansari's report] discusses Muslims' different origins, identities and backgrounds, and helps to counter damaging images and ideas. It shatters the myth of homogeneity among Muslims, considering different religious

and political viewpoints. Like all communities, the picture is complex, and it is broken down further by age, class, gender and regional differences – among many others. There is no one 'Muslim' viewpoint."

[Latimer, 2002, 3]

This is a significant point because, as Ansari argues, such diversity is at odds with state policy on social and political issues, which, according to him, assumes that British Muslims constitute an undifferentiated community. This is especially so insofar as we are operating in a field where the tendency, particularly in recent times, is for sweeping claims to be made about Muslim identities and where many observers – including generally well-disposed observers - appear to suggest that all Muslims take the same view of particular events and circumstances.

In our view, there are compelling reasons for exercising caution when we try to characterise the identity or outlook of Muslims in Europe or in the UK, and our various focus groups provided support for this perspective. For example, we concluded that the participants in our focus groups of young Muslims held in London showed themselves to be much more aware than participants in our focus groups held in Manchester and Bradford about issues facing Islam, they were much more vocal in condemning British government policy as it impacted on Muslims either internationally or domestically and they were more radical in their general outlook. Thus, several of those who participated in our focus group held in the Islamic cultural and Heritage Centre in West London were university students and those who participated in the focus group held at the Islamic College in north west London (some of whom had come to study there from the USA, Sweden and Iran) displayed a considerable grasp of international issues, an impressive knowledge of problems faced by Muslim communities in other

European countries, and a considerable ability to discuss the nature of Islam. We ascribed these differences between focus groups in the level of sophistication of the discussion to differences in levels of affluence and education, as well as to the breadth or otherwise of the life experiences of participants. We did not, however, take such differences to mean that there is no such thing as a recognisable Muslim identity or British Muslim identity.

According to Parekh, the description 'British Muslim' might mean one of three things: [a] Muslims who live in Britain, but have no loyalty to the country as their entire commitment is to the Islamic *Ummah*; [b] those for whom 'British' denotes their attachment to Britain and 'Muslim' denotes their religious allegiance; [c] those who feel loyalty to Britain and in whom there arises a distinct British form of Islam. Parekh considers that the first category is the smallest of the three [Parek, 2005, 199]. Similarly, The OSI report suggests that three trends can be discerned in this younger Muslim generation. First, there is a small yet significant minority who have embraced a radical interpretation of Islam. Second, there is a much greater number who "have retained their Muslim identity and faith but have not seen this as an obstacle to contributing and integrating positively into mainstream British society" and who consider that Islam can develop by engaging with western society. Third, there is a large and significant number who though born into Muslim communities do not identify themselves as Muslim "in any significant way" [OSI, 2002, 77-78]. This echoes Ansari's characterisation of Muslim religious identity in Britain as ranging from orthodox Islamic practice to nominal affiliation and which is "negotiated in complex, shifting and multi-faceted ways" [Ansari, 2002, 12].

Yet it must be stressed that our focus groups of young Muslims did *not* include the third of the trends described in the OSI report, that is those born into Muslim communities, but not identifying themselves as Muslim in any significant way.

The reason for this is simple: as all our initial contacts were made through mosques, Islamic welfare associations, Islamic schools and colleges and Islamic cultural centres it was inevitable that the young Muslims that attended our focus groups were likely to say that being Muslim was central to their identity.

In many respects however, the opinions of the young Muslims who took part in our focus groups were very much in keeping with other data about the opinions of British Muslims. For example, A *GfK NOP* survey of British Muslims carried out for *Channel 4 News* suggested that there is a significant degree of difference between the opinions of young Muslims [aged 18-24] and those of their elders. According to the *GfK NOP* survey, whereas 42 per cent of Muslims aged 45+ felt "very strongly" that they belong to Britain and Islam, only 30 per cent of those aged 18-24 felt "very strongly" that nation and religion are compatible. Similarly, many more young Muslims than older Muslims could be classified as "Staunch defenders of Islam" (notably in terms of prioritising the defence of Islam over the defence of freedom of speech) – 38 per cent of those aged 18-24 fell into this category compared with only 15 per cent of those aged 45+. In addition, in respect of the London bombings the *GfK NOP* survey of Muslims found significant differences between different age groups. Thus 31 per cent of young Muslims agreed with the proposition that British support for the War on Terror justified the London bombings, compared with 14 per cent for those aged 45+. And more young Muslims said they were not surprised that the bombers were British-born than those aged 45+ - 44 per cent versus 27 per cent.

In our focus groups, the clearest expression of there being a marked difference between the vision of Islam held by their parents and the vision held by young Muslims came from a young Muslim man who attended the Islamic College in Willesden, north-west London. In his view the differences between generations reflected differences in their personal histories, and as such they were also

reflections of cultural and geographical differences. This individual's view was endorsed by others attending this particular focus group, though not in such a coherent and insightful way.

It is worth adding that several of the social workers that we interviewed supported the idea that young Muslims lived "between two cultures" (a phrase that was used more than once) and that as a result of this they faced certain contradictions. In particular, these social workers seemed to accept the view that there was an ongoing tension between the expectations of Muslim parents and the expectations of young Muslims. This tension was depicted as being a tension between the cultural traditions of the parents that were embodied in the home and the norms and expectations of the wider society as they impacted on young Muslims.

The *GfK NOP* survey also revealed differences between the generations about the role of women, and this was something about which the young Muslims in our Manchester focus group held strong views. These young Muslims discerned a marked generational conflict over the question of what is the appropriate role of (Muslim) females in society. For instance, some of the females in our young Muslim focus groups objected to what they saw as traditional expectations of women, and they took particular exception to the suggestion that a subservient role for women was set out in the Koran, rather than this being a cultural manifestation. Here it should be added that that several of the teachers that we interviewed expressed the view that girls were oppressed within the Muslim home and that whereas Muslim parents typically had high educational aspirations for their sons, they seemed to be less interested in the educational progress of their daughters[31].

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[31] Several of the teachers whom we interviewed suggested that the contribution of Muslim parents to the education of their children is constrained because they do not always understand the workings of the education system.

Although many of the young Muslims who participated in our focus groups were at pains to say that Islam denoted peace, that Islam is non-racial (and therefore welcomes the faithful irrespective of skin colour) and that – contrary to what was widely alleged in the West - Islam supported human rights, the principal point that emerged was the centrality of Islam in the lives of our focus group participants. Even bearing in mind that, as mentioned above, our initial contacts were made through bodies that were essentially religious organisations or were closely attached to mosques, and that this determined the composition of our focus groups, our focus group participants did more than merely stress how important being Muslim was to their identity. In fact they went further than this and it is possible to summarise what they had to say on this subject as follows: first, many of them reported that they had developed their *own* understanding of Islam. Thus, for example, when it came to wearing the *hijab* it was often said that this was a personal decision, which reflected the way that a particular individual wished to express her faith and to conduct herself in society. Significantly perhaps, in several cases the female concerned mentioned that her mother did *not* wear the *hijab* – which gave additional substance to the claim that the daughter was exercising a personal choice. Second, a few participants went out of their way to say that they had not always been "good Muslims" - for example, one confessed that in the past he had spent his leisure time clubbing, smoking and drinking[32].

What seems significant to us is that though each instance referred to earlier – the decision to wear the *hijab* and the confession of once being a "bad Muslim"– were clearly telling us about individual life histories (and each can be described

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[32] It should be noted that social workers that we interviewed in Bradford spoke of a significant change in the attitudes of young Muslims as shown by the extent to which many young Muslims now went "clubbing", drank alcohol and consumed drugs. On the other hand, it was said by some social workers that the involvement of young Muslims in drug dealing – as well as their being consumers of illegal drugs – should be seen as way that young Muslims responded to the poverty and unemployment that they faced.

as almost a personal odyssey), they were very much in keeping with a wider trend noted by a number of observers. This trend is well summarised by a reporter for the *Guardian* newspaper, who stated that the younger generation of British Muslims (which she termed the "pivotal generation")

> "is already defying the experts. They are not conforming to the theories of seculariston common for [the last] twenty years; they are perhaps even more devout than their parents, and are certainly more assertive of their faith and its requirements…[and] they are not showing much sign of conforming to earlier patterns of cultural assimilation, while the war on terror is radicalising them into a wider range of political activity"

[Bunting, 2004]

To explain these developments, we may point to a variety of causal factors: first, to deprivation, racism and discrimination (along the lines of the definition of anti-Muslim racism produced by the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain that was quoted earlier); second to the likelihood that disjunction between their expectations and experiences of life in Britain is greater for many young British Muslims than it was for their parents or grandparents; third, to the impact of Islamophobia which, even if not beginning with 9/11 is taken by British Muslims to be greatly magnified by this event. Indeed, 9/11 is clearly seen by British Muslims – our focus group participants included – as a seminal event. In particular, 9/11 is seen by them to do much to determine subsequent media coverage of Muslims and of Islam, as well as creating a favourable environment for the introduction of a range of anti-terrorist measures that produce, *inter alia*, the frequent stop and search of young Muslim men merely, so it widely alleged by young Muslims, for "looking Muslim", as well as what are seen as heavy-handed police raids on alleged terrorist premises.

Certainly, all the participants in our focus groups with young Muslims took the view that discrimination against Muslims in Britain had increased after 9/11, and had increased still further after 7/7. Frequent mention was made of young Muslims being stopped and searched by the police and several participants reported that since the London bombings they felt themselves to be treated with obvious suspicion by people whom they encountered in their normal daily life – especially when they used public transport and particularly so if they carried bags that others might imagine contained an explosive device. Discomforted by the suspicious looks of their fellow passengers, in the aftermath of the London bombings some of our informants had – albeit temporarily – minimised their use of public transport or when using public transport had refrained from carrying bags or cases.

It is not difficult to see the events of 9/11 and 7/7 – or perhaps we should refer to the way these events and their aftermath are *interpreted* by young Muslims – as doing much to produce among young Muslims a common identity. In this process it is to be expected that *being Muslim* is central and that defending and explaining Islam is integral. Indeed, as we found in our focus groups, there was a strong sense of participants belonging to a community "under siege". This was not merely a negative reaction though. These events, we were told repeatedly, had prompted these young Muslims to wish to know more about Islam. What we found was not merely a growing interest in Islam, we also heard about a burning desire to explain Islam to others – as one participant put it, to "set the record straight", so that what he saw as media distortions of Islam could be countered effectively.

A number of the participants in our focus groups (and this occurred in more than one focus group) told us that in the aftermath of 9/11 they had gone out of their

way to read more about Islam and that this was motivated, at least in part, by a wish to have ready-made answers to challenges from non-Muslims about Islam. As one participant explained:

> *The media was telling me this about Islam and that about Islam. But I wanted to make up my own mind and it was the events of September 11th that made me pick up books and go the other people to find out more about Islam. And it was this that led me to becoming a Muslim.*

In addition to resenting media portrayal of Muslims, several focus group participants asserted that such perceived negativity had made them "more Islamic" and more conscious of their responsibility to educate the (non-Muslim) public about the true nature of Islam. In other words, the perception of uniformly negative media coverage of Muslims and of Islam had engendered in many young Muslims both a heightened interest in Islam and a feeling of solidarity that gave them more of a sense of who they were, and this was something that they welcomed

As many researchers have found, there is great concern among British Muslims about what they see as the negative portrayal of Muslims and Islam in the British media. One particular concern is that the media fail to represent the full range of views within Muslim communities and that disproportionate media attention is devoted to extreme and unrepresentative views (though it may be pointed out that this reflects wider news values, rather than news values applied just to Muslims).

The media came in for a great deal of criticism in all the focus groups we conducted with Muslims – both with young Muslims and with their parents. In summary, it was said that media coverage showed a lack of understanding of

Islam, that the media routinely caricatured Islam and that only bad news about Islam was printed. The cumulative effect of this coverage was seen by Muslims as being inflammatory: not only by encouraging anti-Muslim racism, but also by creating a wave of hostility that many Muslims – young and old – encountered in their daily lives and activities.

It should be added that several of the social workers to whom we spoke also attested to the strength of feeling among young Muslims about the portrayal of Muslims in the mass media. They reported, for instance, being told by young Muslims about the increasing problems they faced the following the London suicide bombings with regard to bullying at school, verbal and physical abuse on the street and suspicious looks directed at them when using public transport. Similarly, the teachers that we spoke to referred to the extent to which young Muslims saw Islamophobia as a negative element in their everyday lives and the degree to which they saw the mass media as playing a vital role in causing Islamophobia – especially by suggesting that Muslims were all extremists and fundamentalists, that they rejected British values and that they did not want to integrate. As one young Muslim focus group participant put it:

> *That's what a lot of Muslims think now – "Why are they [the mass media] trying so hard to make us look bad?"…It just frustrates me a lot.*

It should be noted here that in our focus groups with young Muslims, particular mention was made of the anti-terror police raid on a supposed dirty-bomb factory in Forest Gate (East-London) in 2006 - which turned out to be based on false intelligence - and the earlier shooting of a man in Stockwell Underground Station (South London) - on the mistaken assumption that he was an active terrorist. In every case an explicit connection was made between these events and what they saw as a wider pattern of government policy - and government

deceit – particularly in respect of the war in Iraq and anti-terrorism measures introduced in the UK.

It should be said that in making this connection young Muslims are not alone: their views are shared by many non-Muslims in the UK. And oddly enough, pointing to this common outlook helps us to make some sense of why it was that our questions to young Muslims about possessing a European identity drew virtually no response. Indeed, these questions caused some puzzlement in our focus groups[33]. The reason that we were not surprised by this lack of response was that we interpreted it as being in keeping with the distant and problematic relations that many, if not most, British people have with the EU and with any idea of a common European identity (which goes beyond the present discussion).

On the other hand, we discovered that the young Muslims in our focus groups held very firm views about what they saw as the stark contrast between the situation of Muslims in the UK and the situation of Muslims in other EU countries, notably France, Germany and the Netherlands. These views were all the more striking, one might argue, given the uniformly negative view that they held of the British media's portrayal of Muslims. This comparison is epitomised by one young Muslim who stated that

> *I just really appreciate the fact that British society is more open-minded. [In Britain Muslims can be] doctors, lawyers, barristers…it shows that we can make a valuable contribution to society and I think that's lacking in other European societies even if they haven't instigated the same bans as the French have.*

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[33] By contrast, questions to them about possessing a British identity invariably provoked a lively response.

The French ban mentioned here is, of course, a reference to the banning of the *hijab* in French schools. This ban was often raised in our focus group discussions with young Muslims. It was not merely seen as an anti-Muslim measure, but treated as symptomatic of the harsher climate that Muslims face in Europe. Similar comments were made about attempts to introduce citizenship tests in the Netherlands and in certain German Bundesländer.

Further light is thrown on this matter by a comment made in one of our focus groups by one young Muslim revert (convert):

> *When I travel to Germany and I wear a [head]scarf people you know people were staring at me, they wouldn't sit next to me [on public transport]…So you know, I think the situation in England is much better than…in Europe.*

The issue of the *hijab* provoked lengthy and animated debate wherever we went. For many of the young British Muslims to whom we spoke, responses to wearing the *hijab* served to show that "Europe" discriminated against Muslims much more than "Britain" did. In this context, it should be mentioned that several teachers that we interviewed made the point that most schools in the UK allow female Muslim pupils to wear certain types of Islamic dress (including the *hijab*) – provided that this accords with school uniform policy.

It is also worth mentioning that on numerous occasions in our focus group discussions about the *hijab* it was stressed by young female Muslims that their wearing of the *hijab* was widely and repeatedly misinterpreted by non-Muslims. Far from being something imposed on them by their families, by their male relatives, by religious leaders or by the Muslim community and far from being a

symbol of female subjugation or degradation, their decision to wear the *hijab* was, we were told, a personal decision.

One focus group participant went further and contrasted her decision to wear the *hijab* with the propensity of English females to attract love and attention by, as she put it, taking their clothes off:

> *But once you take that step [to wear the hijab] and people see that you respect yourself and you're protecting yourself and you're not destroying yourself out there for anybody, people start respecting you a lot...and people can see the purity of it. [Once I began wearing the hijab] I could totally see the change in everyone [in] the way they treated me...guys would hold doors open for me once I started wearing my scarf and you know they were always asking if I needed something.*

Another female in the same focus group mentioned a non-Muslim work colleague who had the impression that Muslim women were forced to wear the headscarf by their parents, whereas she had decided of her own accord to wear it. For her

> *Islam is a very liberating religion and [she felt] that I have not been oppressed in any way whatsoever. So it's me who will wear the [head]scarf the way I do and follow my religion because I want to and not because I'm forced to.*

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Conclusion: Young Muslims

The primary question addressed in this research focused on the existence, or lack thereof, of a European Muslim identity. Such an endeavour presupposes a clear idea of what identity, an idea that is in and of itself extremely complex as evidenced by the vast array of literature on defining identity as a theoretical construct. We do not seek to answer the question of what identity is, but rather adopt one approach that has been proposed by scholars such as Barth, Foucault and Hall in which identity is a social construction, resulting from a bi-directional exchange between groups. The identity itself is not concrete or fixed, but manifests itself in the form of vessels or markers that result from a dynamic process involve interactions between two or more groups (Barth, 1969; 1981). The markers are given meaning within a socio-cultural system that uses them to construct an identity. In this sense personal identity, our sense of self, and social identity, how we present ourselves and are perceived in the social world, evolve as meaning or emphasis is given to some markers and not to others. In our understanding of identity, the identity itself is the sum of a social process that involves differentiated groups who reach an agreement as to the association between a given vessel and an identity, but do not necessarily agree on the significance of that vessel. The veil is one example of this in regards to Muslims as it is generally agreed as being a marker of a Muslim identity, whereas the reason and significance behind it remains a subject of debate. Thus, the "in-group" (Muslims) may have a very different conceptualisation of "the veil" than the "out-group" (the "West").

We can look at a European Muslim identity within this framework by considering how the term has emerged and the commonalities that bind Muslims together in their own minds and in the minds of others. Talking about the identity represents a first step towards its creation, but the vessels or markers are

still lacking. In what follows we hope to address some of the conceptualisations of Muslims in Europe by both the in-group and out-group in order to understand how the interactions and delineations between the two groups serve to create this new identity. To some extent one can see the "European Muslim's" sense of self as emerging through distinctions made between his/her identity and those of both Muslims elsewhere and non-Muslims in Europe. The second part of the dynamic depends on the behaviours of the out-group as it draws distinctions between its own identity and that of Muslims. Taken together, the apparent conflict between two groups clarifies and delineates. The question now is the extent to which such a process is underway.

The conceptualization of a Muslim identity by the "West" in recent years can be said to see Muslims as a homogenous group with numerous stereotypes. This is particularly true following the events of 9/11 when the subsequent conflicts and tension brought even greater attention to Muslims and Islam as a "foreign" presence in Europe. At the same time many, but not all, Muslims appear to have altered their attachment to their Muslim identity, making it more central in their lives and claiming it as a primary identity despite the multitude of national, ethnic and cultural differences amongst Muslims living in Europe. These individuals come from diverse backgrounds with the potential for divergent identities and yet seem to focus on one central aspect of the self—their adherence to Islam, which serves as the common basis for a personal and ultimately social identity. While the personal Muslim identity is of great significance for the individual we are more concerned with the implications of the social Muslim identity as this has come to replace other common primary identities such as nationality. In an increasingly globalised world where the boundaries of nation and identity become increasingly blurred and Islam figures prominently in the public discourse, the identity—label—of being Muslim can be seen as a charged social game piece. It lacks the neutrality that, in the West,

would be applied to another religious identity and is used both by Muslims and against them. We do not contend that all Muslims in Europe seek to use their Muslim identity in such a manner and certainly those who would be inclined to do so were overrepresented in our sample in all four countries. Nonetheless, it is their social visibility and activity that renders them worthy of extensive study and discussion if we want to understand the future of a Muslim identity in Europe.

An examination of the various narratives in the research demonstrates variability and heterogeneity amongst Muslims as well notable country differences. Despite this, one can identify common themes or dimensions in each of the four countries. The first of these can be called the "female question"; the second relates to the opposition or conflict between religion and tradition; and the third focuses on threat. There are numerous aspects that play into each of these dimensions, which are imbued with local and more global features.

The "female question" has two elements. The first is the veil, which figures prominently in the discourse amongst Muslims and non-Muslims alike. It is a point of contention on the individual level for women and girls in terms of whether or not to wear the veil and on the social level as debate abounds as to the appropriateness, even legality, of wearing the veil in places such as schools and the workplace, especially by individuals in positions of authority. This debate is partially rooted in local circumstances as individual schools and employers address the issue, but the discourse is much wider, drawing upon conflicts throughout Europe (notably France in the case of the veil). Thus, the veil has taken on a symbolic value in representing the conflict between "Western values" and secularism and Muslims' claim to freedom of religious expression.

The symbolic value of the veil is not limited to a conflict between the rule of secular law and religion. At the individual level the veil has taken on new meanings for women who choose to wear it. While obedience to god can be seen as the underlying reason, there are also symbolic elements in which the veil reflects their freedom of choice and even liberation (e.g., from the perceived sexualisation of women in Western culture). It can serve as a means of protection and expression of religious beliefs and an identity that might not be deemed necessary in an Islamic country where a Muslim identity is taken for granted. As such, women may intentionally use the veil to increase their visibility as Muslims and hence publicly proclaim their identity.

The public visibility granted by the veil also transforms the role of women in representing Islam in that they become *de facto* symbols and representatives of their religion. Women have long played a central role in the debate about Islam as victims of a religion and culture that oppresses women. The shift that appears to be taking place is that women are moving from being the subject of controversy (e.g., claims that Islam oppresses women) to taking an active part in the discourse, in some cases replacing men as the primary interlocutors.

The transformation of the role of women amongst Muslims in Europe is indicative of the second dimension—the distinction between religion and tradition. Arguably much of the criticism of the practice of Islam is rooted in the means in which the Koran is interpreted within different ethnic groups and cultures. While Muslims are often seen, and present themselves, as a homogenous group, there are numerous practices that have their bases in culture rather than religion. The "female question" is but one of these and the changes taking place can partly be attributed to the visibility granted by the veil and partly to the tendency amongst young Muslims to seek an understanding of Islam that is not rooted in time and place—the traditions of their parents. This

search for the meaning of Islam may be confined to an elite group of young Muslims in Europe, but the emergent themes are clear and point to a transformation in the conceptualization of Islam and the significance behind Islamic practices for Muslims. This re-definition looks at Islam in universal terms, disconnected from the "contaminants" of traditions rooted in place, and seeks to enter the discourse on a rational and intellectual level in which Islam is neither dependent on time, nor place but exists in a "true" form.

The third dimension relates to threat. While commonly thought of in terms of the threat that Islam poses for the West—as famously spelled out by Huntington with his "clash of civilizations" argument (1996)—the research suggests that there is another side to the "threat" in which the West represents a threat *to* Islam.. Although one can debate the extent to which immigrants should adopt the local culture, it is clear that Muslims feel that their religion, and hence they as individuals, are attacked irrespective of individual Muslims' assimilation or integration into the local culture. Muslims recognize that the West sees their religion as a threat, but also point to the situation in which they find themselves where Western culture can be seen as trying to eliminate, or at least reduce, the presence of Islam and Muslims in their midst. Thus, Islam is both seen as a threat and under threat creating a situation in which it is impossible to distinguish cause from effect. If, for the sake of argument, we use 9/11 as a starting point, then one can see a situation in which Islam represented a threat leading the West to respond in various ways that threaten Islam on a general—9/11 is itself often viewed as a conspiracy against Muslims—and individual—Muslims are asked to explain and answer for the actions of other Muslims—level. This in turn leads Muslims act (or react) in various ways that may contribute to the perception of an Islamic threat. 9/11 however is not a real start pointing. The conflict between Muslims and Europe dates back centuries and Muslims have played pivotal roles in the development of modern-day Europe

(Nielsen, 1992). What is arguably unique today is that the West is largely oblivious of the threat that it poses to Islam and Muslims around the world, whether in terms of daily interactions on London's tube or the war in Iraq. These incidents, both remote and near, feed into a cycle of threat and counter-threat, attack and counter-attack in which Islam and the West can be seen as confronting each other on various levels, whether intellectual, social, political, or military.

The question that follows is whether the above can be used to justify the claim that a European Muslim identity exists. Our contention is one often taken in responding to sociological questions—a qualified yes. If one views a group identity as consisting of shared values, then the answer is no. However, if group identity is about a strong emotional attachment, then one can begin to argue that such an identity exists or is being constructed. The Nation of Islam represents one example of such a shared identity that is based on an emotional attachment rather than a clear image of collective values. The formation of similar bonds in Europe may have numerous causal factors, one of which relates to the perception that Islam is under attack. As described by Durkheim (1982 [1895]) and others since him, an external threat inevitably serves to increase internal social cohesion, using group differences to delineate differences between the in-group and the out-group, or "us" versus "them", in a way that serves to increase the group solidarity.

In the creation of this group identity Muslims in Europe can be seen as connecting with other Muslims on two levels: one is global the other can be defined as Euro-centric. On the global level there appears to be a general connection with Muslims regardless of location as expressed through opinions in regards to the conflict between Palestine and Israel and the war in Iraq. Despite this apparent empathy, there is also a tendency amongst Muslims to distance

themselves from the turmoil in other areas arguing that it is not part of their world and does not reflect their values or practice of Islam. There is both an appeal to a universal Islam and an effort to strip it of place-based traditions. This is arguably where one can see the emergence of a European Islam identity as Muslims in Europe demarcate the vessels of their Muslim identity as separate from those of Muslims elsewhere. In fact, the definition of a European Muslim identity appears to be evolving from a process that includes unification as a response to threat and combined with an effort to separate themselves from the actions of Muslims elsewhere while nonetheless sympathising with the plights of Muslims under the world who are perceived as being unfairly attacked or persecuted in places like Palestine.

Non-Muslim Views: 3 Categorizations

As previously mentioned, Muslims are often seen as one homogenous group. This, however, greatly oversimplifies our understanding of what is in fact a multi-faceted group of individuals lumped together on the basis of a common religion. A different view of young Muslims was presented in the research both by Muslims and non-Muslims who work with them—teachers and social workers. On this basis it is possible to distinguish between three primary groups on the basis of the social problems that they pose. This first group can be described as the "educated elite" in that they represent a group of relatively privileged, educated individuals (e.g., university students, members of Muslim organizations) who use reason in discussing and defending Islam. The second group—the silent majority—is perhaps the least visible and threatening in that it is largely assimilated and not perceived as posing much of a threat. The third group can be seen as the mirror opposite to the first in that their adherence to Islam is rooted in traditions. This group does not seek to assimilate or integrate, maintaining the culture and brand of Islam from the country of origin. This is a marginalized group that exists on the fringe. The threat that it poses to Western

culture lies in its refusal to accept local culture and values. Study participants (young Muslims) can be seen as falling primarily in the first group.

The degree of threat posed by any given group can be measured by the cultural distance between the group and majority. On this basis the first and third groups pose the greatest risk—the third due to its self-imposed isolation and first due to its continued resistance besides being armed with the educational and intellectual capacities valued within Western culture. This group is unique in that it has the characteristics valued by the West and the potential for assimilation or integration and yet adheres to a set of non-Western values by affirming its Muslim identity. This claiming of a Muslim identity, particularly by women who wear the veil, may be seen as puzzling by the "out-group" which fails to understand how such individuals can still cling to seemingly backward beliefs and a religion that, in the mind of the "out-group", is anything but rational and enlightened. It is an old discourse of science versus religion, reason versus faith, in which those who believe in the virtue of science and reason shun that which cannot be demonstrated by (secular) logic or through scientific evidence.

The educated elite, apart from representing a conundrum amongst reason-based intellectual, represents another threat that touches people's lives directly as some of the most notorious terrorists in recent years have come from this group. Universities are seen by some as breeding grounds for terrorists and Islamic extremism[34]. This may be an overstatement, however, one cannot deny the presence of radical elements on some campuses and the power that this educated elite can have in seeking to affect change and bring others to their cause. This group calling for radical change does not appear to represent a large portion of

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[34] Concerns in regards to this are evident media reports as well as in the research. *The Guardian Unlimited* provides one example of the situation in the UK in a report on October 16, 2006 that discusses calls for lecturers and university staff to spy on Muslim students. Available at http://education.guardian.co.uk/higher/news/story/0,,1923325,00.html.

the Muslim educated elite, but their potential to influence the debate cannot be ignored since their actions may have much wider ramifications than the silence of the majority or oratory of others. We do not contend that the stereotype of Muslims as terrorists and radicals are true and that a clash of civilizations is impending, but that there is some reason to be concerned about a small segment of the Muslim population whose choices may nullify the efforts of other Muslims for the simple reason that the radicals and terrorists *are* the common stereotype. Their behaviour simply serves to reinforce this view.

Globalisation

One cannot speak about a European Muslim identity without at least mentioning the current European politics and push for a European identity among the citizens of member states. The creation of a European identity has been on the political agenda for several years although there is still no clear understanding of what it means. There are also crucial differences in the receptivity to such an identity (Cinirella, 1997), differences that are echoed amongst Muslims as British citizens, whether Muslim or non-Muslim are less inclined to feel the need for a European identity. This discussion of a European Muslim identity then, while it has been raised by prominent figures in the Muslim community such as Tariq Ramadan (see Ramadan, 1999), can be attributed to a wider movement seeking to create a common identity among disparate nations and peoples who have long histories of discord. Thus the mere existence of the discussion about a European Muslim identity can be seen as linked to a wider social and political agenda.

Flows of Communication and People

Immigration has been a part of human history for as long as anyone knows; the pace and nature of immigration, however, has changed dramatically in recent years as technological advancements not only make it easier for people to travel,

but also make it easier for them to remain in touch with family members and communities in different areas of the world. This means that immigrants are no longer cut-off from their countries of origin in the way that they might have been in the past, but can easily maintain contacts across long distances and travel back-and-forth relatively quickly and cheaply. This allows not only for the maintenance of family ties, but also for cultural ties. From the perspective of identity, however, it can prove troublesome in that second- and third- generation immigrants may not have a clear sense of national identity—as seen amongst many Muslim youth Within this context national boundaries and identities may blur with individuals adopting multiple identities or seeking a supranational identity that can offer a sense of self in an otherwise fragmented world.

The media plays a significant role in this flow of communication as satellite television and the internet give individuals access to news coverage from all over the world, enabling Muslims to not only gather news from their local news sources, but also from Muslim countries. Interested Muslims can then get information about events around the world from the sources they choose, allowing Muslims in Berlin and London to read or listen to the same reports. This aspect of globalisation both disconnects individuals from their local environment and connects them to a wider network of individuals who seek the same information and hence are likely to foster some level of connection on the basis of values, beliefs or emotional concerns. This can be seen as helping connect Muslims in different areas of Europe (and the world) as well as placing them in the same "corner" as they confront their portrayal within the Western media.

The Rise of Religion in Domestic Politics

The focus on Islam is often seen as unique in the "secular" West. A brief review of leading stories in Europe and the United States however demonstrates that

Islam is not the only religion of political and social relevance. In fact, moral or ethical issues abound with references to religion. Controversial issues such as gay marriage, cloning, in vitro fertilisation, stem cell research, the teaching of evolution or intelligent design in schools, and abortion, all appeal to religion on some level. We do not wish to provide an explanation for the "re-emergence" of religion and issues "morality" in the public and political discourse after years of secularization, but simply to point to the fact that Islam is not unique. While there may be concern over radical Muslims, one cannot then ignore the growing public presence—in the sense that they are heard and given a voice in the public and political discourse—of conservative Christians and extremist parties in politics at the national and European level[35]. In light of this, the focus on Islam (apart from the attention given to it following 9/11) can be seen as part of a larger shift in which religion and "moral values" have come to the foreground as society faces both new (e.g., stem cell research) and evolving (e.g., gay marriage, adoption by gay parents) challenges. An ongoing debate in the United States between many scientists and creationists illustrates this evidence-based science and faith come head to head in a world that faces new questions about its origins and the limits of ethical behaviour on a regular basis.

Conclusion

At the end we are still left with the question of whether we can conclude that a European Muslim identity exists. As mentioned previously, in the absence of a clear European identity, it may be difficult to talk about it in relation to Muslims. This, however, overlooks a fundamental finding of this research—the discussion of European Muslim identity is not dependent on that of a European identity. It is entirely possible for such an identity to form independently as Muslims—at least a select group of them—throughout Europe share common experiences and, if not values, an emotional connection despite being in

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[35] See Marquand, Robert. "Europe 'ripe' for our ideas, says far right". *Christian Science Monitor*. February 6, 2007. Available online at http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0206/p06s01-woeu.htm

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different corners of Europe. This may be seen as stemming from both the young Muslims' quests for who they are, their own sense of self, and the pressures exerted by the West. Identity construction may be underway, but as of yet cannot be said to be complete.

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Annex: Conference Paper - Final Conference
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Muslim Identity: young Muslims and their parents

Note on Methodology

This section is based on focus groups and interviews carried out with parents and youth in the four countries. Some of the findings are also supported by information gathered from teachers and social workers. It should be noted that the discussion is somewhat limited in that the respondents differ on some key characteristics (education, social and economic status, ethnic diversity or homogeneity, gender diversity, etc.). This is partially due to the methodology, but also due to the Muslim populations in the cities where the research took place. It is important to recognize that for Muslims, their religious identity can refer to many elements of varying levels of importance depending on the individual, generation, ethnic roots, class, and the place in which they live. These differences place some restrictions on the ability to develop topography of Muslims and their identities; however, they also speak to the diversity of the Muslim population and need to be aware of differences rather than seeing the various Muslim populations as homogenous.

Media constructionism[36] and stigma

> *"[We are] accused everyday of fundamentalism, fanaticism, oppressing women, etc."* (20-year old Moroccan male in Italy)

A primary consideration in regard to the identity of young Muslims seems to be the role played by the mass media. The Muslim respondents, whether youths or

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[36] This study does not include an extensive review of the actual media coverage (discussed to some extent in the national reports), thus, it is important to distinguish between the respondents' perceptions of the media coverage and actual media coverage.

parents, denounce the mass media and its tendency to negatively portray Muslims and Islam, often associating Islam with terrorism and constructing an image of Muslims as a homogenous group. Both youth and parents expressed the view that their situation had become worse since 9/11 with an increase in negative media coverage of Muslims. Accompanying this media coverage is the sense that Muslims are blamed for the actions of other Muslims, actions for which they are not responsible and have no relation to them (i.e., terrorist attacks, suicide bombings). There is also a sense, particularly as reported by some Muslims in the UK, that Muslims in general are blamed for things that they did not do[37]. This occurs both via the mass media and in personal encounters with non-Muslims, both of which often include questions about their religious identity. As a result, Muslims report feeling the need to defend Islam against the images of Islam constructed by the mass media and what they see as false public opinion, which is manipulated by the media. The respondents report a desire, and for a duty, to alter this perception, to show teach people about the "real Islam".

In doing so they adopt different behaviours, attitudes or arguments to demonstrate that Islam is not about terrorism, that Islam does not oppress women, that fanaticism is not inherent to Islam, and so on. In doing this, young Muslims, particularly in Belgium, Italy and the UK, stress Islam's human values and universal ideas, what the UK respondents referred to as high Islam. They present Islam in relation to Western values and denounce the vision of an incompatibility between Islam and Europe, often condemning (in Belgium and Germany) practices carried out in Muslim countries (e.g., stoning, the oppression of women) that they see as being related to the culture or interpretations of the Koran that do not respect its true meaning, rather than as something intrinsic to Islam. It seems that for this generation Islam is intimately

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[37] The PEW Report (2006) supports this in that 54% of British Muslims and 44% of German Muslims do not believe that Arabs carried out the 9/11 attacks.

connected with an enlightened view of the world, one in which notions of human rights and equality figure among the attractions of Islam itself. The reasons underlying this change need further exploration, but there appears to be a movement towards exploring and re-thinking the tenants of Islam and its meaning for the individual.

As just mentioned, the bombardment with questions about Islam can create a sense of duty to inform, or perhaps enlighten, others. It also represents, in the minds of some young Muslims, an opportunity in the sense that the questions are generally asked out of curiosity or as an insult. When the question is based in a sense of curiosity, the young Muslims see an opportunity for dialogue and point to a positive that has come out of horrific events as more people seek to understand something that they previously ignored. This has, in some cases[38], even led to non-Muslims adopting Islam as their religion. Insults, however, tend to lead to a much more defensive reaction with Muslims feeling the need to defend their religion and themselves against unwarranted assaults and the demonisation of Islam. The result, in both cases, as been a tendency for young Muslims to reaffirm their Muslim identities, often becoming more observant and involved in their faith on a personal level and on a public level as they seek to inform non-Muslims

The depictions of Muslims in the media, as perceived by the young Muslims, leads some of them, notably in Belgium (Charleroi), Germany and Italy, to feel that they have to set a good example and that they do not have the right to make a mistake. Many of young Muslims in these countries, and particularly those in Brussels, suffer greatly from the representation of Muslims in the media and

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[38] Study participants who fall in this category include a male youth in Rome and participants in one of the focus groups in the UK. Individuals in the UK who fall in this category consider themselves to be "reverts" in the sense that they are returning to the true religion. The same terminology was not used in Italy, but the youth made a point of saying that he was *not* a convert since that implies changing religions. Instead, he saw himself as not having a religion prior to becoming Muslim. Some of the Muslim youth in Antwerp also talked about an increase in the number of people adopting Islam as their religion.

either boycott the media entirely or turn to Arabic channels (Turkish channels in Germany). It should be noted however that concerns about the media are less evident in the UK where, even if they feel that the media is biased, there is a sense that it is less biased than in continental European countries. This sense that the UK is less biased was shared by some Muslims of Somali origin in Turin who had family in London and spent a significant amount of time there.

Culture/Religion: between rupture and continuity

In all four countries the Muslims expressed a desire to insert Islam in the society where they live in a manner that respects local law. However, the tendency of the current generation of young Muslims to feel that they are questioned about their faith, notably in terms of links with terrorism, leaves them wanting to understand, express and defend their faith. This is especially the case in Belgium (Charleroi), Italy (Milan) and Germany. Some of these youth, mainly those with a higher level of education, see themselves as having a mission: to create a peaceful coexistence between Islam and the society in which they live and to obtain the respect and the recognition in this society.

This affirmation and defensive posturing, however, is not just a matter of responding to questions and negative media depictions of Muslims. There is also evidence of a divergence from the Islam of their parents in which they see themselves as purifying it from cultural attributes. One young Muslim in the UK illustrates this in stating:

> *"I think our parents are like from a different generation, where they would have experienced things differently to us, so although like the principles of Islam don't actually change, perhaps like we're a bit more um, we're more aware of being Muslim nowadays"*

The young Muslims conduct their own research on Islam using the Koran or second-hand materials (e.g., religious books, conferences, networks) to improve their understanding of their religion and to separate the religious from the cultural. In the face of practices that for their parents are part of Islam, but for young Muslims represent points of contention, the Koran is regarded as a blueprint for how to live resulting in the personal examination of its contents rather than reliance on tradition and others' interpretations. Despite this re-examination, the practice of Islam, as pointed out by young Muslims in the UK and Belgium (Charleroi), is not always easy in a western context as it can be difficult to respect some Islamic rules. However, the youth are not against making some sacrifices to respect their religion as is often the case for girls in Belgium (e.g., not going to discos or refusing to kiss boys in greeting). These girls see themselves as visible symbols of Islam in that people see them and associate their behaviour with that of Muslims in general. As one girl, who says she wears the scarf as a sign of purity, noted,

> *"About the kiss, I go back, I give them my hand and they respect me …*
> *[the other youth] go out and I make a sacrifice by not going out."*

In summary, as Muslims construct themselves as Islamic in opposition to the image spread by the mass media, they do the same in regards to the Islam of their parents.

In practise, more and more Muslims show their belonging to Islam. In Italy, more first- and second-generation Muslims are wearing headscarves. However, some of the first-generation women did not wear it in their origin country, but decided to wear it either as a form of protection or as a means of expressing their faith and affirming their Muslim identity. Many Muslim girls and women reportedly wear the headscarf as a response to questions regarding Islam, reinforcing their

religious identity and making them more visible as Muslims in a non-Muslim context, especially after 9/11. In Germany the headscarf appears to have a somewhat different reason for being worn by some of the women for whom the headscarf represents a silent protest against the negative reactions and stereotyping which have increased since 11 September 2001. In Belgium, Germany and the UK, the headscarf is also a natural expression of an emancipated woman openly displaying her religious conviction of her own free will. Thus, while wearing the headscarf can have many meanings (greater visibility in Italy, a form of protest in Germany, or a symbol of emancipation in Belgium, Germany, and the UK), all of the respondents emphasized that it is a matter of choice for them and as such is an expression of their freedom – a freedom that some note they did not have in their country of origin (The decision not to wear a headscarf is a similar expression of freedom).

A young Muslim woman in Berlin describes her individual decision to wear a headscarf independently of the opinion of her parents as follows:

> "I had always intended to dress more in the Muslim way and hadn't dared to do so until 2002. I had already been praying before ... I still pray at university and taking off my headscarf each time after prayers was a great burden for me. It was stifling and I couldn't bear it emotionally. But there are also people who don't wear one, because they can't cope, everyone is different and you can choose not to if you don't want to. It's down to the individual, everyone makes their own decision."

The issues of choice and gender roles are a rather thorny issue however. For example, Muslim mothers who attended one of the focus groups in the UK had to obtain permission from their husbands to attend whereas the fathers who attended a parallel group did not need to obtain permission from their wives. Similarly,

one of the focus groups in Italy, which was intended to include parental couples, only included fathers in the actual group. The wives were present in the house, but remained in the kitchen for the duration. The explanation given was that the husband would speak for his wife. As they did in a manner that indicated that they thought were concerned about their wives' experiences. Other mothers in Italy have noted that they would not speak in a mixed group, whereas they participated openly in an all-female group. In contrast, mixed groups with youth were the rule and did not appear to present any conflicts with boys and girls expressing their opinions. This paper did not seek to answer questions in regards to parental gender roles, but it must be noted as it is likely to have some impact on the youth and is an important aspect of the debate in regards to Islam. The important point here is that while the girls emphasize the choices that they have and make in regards to wearing the headscarf, the research revealed some aspects in which women tend to have less freedom than the men.

In general, young Muslims distance themselves from the type of faith practised by their parents by valuing their religious identity as essentially "more individual" and "emancipated" than their parents' means of practicing Islam. The youth view themselves as modern, self-determined Muslims, who take advantage of their right, in Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the UK to decide for themselves whether or not for example they wear a headscarf. While for the first generation religion is a means of furthering traditions and above all represents a link, a way of holding onto their culture of origin in the host country, the generations that have followed see their religion more in spiritual terms with less connection to, and even rejection of, tradition.

Despite this apparent rejection of culture and tradition while focusing on the centrality of their Muslim identity, traditions still impregnate their identities to varying degrees as their sense of self represents a complex mixture of religion,

country of origin and the nation in which they live. Their national identities vary with some having weak and others strong ties with the country in which they live and confusion over where "home" is. Members of the second and third generations generally feel that they belong to the country where they live and define themselves as Belgian, German, Italian, or British, but the place that this occupies in their complex identity is not always clear for them.

In what is often an uncertain identity, the one constant is the centrality of their Muslim identity, which they see as an extra benefit, and advantage that they have over their non-Muslim peers. In the four countries where the studies were carried out, it is impossible to separate the national identity from being Muslim. However, being Muslim clearly remains the primary focus for young Muslims in the UK and Italy (in Manchester and for the parents) and Belgium (especially with Arabic origins).

These difficulties related to national identities are not just a matter of internal conflict or teenage self-discovery. While the youth do discuss these internal or personal factors, there is also a strong link to world events (including 9/11 and later bombings in Madrid and London), the behaviour of others (including discrimination), and the general environment in which they find themselves. Discussing the identity of young Muslims, especially in terms of a Belgian, German, Italian, British, or European identity, is not possible without consideration of these other factors. These events are closely linked to the regular need to "defend" or "explain" Islam, which appears to have a profound impact on Muslims, regardless of the extent to which they believe in adhere to Islamic practices[39].

A young Muslim in Germany gives the following example:

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[39] Almost all of the focus group participants and interviewees consider themselves to be practicing Muslims. The exception to this is a couple of interviews carried out in Italy with Muslims who say that they do not practice, but nonetheless defend Islam and their Muslim identity when confronted with an attack.

"When discussing religion in school for example, the subject comes up right away. 'You're all terrorist and do what the Koran tells you to' and the worst thing is, you can't explain it to them. They simply don't understand. It's not in the Koran, read it, it's not there. It's not there, that they ... it's just people who exaggerate with weapons, start wars and so on. But usually we are discriminated against, straight away, 'You are the terrorists, the bomb makers …' It's got nothing to do with it."

Young Muslims appear to place religion in the public domain more than their parents do. At the same time, young Muslims are under a lot more pressure to achieve the same level of opportunity as their Belgian, German, Italian, and British contemporaries. Above all, those- with a better education see being Muslim as something that obliges them to not only practice Islam privately, but to openly display their identity, effectively putting enlightenment into action. These youth tend to focus on being active and see their Muslim identity as including a responsibility to educating others about Islam. Going back to the previous discussion regarding the media and the youths' reactions to media coverage, the youth appear to be undergoing a process in which the private is redefined and takes on a personal, public face that decries the stereotypes and misconceptions that they perceive in the mass media and some non-Muslims with whom they come into contact.

Universal Islam

The Muslims who participated in the focus groups and interviews tend to see Islam as a universal religion that is not incompatible with western values and other identities. In this sense Islam has certain aspects, embodied in the "real Islam", that enable Muslims to live within any culture while respecting that culture and the following the tenants of Islam. Nevertheless, in Belgium (Charleroi), identification with Islam is also expressed in opposition to western

life, which is judged as being too depraved. One Muslim girl, in speaking about her sister-in-law who converted, said, *"Before she lived like the other Belgians and now that she has found Islam she is happy."* The implication of this statement is that she was never truly happy with her life before becoming a Muslim and that being a Muslim, with its restrictions on behaviour, is ultimately more fulfilling.

It is important to note that within the Muslim population, national origin and language are sometimes used to make distinctions among Muslims. This is especially true in Belgium and Italy where divisions and conflicts have been reported on the basis of nationality or country of origin. In Italy, two non-Arabic speaking Muslims who were interviewed (an Italian boy who has adopted the Muslim faith and an Italian born Muslim) point to the use of language as a means of exclusion in that Arabic-speaking Muslim youth, whether in a mosque or Muslim organization, will switch to Arabic for the sake of excluding "outsiders". In Belgium, two youths of Turkish or Albanian background mad a similar distinction but on the basis of country of origin, distinguishing themselves from the Arab Muslim majority.

The participants words, then, paint a mixed picture of Islam in which it is both universal, a homogenous whole, and heterogeneous. It is homogenous, universal, when Muslims define themselves in contrast to the non-Muslim sphere. This sense of universality appears to be first element in establishing the Muslim "frontier" The reported reality becomes quite different, however, when you look within the Muslim sphere. Here national identities prevail over a Muslim identity. This is apparently contradictory and points to in-group, out-group dynamics that are perhaps not so surprising. However, one must also consider the possibility that the tendency to homogenize Islam in relation to non-Muslims may contribute to the conceptualization of Muslims by non-

Muslims as homogenous[40]. The difference that should be noted here is that while the Muslims in this project pointed to the peaceful and tolerant aspects of a universal Islam, the predominant image in the West is one of violence and hatred towards non-Muslims – a finding that reiterates the previously noted findings from the PEW Report.

Discrimination

Before beginning a discussion of discrimination it is important to define it and to distinguish it from demonisation as these two concepts are often confused. If the media attribute responsibility for events to one community or to certain sorts of people, for example Muslims, that is demonisation; whereas discrimination is when someone is denied something on the basis of race, religion or gender. It is, however, not always easy to disentangle one from the other. Similarly, discrimination can occur for numerous reasons and it is not always clear that the link is Islam. In fact, focus groups with teachers and social workers note that immigrants in general face discrimination and prejudice. Being Muslim then, especially when it is visible (i.e., women who wear the veil), is one of many factors that can contribute to demonisation and/or discrimination. The Muslim respondents in the focus groups and interviews reported the occurrence of both demonisation (primarily by the mass media) and discrimination, the latter of which is the focus of this discussion.

In terms of discrimination, responses from the focus groups indicate confusion and mixed experiences and feelings. Many feel that discrimination has increased since 9/11 and 7/7. For example, participants in the UK see the police as being more willing to stop and search young Muslims. In Germany, focus group participants report that young Muslims' applications to join the police have been rejected on the basis of their being Muslim and those Muslim soldiers are

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[40] This information is covered in the National Reports for each country.

insulted by other soldiers and their superiors. In Belgium and Germany, participants report that women wearing the headscarf have been denied access to the labour market. A Muslim student who wears the headscarf describes the following experience:

"One example on a very high level that I believe shows how heated the mood has become is this. I have been looking for work for a few months now and I have personal contact to my ex-professors. One of them is now deacon and definitely not a BZ or Bild reader, he is a highly intellectual man who said to me 'don't take it personally, but especially since 9/11 it is simply extremely difficult to place you in a job, regardless of how German you are, regardless of how highly qualified you are, because the situation is so tense, even if the human resources manager has no problem with it, there is the potential for conflict and one asks oneself, why, when I have two candidates with the same qualifications, should I take one who might create problems with staff and colleagues, when I can take one who doesn't wear one (a headscarf)'."

In Italy, the situation is less tangible although Muslims have reported some discrimination while travelling and in dealing with government bureaucracy.

The above provide some examples of discrimination as perceived by the focus group participants, but claims are not always related to the participants themselves. What emerges upon probing is that there appears to be two types of discrimination: individual and collective. Most of the time the respondents talked about collective discrimination. Indeed, most of Muslims report discrimination that happened to other people; the vast majority of the participants have not personally experienced discrimination. This lack of personal experience, however, does not mean that it does not affect them as their

words indicate a degree of identification with those who have been discriminated against and hence what could be considered secondary victimization that influences their larger view of the society in which they live even if it does not alter their personal relationships. Perceptions and beliefs in regards to discrimination faced by other Muslims can be personally relevant regardless of the true extent of discrimination. Thus, in discussing discrimination it is important to consider widely held "truths" from reality, which requires careful research and is unlikely to ever be fully captured.

In discussing discrimination for the Muslim population in Europe it is important to note that racial and religious discrimination are not necessarily easy to separate especially when discussing visible minorities (Arabic or black people). There may also be a general discrimination against "immigrants" that is compounded for individuals who are visibly different whether due to religion (e.g., Muslim girls who wear a headscarf) or skin colour. In Italy and Belgium there are some second-generation Muslims, notably non-Arab Muslims, who either do not feel discriminated against or state that it is not a concern of theirs. As one young Italian born Muslim of Somali origin (14 year-old girl) stated:

> *"I have never felt [discriminated against], but I don't give it any importance…it doesn't interest me."*

This is not to say that being Muslim does not contribute to discrimination in certain areas such as the labour market and school. The acts of discrimination that were reported reflect the opposite of the experiences of those for whom discrimination is not an issue – visibility. Wearing a headscarf renders Muslim girls and women much more conspicuous and hence easy targets for discrimination. This was especially true in Belgium where the Muslim

participants indicated that Islam is a primary reason for discrimination along with other factors (e.g., race).

Discrimination may also take another form via the inability to establish certain facilities or observe religious practices. Of course it should also be noted that the absence of say, a mosque, is not necessarily the result of discrimination. Nonetheless, such "lacks" pose issues and difficulties for Muslims. The most frequently reported issues include: the lack of facilities in schools for prayer rooms (Belgium and UK), the lack of mosques and prayer halls (Belgium and Italy), the absence of day-off for the Islamic feasts (in the French part of Belgium), the lack of acceptance of headscarves in the workplace (Germany), but these are not issues that aroused any great passion. However, the issue of the headscarf generated some debate. In Belgium, the ban of the headscarf in the labour market is perceived by Muslims as discrimination. In the UK, the primary debate is not so much issues such as the headscarf, but about wider policies that are seen as being anti-Muslim.

Intergenerational Differences

The discussion about discrimination has also highlighted a relevant element in regards to generational differences. In Belgium and Italy, the parents put more stress on the opportunities that they have in the host country and have a lower expectation in regards to accommodations for the practice of their faith. Though this generation does not fail to note difficulties, the emphasis is on what Belgium and Italy has offered them. For many of these individuals, the greatest difficulties that they have encountered relate to their children, notably the education of their children and the difficulties they encounter raising their children as Muslims in a non-Muslim environment. As one father in Milan put it:

"The difficulty is not that I can't find a place to pray, the difficulty that I encountered is finding a place for my children, where they can study our language and religion. This is the primary thing that I suffer from. The religion can be practiced at home, but the difficulty is that the children cannot study Arabic."

The overall view of the parents in Belgium, Germany and Italy is one in which Islam can and should co-exist with European culture. They see their children's futures as being in Europe and feel the pain and frustrations of a country that does not necessarily make it easy for them or their children to stay there. To some extent they express a desperate hope for a future in which their children can grow up and be part of a Europe where they are not seen as terrorists or "Bin Laden." These parents are not blind to the difficulties and conflicts, but want their children, who were born in Belgium or in Italy, to be seen and treated as Belgian or Italian rather than as foreigners. All too often there is a sense that the children see themselves as Belgian, German or Italian and do not understand why they are treated as foreigners or blamed for things that others do in other parts of the world simply because they have a religion in common. A young woman with German citizenship and a migration background had this to say about the subject:

"We are always being blamed for having a terrorist attitude. We are all under general suspicion. We are all hand in glove with each other and when someone does something a fellow student asks me, 'well, what have your brothers gone and done now? What's up at home again?' I am a German citizen and have just as much right to be here as he does."

In contrast, second- or third-generation young Muslim in Belgium, Germany and Italy can be seen as less tolerant and accommodating than the parents. Here

there is also much more variation in viewpoint regarding to their level of education. Youth with a high level of education tend to state that there are many things that are done for them and they regard themselves as a part of society. As a result they feel that they have the right to demand recognition of Islam within of their society because this is a part of them. Amongst this group you often find individuals who feel like they are part of the local who are the most active in seeking changes (e.g., in the media portrayal of Muslims). Of course there are also some who well-educated Muslim youth who do not feel integrated and are active in seeking recognition for their "rights" (this was especially true in Italy and Antwerp).

This difference between parents and more generally individuals from first generation[41] and second-generation youth can be understood on the basis of the variations in their experiences and situations. In Germany and Belgium the parents came as *Gastarbeiter* – temporary workers – and planned to return to their country of origin when enough money had been saved and only slowly came to terms with Belgian or German society as time passed and savings proved inadequate. The subsequent generations – having been born or brought up in Belgian, Germany or Italy (although the parents did not come as temporary workers) and regard themselves as part of society and hence expect did not come as temporary workers) and regard themselves as part of society and hence expect equal opportunities and respect for their religious and cultural values. Accordingly, the latter's sensitivity to any experience of discrimination will be far greater than that of the first generation.

Specific accounts of discrimination are rather sparse within the UK focus groups while anger and frustration over general government policy and media demonisation is extremely high. However, among the young people, there is

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[41] A large number of the youth in Italy (especially in Rome) were first-generation immigrants and were quite similar to parents in terms of their outlook and attitudes.

broad and almost unanimous consensus that they are better off in Britain than in any other European country[42]; furthermore, the youth felt that they enjoyed more freedom in the UK, had more opportunities and faced less discrimination than they would in any other European county.

European Identity and Muslim European Identity

European integration is likely to contribute to the production of a European identity that transcends national identities. The Europeanization process contributes to an impulse to form new "imagined communities", pulling together opposite identities and pushing apart close identities, thus creating an "imagined European community". Indeed, the tension between the European level and the national level creates new identities and new ethnicities. The traditional differentiation between nationals and non-nationals seems to be shifting towards a new division line between a shared "Western culture" and an otherness defined at a higher – and trans-national – level. In countries such as Belgium, Germany, Italy and the UK, the foreigner is most frequently regarded as being Turkish, Arab, African, Afro-Caribbean or Asian although most of these "non-nationals" actually have a European nationality. Within this context being Muslim is regarded as the European "otherness". The formation of a European identity may also signify an identity based on image, a "pure" identity. This identity consists of a superposition of the historical and idealised representations of the French, Germans, Italians, British, and so on. Conversely, the merging of all manifestations of the European "strange foreigner" contributes to the creation of "non-white" as a stigmatised social group subject to discrimination. With European integration, nationals become heirs and immigrants (both old and new) outsiders. The "heirs" in Europe are all those who can lay claim to a history stretching far back in time, a history shared with one of the states of the

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[42] This contention was affirmed by Muslims in Italy who have family in London and travel to the UK frequently. There was a sense that the situation in Italy was in its early stages and with time would improve and become more like the UK.

Union. What immigrants may have acquired in the state where they reside they lose when they circulate within Europe. Thus, a French citizen of Turkish origin crossing into Germany becomes a Turk regardless of that individual's personal history and nationality. This, apart from other acts of discrimination, potentially places extra burdens on Muslims of non-European origins who are seen as outsiders both in terms of religion and country of origin (even if born in Europe).

To confront discrimination in Europe, it is necessary to recognise that people who have immigrated into European countries and into Europe are a part of the European population, that this population is "crossbred" and cannot be reduced either to the sum of cultures of EU member states or to the image of an ancient historical Europe. Immigrants and their descendants from Africa and Asia are part of Europe as a community of the imagination, and are part of the European political community.

Muslims make the same claim. They present Islam as universal and not rooted in a country with its traditions, but in a value and belief system that they can take with them anywhere even if it is not an easy task. One young Moroccan in Italy puts it this way:

> *"Being Muslim in Europe means to have your own roots, or better, to keep your own Muslim identity respecting the country in which we are living on a cultural level, constitutional, living together with others without renouncing the Muslim identity, trying to include in one's personality the European part which is in us, because the Muslim religion is an open religion which can be adapted in whichever living context."*

Muslims of the second generation and subsequent generations insist on the fact that they are "normal" like their Belgium, German, Italian and Britain's "peers". In Belgium and Italy, others point to a divide between themselves and their peers. They feel that they are not understood. Exclusion, however, goes both ways as indicated by some non-Muslims in Belgium who say they cannot access some activities (i.e., a gym reserved for Muslims).

Muslims and non-Muslims need to seek to understand one another and perhaps make concessions. Such observers suggest the possibility of a European Islam, though others see this as impossibility. For those who see it as a possibility (in Belgium and Italy), it is not clear that there is one coherent image of what it entails. To some extent it represents a blending of two cultures, taking the best from their country of origin and the best from the country in which they live. Islam, however, remains largely unchanged apart from adherence to certain "requirements" that may be more rooted in history and culture, than in tradition (e.g., polygamy). Moreover, the young Belgian Muslims reject imams who come from abroad and want a school for training imams in Europe. Similarly, an imam who was interviewed in Italy noted that he was hired specifically because he had lived in Italy and understood the local culture. There appears to be a trend towards seeking spiritual leaders who are not themselves entirely foreign, but understand the context and culture of the place in which they will be working. This provides an indication of a search for a local or European Islam that grows out of the local rather than being imposed on it.

The information gathered in the course of the project does not provide a definitive answer as to whether a European Muslim identity exists. In fact, the young Muslims in Antwerp rejected the notion of a European identity and refused to speak about. It is quite clear though that for the large part of the youth in this study, there is a strong indication of a *Belgian, Italian, German,* or *British*

identity, especially for second-generation youth or those who immigrated at a young age (even if there is still a sense of being different from time to time). The centrality of that identity is another issue as the importance placed on each identity varies.

For the vast majority of the Muslim youth in this study, being a Muslim in Europe means practicing Islam within a European context while respecting local law and culture. The question that remains to be answered is what it means to be a European Muslim. To what extent has being a "Muslim in Europe" developed in to being a "European Muslim"? The data gathered in the four countries does not have the answer to this question, but does suggest that the seeds for a European Muslim identity are present amongst some of the young Muslims (and to some extent their parents) who stressed the compatibility between Islam and European values.

Teachers

The focus groups with teachers in every partner country have shown that, like the social workers, the teachers indicate that there have been changes in the behaviour and attitudes of young Muslims since 9/11. However, unlike the social workers who may be seen as being more actively involved in lives of young Muslims, the teachers generally seem to be conscious about the changes, but feel insecure and helpless, unsure of how to deal with the changes or issues that arise.

Teachers in Germany, Belgium, Britain and Italy point to changes in the behaviour of young Muslims since 9/11. In particular, our respondents felt that young Muslims had made themselves *more* visible (e.g., girls started wearing the veil[43]) and had become more observant of Islamic practices and displayed.

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43 The teachers in Milan note that they have also observed young mothers wearing the veil after 9/11 when they did not do so before.

Belgian teachers referred to a *"growing self-affirmation"* in relation to *"statements, practices and demands"* - as exemplified by female students refusing to take part in activities that do not allow them wear the *hijab*. The teachers in Belgium especially in Brussels and Antwerp refer to a change in attitude amongst young Muslims since 9/11 insofar as they are felt to be more demanding.

On the other hand, in Germany, Belgium and Italy the opposite tendency was also reported - as young Muslims sought to make them selves *less* visible[44]. Although there is some recognition of changes, teachers in Italy were often reluctant to associate behaviour with 9/11 or state that such behaviour is a direct consequence of recent terrorist attacks. Some of the teachers, notably those in Turin, cite larger world issues such as the wars in Iraq and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (These teachers primarily have Muslim students who are recent immigrants from the Maghreb countries, and this may influence these worldview and primary concerns of these students.)

The subject on which all the teachers interviewed in Belgium, Germany and Italy seem to agree is the headscarf, which represents one of the primary points of contention. The majority of teachers in Belgium, Germany and Italy seem to think that the school is a 'neutral' area and for this reason they remain attached to secularism. They feel that religious expression in schools should be limited in that it should not refer to the sacred and not be represented materially, for example, by the headscarf. It should also be mentioned that some teachers regarded the wearing of the headscarf as a form of social control by male classmates, by family members or by members of the relevant ethnic community. Whether the concern has its basis in religion or culture is not

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44 This can be linked to some young Muslims who talk about feeling special as Muslims and the veil as a highly visible symbol of Islam that they are proud of. However, it is also clear that not all Muslim girls share this view and some are reluctant to wear the veil.

entirely clear, but it is evident that teachers see certain problems in relation to their Muslim students.

The teachers interviewed in London reported that Bangladeshi girls seemed to value education and did not present disciplinary problems (as other pupils – both male and female – often did). On the other hand, some teachers in both London and Bradford expressed the view that Muslim girls had very little freedom at home and several teachers seemed to regard the Muslim home as oppressive. In particular, a number of UK teachers subscribed to the view that whereas Muslim parents had high educational aspirations for their sons, they were less interested in the educational progress of their daughters.

In Belgium, Germany and Italy, the headscarf plays a central role in the debate among teachers – as it did with the Muslims in our focus groups. There was, for example, unanimous agreement amongst teachers in Belgium[45] that the *hijab* should not be worn by a person in a position of authority. In general, the majority of teachers in Belgium, Germany and Italy support the banning of objects or symbols that render Islam visible (and, indeed, this view seems to be applied to all religions) when the person is in a position of authority. One reason behind this is fear of proselytising. Significantly, perhaps, Muslim teachers were amongst the most adamant in their opposition to the wearing of religious symbols by individuals in authority (though it is worth noting that where non-Muslim teachers take this position they can be accused of adopting a discriminatory attitude). There are some exceptions however, as indicated by a Muslim professor at the Institution for Social Advancement in Charleroi who wears a headscarf. It is also interesting to note that amongst interviewees in Brussels, the headscarf is often considered a symbol of ethnic and not religious identity.

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[45] The same is true for social workers in Belgium.

Teachers in the UK took a different view about Muslim pupils wearing the *hijab* in school, no doubt reflecting the fact that most schools England and Wales allow Muslim girls to wear traditional Islamic dress, provided, for example, that it conforms to the colours of the school uniform. However, one teacher, who taught at a school with a substantial Muslim proportion of Muslim pupils recalled that it had taken protracted negotiation with local Muslim organisations before the then head teacher had agreed that the *hijab* could be worn.

German teachers claimed to have witnessed what appears to be a particularly pronounced response to 9/11 and report similar responses to those witnessed by the social workers, as evidenced by what they saw as the young Muslims' support for the attacks. The teachers feel that these changes, along with media coverage of Muslims and terrorism, have also influenced how they interact with their students. In general it can be said that the events have instilled a strong sense of insecurity and vulnerability in the German teachers who participated in our research. Without exception, teachers interviewed in Germany talked about various incidents immediately following the attacks on 9/11. Although the sense of shock died down after a few months and the pupils took much less notice of subsequent attacks, for example in Djerba, Madrid and London, most teachers believe that a subtle tension remained in their relationship with young Muslim pupils. The teachers were most aware of this during discussions about the terrorist attacks in such classes as politics and history. One teacher reported that she detected a certain *Schadenfreude* when the subject of the attacks on New York came up. Others report the formation of two different groups, one that can be called 'pro Europe' and another that could be called 'Anti-American'. The following is one example:

"I have a class of Year 7 pupils (13/14 yrs) with a high proportion of Muslims. Groups were formed. One group said that what happened was

completely wrong and regarded themselves as 'pro Europe'. The other
group believed that the Americans themselves had finally been on the
receiving end for once. The latter group already felt much excluded and
felt even more that no-one wanted anything to do with Muslims."

As with the focus groups with young Muslims, German teachers considered that Muslim youths feel that they are held responsible for terrorist attacks and are under constant pressure to vindicate themselves as 'Muslims'. In addition, because they are disadvantaged in the education and employment markets and experience discrimination in their daily lives, they regard themselves, in the words of one teacher, as "*100% second class citizens*". Similarly, in the UK teachers reported that Muslim pupils felt excluded in a number of respects. They mentioned, in particular, resentment about the way that young Muslims are viewed as a threat to society and resentment not only about debates in the media over whether it was possible to be British and Muslim, but corresponding suggestions that young Muslims had to choose between a Muslim and adopting a British identity.

Interestingly, the teachers in Belgium also speak of discrimination *within* the Muslim group. Even if the differences between Muslims and non-Muslims seem to be more important than differences between Muslims, in Antwerp and particularly in Brussels, the teachers considered that there is a tendency within the Muslim group to try and differentiate between good Muslims and bad Muslims. In addition, teachers in Italy pointed to distinctions amongst Muslims on the basis of nationality, noting that conflicts between different nationalities (e.g., Albanians and Moroccans) were not uncommon. Tensions within the Muslim group were also noted by the teachers in Charleroi, but here they took the form of non-veiled students pressuring a fellow student to take off her headscarf.

The results of the focus groups in all partner countries indicate the deep influence of the mass media and the perceived negative image that it conveys of Muslims and Islam in general. For example, the teachers in Italy were of the opinion that predominant problem is the lack of acceptance of Islam in general, which they attribute to the media's promotion of stereotypes and portrayal of Muslims in a monolithic manner. The interviews with the Belgian teachers illustrate their difficulties in defining what Islam means or stand for despite the fact that they appear to have a certain level knowledge of various religious practises and precepts. The perception that they do have is largely based on what they obtain from the media, which they report as being a globally negative image of Islam and of Muslims, be it in Belgium or elsewhere. Similar findings are evident in Germany as indicated by one head teacher of a *Hauptschule* who said that he had to fight his own prejudices and tended to see problems regarding religious or cultural differences where they did not exist for the young people themselves. He also suggested that a main part of these irrational fears and prejudices was caused by the stereotypes of the media. He described his bias when dealing with pupils directly after the events of 9/11 in the following way:

"You read about Muslim terrorists every day in the newspaper and – even if you don't want it – it has an effect on you in every day life. I had to force myself not to equate Muslims with terrorists, this troubled me. Do they support such thing? What are their attitudes? Especially these difficult young men whose behaviour has always been conspicuous, and then to tell myself don't equate them with terrorists, well, I just had to check myself consciously and avoid equating Islam with terrorism."

Most of the UK teachers referred to the issue of Islamophobia and reported that many young Muslims saw Islamophobia as part of their everyday lives and as something that contributed to their sense of social exclusion. UK teachers

frequently referred to the manifest resentment of their Muslim pupils about the way Muslims were portrayed in the mass media – which they saw as perpetuating unfavourable stereotypes about Muslims. For example, it was mentioned by teachers in London, Bradford and Manchester that their Muslim pupils had been particularly affected by the coverage of the London bombings (7/7) and that they felt that the underlying message given by the media was that Muslims had not wanted to integrate because they had rejected British values altogether.

The teachers echo the statements of the young Muslims, parents and social workers in describing the media as presenting a negative image of Muslims and demonising Islam as a threat and danger to the West. Some of the teachers also recognize as did some of the social workers that this influences how individuals perceive Muslims and Islam – including the impact that it has on their own perceptions. In fact, the teachers acknowledge a lack of understanding and knowledge of Islam[46]. As noted by one teacher in Italy:

> *"...There is very little knowledge about Islam. Islam is perceived in a uniform way...from the veil to the headscarf etc, etc, there is a lot of confusion. And there is confusion about who is a Muslim from Morocco, which is a completely different thing than a Muslim from Kuwait. Unfortunately, what are we doing about this [lack of] knowledge? Previously nothing, but now it is important at school. Because, unfortunately Islam is perceived as a monolithic bloc without distinction, but for the single Muslim who is Moroccan, Egyptian, things are perfectly clear, but he/she is not able to convey this."*

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[46] According to social workers interviewed by the Italian partners, Italian teachers are not only ignorant about Islam and uninterested in other cultures, but prone to making prejudicial statements about Muslims. This is in contrast to cultural mediators for whom an understanding of Muslims is central to their work.

In the UK too, teachers reported that Muslim pupils resented the way that Muslims were depicted in the media and seen by non-Muslims as monolithic and threatening and as invariably associated with fundamentalists and extremists.

The interviews in Belgium indicate that the teachers who know Muslims outside of their work environment usually have an image of Muslims that contrasts with the one they get from work. Some of them realize that without their work environment in which they have the opportunity to meet Muslims they would most probably have a negative perception of them. For others, the private and the professional spheres allow for a broader image that goes beyond the problems. These statements underscore the various attitudes and approaches that seem to make negotiation possible. Regarding stigmatisation and discrimination directed towards Muslims, the Belgian partners found out that, according to some teachers, even if being an immigrant is a source of discrimination, the fact of being a Muslim is an added one. However, teachers are very discreet on this subject. They claim that there are discriminatory measures against Muslims in the workplace, for example, but did not volunteer further details. They shared their fears for the future of these young people who are already in very unfavourable social conditions (e.g., in terms of secondary school apprenticeships and professional training).

The difference between religion and culture was also noted by the teachers in Germany, particularly in regards to the comportment of Muslim boys. The teachers do not tend to distinguish between cultural and religious behaviour. This is especially true in respect to the stereotypical "macho" behaviour patterns of young Turks, as described here by a teacher:

"Particularly among the boys, this affected macho behaviour, it's a kind of mixture of 'I'm a Turk, man', and 'I gotta lotta friends' and I think these things are difficult to separate; what's a Turk, what's macho and what is religion-based? I can't say that it (the meaning of religion) has increased in significance."

As indicated here, there is significant confusion about the distinction between religion and culture although the teachers are aware of their lack of knowledge. Additionally, arguments with Muslim pupils are not associated with inter-ethnic or religious controversies, but with - as some teachers see it - the proud and temperamental behaviour of young Muslims:

"Pupils have exchanged a few insults, but nothing more really. There were just the usual quarrels with Muslim pupils who tend to lose it a bit quicker when someone makes a remark about another's mother, things like that."

There is also evidence of conflict over the issue of Islamic schools versus secular schools, as illustrated by the Italian partners who report a generally negative attitude on the part of the teachers they interviewed towards Islamic schools. Such schools were seen as offering an inferior education and as separating Muslim children from their peers. Opinion among UK teachers seemed more divided on this matter however. Although many state schools with substantial numbers of Muslim pupils have acceded to the demands of Muslim parents, local mosques and other Muslim organisations by providing, for example, prayer rooms for Muslim pupils and single sex swimming lessons, it was noted by some teachers that these arrangements do not satisfy some Muslim parents or Muslim teachers. One Muslim teacher in Manchester was firmly of the opinion that non-Muslim schools did not offer adequate moral or spiritual guidance for Muslim children. His argument was that a Muslim school can

avoid the contradiction that would otherwise exist between a Muslim home and the values that the child is taught at school. On the other hand, while some teachers argued that Muslim schools did not prepare children for life after school in a multicultural society, others said that Muslim schools contributed to growing social segregation in their communities.

A number of UK teachers maintained that though Muslim schools might lead to social segregation, segregation between Muslim and non-Muslim children simply reflected the degree of residential segregation between Muslim and non-Muslim communities that had developed over many years, as is the case in Bradford and parts of London for instance. Thus in some districts in Bradford school catchment areas consisted of a single ethnic group, so that some secondary schools were almost 100 per cent Muslim. While there has been a tendency to assume that Muslims are responsible for whatever geographical segregation exists (for example, because they prefer to live in predominantly Muslim communities) the teachers interviewed in London reported that over a period of years the aim of most white parents to avoid sending their children to schools with significant numbers of Muslim children had led to a situation where some schools were now mainly or even overwhelmingly Bangladeshi Muslim and others were mainly or overwhelmingly white. Teachers interviewed in both London and Bradford took the view that the virtual separation of communities based on a mixture of religion, ethnicity, housing and education is sure to contribute to a lack of contact, understanding and tolerance between communities. In general, the UK teachers interviewed felt that Muslim schools – like other faith-based schools – would add to the existing lack of contact and understanding between different communities.

Overall, the teachers from each country have recognized a change since 9/11 in the way they deal with Muslims and the attitudes of Muslims themselves. They

also see the school environment as a meeting point for different cultures, but are ill-equipped to deal with problems that arise. In fact, they tend to feel helpless and acknowledge their ignorance of the situation. They do not necessarily see problems where others might. Despite the difficulties, the teachers do see some potential means of improving the situation within schools including: external mediation; teacher training in intercultural competence, language skills, prevention of violence and conflict management; increasing the number of teachers with a migration history; and, expanding the opportunities for Muslim youth through advanced apprenticeships or other training opportunities.

In the UK, teachers were in agreement that the school had a vital role to play in fostering mutual respect and tolerance between different communities. However, there was, nonetheless, some difference of opinion among the teachers that were interviewed about how far schools should accommodate the demands of Muslim parents and Muslim religious authorities. There seemed to be general support for a school providing adequate prayer facilities for Muslim pupils and for permitting female pupils to wear the *hijab* (provided that this complied with a school's uniform code). In addition, there was some support for allowing Muslim pupils to take time off for Islamic festivals.

All UK teachers were in agreement that Muslim parents sought a good education for their children, especially for their sons (though they were aware that Muslim parents often express the view that teachers in the UK are not strict enough with the children that they teach). Even parents with little formal education themselves wished their sons to continue in education beyond the minimum school leaving age of 16 so that they could improve their social and economic position. One teacher in London remarked that in general

> *Bangladeshi [i.e. Muslim] parents make more effort to come to parents' evenings and do more to support the teacher than English parents.*

However, teachers in both London and Bradford reported that despite this the contribution of Muslim parents to their children's education is limited by a number of factors: one factor is that they do not always understand how the education system works. There was also concern expressed that Muslim children are sometimes taken out of school at critical periods for lengthy visits to Pakistan and Bangladesh (even though such absences from school amount to a failure by a parent to comply with the obligation to ensure that their child attends school regularly).

Social Workers

Social workers represent a rather mixed category in that each country utilized a somewhat different professional group. Despite these professional differences, the nature of the working relationship that these individuals have with young Muslims appears to enable them to talk about the young Muslims with a degree of insight that is not necessarily evident amongst teachers, since social workers have the task of helping the youth find their way in apparent conflicts between what some social workers described as being "two worlds". These social workers, some of whom are also Muslim, effectively wrestle with many of the same situations as they seek to understand Muslim youth, and seek to find viable solutions or means of assisting them.

The social workers' internal world also needs to be considered in light of one their primary concerns in regard to Muslims – media coverage. This was perhaps one of the most pervasive themes that came out of the focus groups and interviews in that social workers generally see media coverage of Muslims as being biased, consistently portraying Muslims either in a negative manner or

within a negative context, effectively demonising Muslims and contributing to a generalised fear of the "Muslim threat". In the UK social worker focus groups, there was general agreement that what young Muslims learned from mass media coverage was that Muslims were a threat to society and therefore they were not at all surprised that strangers would apparently treat them with suspicion. For example, several social workers mentioned that since the London bombings they had been told by Muslim youths that they had experienced a good deal more bullying at school and verbal and even physical abuse on the streets. In particular, a number of social workers in London, Manchester and Bradford reported that many young Muslims had complained to them that in the months after the London bombings they had been frequently regarded with suspicion when travelling on trains, buses or the [London] Underground and that this made these young Muslims very uncomfortable – reports that echoed the findings of the focus groups with young Muslims.

This *perception* of demonisation within the media portrayal of Muslims should be considered in terms of what it says about the media, but also in terms of its impact on the social workers themselves, some of whom (notably in Belgium) acknowledge the impact that their work environment has on their image of Muslims. These social workers point to the effect of working with Muslims suggesting that in the absence of this direct contact they would have a largely negative view of Muslims (arguably driven by biased media coverage).

Given this situation, one is left wondering how much their view has changed and to what extent they cling, even if unconsciously, to negative views of Muslims. It should also be noted that some social workers may retain a negative image of Muslims as in the case of a social worker in Italy who stated:

"Young Muslims in Italy expect too much, they expect too much. They want their rights and don't consider their duties. They want, want and want...they don't respect the country in which they live, they don't respect the people there....They think they're always right during discussions, because of this you can't find...a middle ground...I don't think they want to change. They want to live in Italy, but with the same Egyptian mentality, or the same Moroccan mentality."[47]

Some social workers do not hold a positive or even hopeful view of the youth with whom they work. Despite this, the vast majority, while discussing the difficulties and frustrations of their work, do not see the youth themselves as necessarily being the biggest obstacles (although the social worker quoted above was certainly not alone in pointing to the reluctance of some young Muslims to negotiate or concede certain rights to other cultures). What the majority of social workers said is that there is a need for them to assist in a process of negotiation.

This need for negotiation about practices, behaviours and the accommodation of these practices and behaviours emerges as a key issue if conflict is to be minimised. One of the primary issues that came up with social workers in this regard in Belgium, Germany and Italy (but not in the UK) – as it did in our other focus groups, relates to the headscarf – an object of continuous discussion that has led to controversies in all of the partner countries. The difficulty for Belgian, German and Italian social workers is determining where to draw the line in their attempts in finding a compromise, between the right of Muslims to practice their faith while also respecting the reality of the local and national culture. This is not always straightforward. For instance, social workers in Belgium note that Muslim social workers can push for the absence of headscarves amongst people in authority positions, (at least when exercising those roles), whereas non-

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[47] This statement was made by an Egyptian Christian who has lived in Italy for 10 years, but continues to have difficulty with Italian. The translation was modified somewhat to make the meaning clearer.

Muslim individuals would be considered racist for making the same suggestion. Overall, the social workers in Belgium recognize the need for compromise and understanding in areas such as the inclusion of mothers on school trips and "female only" hours at swimming pools while being less compromising on issues that would deprive others of the right to express their cultures and values (e.g., not serving wine at a function or dinner due to the presence of Muslims).

The social workers in both Italy and Germany focused in particular on what they saw as behavioural changes on the part of young Muslims since 9/11. These observed changes have some similarities, but also stark differences that might reflect national differences. The situation as described in Italy is the same as that observed by teachers and confirmed by the youth themselves, namely that the youth have either: (1) developed a greater adherence to tradition and Islam or (2) distanced themselves from Islam and their roots (i.e., country of origin). Some social workers describe the tendency to become more traditional, a "better Muslim," as a "reaction against a reaction" in that it is a response to the behaviour of the non-Muslim community following 9/11. The social workers in Germany also point to reactions to 9/11, but this is generally presented as an initial expression of support for the attacks and a heightening of the importance of Islam in the youths' lives. Beyond this fairly predictable observation, there was though some degree of ambivalence or disagreement. Some social workers saw young Muslims as struggling between the 'two worlds' of their traditional and religious values and the values of the 'host' society. Others pointed to the prejudice that they perceive among they general population and the difficulties that this creates for young Muslims:

> *"A master craftsman reads the Bildzeitung (popular press), has these*
> *prejudices in his head, has just read about the riots in France, then he*

*receives an application from a young Turk and he thinks, I prefer not to
take any risks. The applications are usually sent back by return post."*

All social workers in the German focus groups agreed that young Muslims felt
that their acceptance in the 'host' society was problematic. The social workers
also felt that this might have undesirable consequences, for example, by making
them more susceptible to radicalisation. Above and beyond this, they also note
an increase in anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism among young Muslims,
which has its roots in Arabic and Turkish media:

> *"While the one spoke out against the attacks on New York, others said
> that they found what had happened a good thing. Bloody Americans, we
> oppressed Muslims have finally been able to defend ourselves. We social
> workers then (sic). We then steered the dialogue away from this topic to
> try and lighten the somewhat aggressive atmosphere."*

The German social worker observed that this Anti-American sentiment was
much stronger among Arab youths than Turkish ones. The terrorist attacks are
justified by the Muslims, who felt that they, as Muslims, had to defend
themselves against what they see as a repressive world politic of the USA.
According to the statements made by the social workers, the American invasion
of Iraq also created a feeling of shock and a more intense anti-American
sentiment among the youths.

Several UK social workers supported the view that Muslim youths face
significant contradictions in their lives because they lived 'between two
cultures' or between 'two worlds'. The social workers saw this in terms of a
'generation gap' reflecting differences between home and the outside world –
whether the latter was the school, the work environment or 'the street'. Thus

social workers reported a tension between the cultural or traditional expectations of the parents of young Muslims and conflicting pressures to fit in with the norms that prevailed elsewhere in society. One social worker in Bradford went so far as to speak of Muslim youth being alienated from society and another spoke of the high incidence of depression among Muslim youth, which he attributed to feelings of resentment and humiliation over the way Muslims were characteristically portrayed in the mass media, as well as by their direct experience of racism, discrimination and demonization of Muslims that they perceived as endemic in British society.

It is clear in all four countries that identity is a point of difficulty for many of the young people who are at an age when identity issues are especially sensitive. The extent to which the respondents see Muslim youth as adopting Italian, German, British or Belgian identities varies by country and, in the minds of the social workers, is largely driven by the extent to which they are accepted as Italians, Germans, British or Belgians. There is also some indication that this identity is driven by the degree of integration and interaction with the larger society – something that may result from the personal choices of the Muslim youth (e.g., where a youth decides to move in social circles that exclude individuals who do not share his or her country of origin) or from the level of acceptance by the larger community. The latter is a particular problem in Germany where the social workers note that Muslim youth, even if second or third generation, are not accepted as Germans even if they have the desire to be so accepted and thus they have no choice but to adopt another national identity (e.g. Turkish). The importance of national identities was raised by social workers in Belgium and Italy as well, but appeared to be more a matter of choice, than last resort.

In the UK, a number of social workers emphasised the importance of maintaining and developing youth services (for all communities). As far as they were concerned, this was not merely a matter of obtaining more resources, it was also a matter of developing resources designed to encourage interaction and integration between communities. It became clear in our interviews that since the London bombings social workers saw this as being particularly important. The consensus of opinion was that given the potential for communal tension in the aftermath of the bombings, it was vital to bring young people together if there was to be much hope of better appreciation of different cultures and different religious traditions. However, according to the social workers in Bradford this objective was made more difficult to attain insofar as facilities for young people were being increasingly threatened by restrictions on funding, though this problem was mitigated to some extent by the help given by voluntary workers. The Bradford social workers also reported that the Muslim community – especially young Muslims – felt that because they experience severe social problems any restrictions on funding of programmes and initiatives would have a disproportionate impact on them. One problem that was seen to affect all communities was drug taking [and drug dealing]. This was especially noteworthy among young Muslims because it occurred even though a substantial proportion of them [perhaps 50 per cent, according to one social worker] had never consumed drink, let alone drugs. Yet in Bradford, for example, social workers reported that, over a period of a few years, there had been a significant change of attitude among young Muslims, many of whom – against their parents' wishes – now not only went out 'clubbing' and consumed alcohol, but also consumed drugs and quite a few of whom sold drugs. Although drug dealing offered a lucrative source of income, some social workers viewed the involvement of young Muslims in drug dealing as a way of avoiding the poverty and unemployment that confronted many in the Muslim community.

In terms of a Muslim identity, the social workers often saw Muslim youths as struggling to find their way through a mix of religion and culture in piecing together their own identities. Although opinions vary and individual differences exist, there is a general consensus that the youth are driven by their social positioning and that seeking out their Muslim origins is often the result of trying to find their place in society. The strengthening of the youths' Muslim identity can be seen as a double-edged sword in that while it may help the youth, it can contribute to fear of Muslims as noted by one social worker in Italy who stated, *"In fact, having a strong sense of one's Muslim identity is sometimes viewed with fear of fanaticism. This fear is conveyed through small things said here and there."* Of course this, in turn, may only serve to strengthen the "reaction against a reaction."

This concept may also apply to the tendency described by social workers in Italy and Belgium in which some Muslim youths use terrorist events and/or discrimination in their particular way. The social workers in Belgium describe youth as using discrimination to avoid going to work or internships. This a practice that could potentially increase discriminatory behaviour on the part of employers if they come to believe that Muslim employees are unreliable – resulting in a vicious circle in which Muslims think employers are discriminatory and engage in behaviour that puts them in a negative light, which in turn fosters discrimination. The behaviours described in Italy represent a radically different use of past events in that some youths are reported to have entered a crowd and threatened to blow themselves up if people do not clear the way – an act that, while different in kind, is similar in nature to the absenteeism described by the Belgian social workers – thus employing anti-Muslim stereotypes for their own ends. In both cases the youth put on, even if temporarily, an identity that has been created for them by others.

Overall, the picture painted by the social workers in the four countries is one of youth who choose different paths, but who are all heavily influenced by their external environment. Feelings in regards to national identities vary, but there seems to be a general consensus that most youth *want* to be Belgian, Italian, British or German, but that discrimination and prejudice does not always make this possible. Attachment to a Muslim identity varies; however, there is general agreement that when threatened, the Muslim identity is the primary one.

Conclusion

The research carried out in Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the UK involves young Muslims with a myriad of differences in terms of nationality, immigration histories and the local contexts (both in terms of city and nation) in which they live. Despite these differences, a number of commonalities emerged amongst the youth, commonalities that were echoed by the reports of parents, social workers, and teachers. One of the primary themes that emerged dealt with changes in the youth since 9/11: changes that appear to have taken two general forms. One response represents youth who are moving away from Islam; these, however, appear to be a minority. The vast majority of the Muslim youth conduct and express themselves in ways that re-affirm their Muslim identities in different ways. This can partially be seen as a response to the environment around them ("*a reaction to a reaction*" as noted by a social worker in Italy) as they are asked, and perceive the need, to explain or justify Islam and themselves. Thus, there is an outward re-affirmation of who they are and what it means to be a Muslim. There is also a more personal side that is represented in what can be seen as a break in tradition, in the youths' desire to understand Islam for themselves rather than relying on their parents or Imams from Islamic countries. This search for knowledge can be said to contribute to a generational gap or rupture in terms of religion and culture, as parents and their children have different notions of what belongs in the realm of religion and what pertains to

culture or ethnicity. While generational differences are certainly not unique to these young Muslims, it is interesting to note that the youth tend to distance themselves from nation and culture in favour of religion. For many, there is a sense of being between nationalities, neither belonging to the country in which they live, nor belonging to their country of origin, and hence their primary identity is often rooted in religion rather than in place.

This research sought to understand the development of the identities, with particular emphasis on whether Muslim youth have or show evidence of a European identity. It is quite clear that most of the youth (with some notable exceptions in Germany although this appears to be largely due to being rejected by the autochthonous population) have a fairly strong national identity, even if their Muslim identity is often the one that they identify with the most. Findings regarding the presence of a European identity are more ambivalent, but the words of the young Muslims suggest that such an identity is not incompatible with how they see themselves. In fact, there is a tendency to argue that Islamic and European values are not only *not* incompatible, but overlap in regards to respect for others, tolerance and desire for peace.

Apart from whether or not any particular identity exists, the research establishes a basis for seeking to understand the process by which identities evolve and develop. This research did not have this as an explicit aim, the findings; however, provide some insight into the phenomenon. While tentative, we can provide an explanation for why these youth seem to be moving towards Islam[48] by examining the larger context and prevalence of a common Muslim stereotype, supported by the mass media, that tends to portray Muslim and Islam

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[48] Teachers and social workers also talked about young Muslims who had distanced themselves from Islam. These youth, however, were not part of this study due to methodological restrictions as they would be much less visible and accessible. Their experiences and tendencies may be entirely different and future research would be needed to understand their identity transformations.

as not only incompatible with the Western values and culture, but as a danger and threat to those values and culture.

While numerous immigrant groups have faced and continue to face discrimination, the context tended to be much more localized meaning that immigrants could deal with conflicts and difficulties on a local level. For example, Greek and Italian immigrants in Germany (who arrived at about the same time as Muslim Turkish immigrants as temporary workers) have not encountered the same difficulties as their Muslim counterparts. These individuals have not had to contend with a wider demonisation of Italians and Greeks and benefit from being from countries that have joined the European Union. Muslims, however, are left combating an image of Islam at a higher level that incorporates Europe and the rest of the West. Local (national included) media coverage may differ (e.g., the UK media may be more sensitive in its portrayal of Islam than the media in other European countries), but the youth are nonetheless repeatedly asked to justify events by individuals halfway around the world and confront the same stereotypes that equate Islam with intolerance, violence and terrorism. Muslims are readily seen, as defined in Cohen's (1972) classic study of the Mods and Rockers, as "folk devils" that are not just bedevilling the Brits, but all of Western civilization.

Muslim youth vary in their reactions to the pressures they face to answer for the behaviour of other Muslims. Some do not want to respond and perceive it as a burden, while others see it as a responsibility, an opportunity and even strength. Regardless of how they feel, these demands and requests can be seen as reinforcing a Muslim identity by making religion the primary focus and relating to Muslims on the basis of religion. This can have, as Amartha Sen noted in discussing the UK's Prime Minister Tony Blair's appeals to the "the authentic

and moderate voices of Islam" to make themselves heard, profound consequences:

> *The effect of this political approach focused on religion, and on the political institutions that generate it (with frequent similar announcements, for example, <<the government is meeting a leader of the Muslim community in regards to the next and fundamental phase, ready to consolidate a united front>>), has been to reinforce and strengthen the voice of religious authority, diminishing the importance of non-religious institutions and movements[49]*. (Sen, 2006, pp. 77-78)

Politics may or may not play a part for the youth, but the result is likely to be similar as Muslims who might otherwise be more private about their religion are asked to be public about their faith, entering a global stage where one image of Islam confronts another. This leaves Muslims from various backgrounds around Europe in similar situations as their conflicts are no longer locally based, but have taken on a European and even global importance where symbols can displace reality. The appearance of "being Muslim" can induce a fear response on buses and public space as non-Muslims respond to events that happened in another city, another country, or even on another continent. It is, as media scholars have noted (Surette, 1996; see also Croteau and Hoynes, 1997; Dearing and Everett, 1996; Kingdon, 1984), the potential for news from one locality to shape a much larger agenda, spreading fear in the process of doing so. The spreading of such fear is not a foregone conclusion as there needs to be an element of identification. Thus, the American response to 9/11 may be best understood by the fact that it occurred *in* the U.S. rather than at an American embassy somewhere in the Middle East. Italy, for example, has not experienced a

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[49] Translation by the authors from the Italian.

direct attack, but there is nonetheless a tendency to identify with what has occurred in the U.S., Madrid and London. In this sense the threat has gone from the terrain of the "other" to their own. There is a sense that the violence is not just "over there", but could touch them in their own cities. It is in this context that the Muslims "over there" and the Muslims next door tend to get subsumed in the same threatening image that presents a threat to the local and larger context (i.e., Western). It is this globalization of the "Muslim threat" that separates it from others (e.g., the IRA in Ireland, which has not led to a widespread demonisation of Catholics) where the threat, conflict and images are much more localized.

Young Muslims, then, are left constructing themselves as Muslims while contending with the media and social constructionism of what it means to be Muslim – stereotypes that they encounter on a regular basis. They essentially find themselves between two opposing and monolithic portrayals of Islam: the Western stereotype of Islam as a threat to Western culture and the Muslims' contention that there is one Islam. What impact does this have on their identity formation? How is this rooted in place? The findings from this study are not definitive, but hint at an ongoing process. The majority of the youth included in this study appear to feel a connection to the country where they live, they feel British, Italian, German, or Belgian, and they also see a place for themselves in a wider Europe, which they respect, and that shares their values – a symbolic sharing that may be increased due to the sense that what they are experiencing is not unique to them, but is a common plight, experienced by Muslims elsewhere.

In concluding it is important to re-emphasize the limitations of this research in that it was carried out with a somewhat limited portion of the Muslim population. However, it is also important to recognize that common themes emerged despite the numerous differences in each country and city where the research was carried

out. This, perhaps, is the greatest indication of the development of a European Islam as young Muslims, regardless of country of residence or background, begin to explore what Islam means to them rather than what it means to their parents. It may be that being a European Muslim is not necessarily about sharing the same beliefs and interpretations for different aspects of Islam, but in sharing a process that, in terms of religion, has a long history in Europe.

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