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**Beyond Rituals and National Models of Integration: Muslim Migrants'  
Religiosity in a Western Context**

**Egyptian Muslim Migrants in the UK, France, and Belgium**

*By Karim Hegazy*

Dissertation submitted to the School of Politics and International Relations in the Faculty of  
Social Science in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of  
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Karim Hegazy

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*In the loving memory of Dr. Mohamed Hegazy*

## Abstract

For many years, the question of Muslim migrants' integration in Europe has been at the fore of European public debates, as a topic that deeply polarized the political agenda. Recently, the issue has even taken on new urgency in the wake of the enormous challenges resulting from the migration crisis that has exploded into public consciousness since the outbreak of the unrest in Syria, with its spillover into many European countries, followed by some high-profile events including terrorist attacks and security threats. At the center of this vigorous debate, the issue of Muslim migrants' religiosity in Europe is found to be thrust to the fore, moving the scope of attention from just Muslims' integration to the impact of their religiosity on the paths of this integration.

Being situated at the center of this debate, this doctoral dissertation presents a more nuanced understanding about the nature of the relationship between Muslim migrants' religiosity and their sociocultural integration. It tries to fill a number of major gaps in literature by examining the relationship between Egyptian Muslim migrants' religiosity and their sociocultural integration in the UK, France, and Belgium. The thesis identifies the nature of this relationship by focusing on the dynamics of interaction between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception. Through a substantial sample of 128 in-depth qualitative interviews, the research examines this dynamic of interaction by drawing on a hybrid of theoretical approaches including the theories of religiosity, of migrant integration, and the context of reception.

This thesis makes a critical contribution to literature, first, by focusing on migrants' own perspectives of religiosity and the context of reception as a solid framework of analysis in investigating the relationship between religiosity and sociocultural integration. This serves to show

that both migrants' religiosity and the context of reception influence integration primarily through the perception of migrants, so that relying only on structural context of reception -with its set of policies and structures- in evaluating migrant integration is not enough. The second main aspect of contribution lies in approaching religiosity in this thesis as 'a state of being' instead of a measurable scale, an approach that is pivotal in helping us to accurately understand religiosity more by its impact on Muslim Migrants' daily lives and less through measurement of migrants' observance of religious practices and rituals. Religiosity, on that basis, can be seen as an attribute that goes beyond structured rituals and codified procedures.

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# **Chapter One: Introduction**

## **I. Background and Rationale of the Research**

This thesis examines the relationship between Muslim migrants' religiosity and their sociocultural integration, drawing on fieldwork among Egyptian Muslim migrants in the UK, France, and Belgium to do so. One key question which is examined is whether or not migrants' religiosity changes post-migration in these three European countries of destination, and if so, in what ways, and what impact such a change may have for migrants' daily lives.

The issue of Muslim migrants' integration in Europe has generated vigorous public, political, and academic debate across the continent, where varying views on integration have become a primary part of the political agenda (Alba and Nee 2003; Joppke 2009; Faist 2010; Statham and Tillie 2016), and where the settlement of large numbers of Muslim migrants into European societies has raised important questions for how European policy makers can manage cultural diversity, maintain social cohesion, and accommodate minorities (Fetzer 2004; Norris and Inglehart 2012). Some high-profile events since the early 2000s, including honor killings, terrorist attacks or murders carried out by Islamic fundamentalists have contributed to the increasing negative rhetoric about Muslims in Europe and more firmly embedded that negative rhetoric in political dialogue. All of these issues, much debated by politicians and in the media, have raised questions, first, about the success of Muslims' integration in Europe, and second about the role of religion in this integration process.

Many of these discussions circle around the question of the impact of religiosity on migrant integration; my research is situated at the core of this debate. In summarizing these complex

debates, three key schools of thought come to the fore. The first argues that the challenge of integrating Muslim migrants in their European countries of destination is primarily represented (or seen) in their religion and/or Islamic traditions (Kaltenbach and Tribalat 2002; Phalet *et al.* 2013; Bloemraad *et al.* 2008; Cesari 2004; Kastoryano 2004; Alba 2005; Lucassen 2005; Bowen 2007; Foner and Alba 2008; Klausen 2005, 2008; Alba and Foner 2016). The second school emphasizes that the real challenge of migrant integration is not mainly about migrants' religion, it is rather circumscribed in the context of reception, as in the receiving state and society by which migrants are received and accommodated (Landolt 2008; Laurence and Vaisse 2007; Maxwell 2009; Crul and Schneider 2010; Crul and Mollenkopf 2012), and that instead, in some cases religion/Islam has an integrative role (Fischer and Hout 2006; Laurence and Vaisse 2007; Foley and Hoge 2007). Finally, the third school concludes that both religion and the context of reception, combined, shape the process of Muslim migrants' sociocultural integration (Maliepaard and Schacht 2018; Reitz 2002; Adida *et al.* 2016).

It is this third school of thought upon which my work is based; my empirical research presents a more nuanced understanding, building on that third school of thought. While my thesis signals a robust relationship between migrants' religiosity and their integration, it initially underlines that the focus cannot be restricted solely to the idea that religiosity and the context of reception influence migrant integration, and argues that, in particular, the dynamic of interaction between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception is crucial in understanding the nature of the relationship between Muslim migrants' religiosity and their sociocultural integration.

In academic research, the relationship between Muslim migrants' religiosity and their integration, as well as the relationship between the context of reception and migrant integration, have been oversimplified. These relationships have often been portrayed as being causal. For example, high

religiosity is argued to lead to negative integration (i.e. Güngör *et al.* 2011). Also, a welcoming context of reception has been identified as an important factor for positive integration and vice-versa (i.e. Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Nevertheless, I argue that the process is more complex and multifaceted.

My thesis advances this perspective, and is an original contribution to literature by arguing that: *first*, the overall relationship between religiosity and integration is best understood through the dynamics of interaction between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception; *second*, that this dynamics of interaction takes place in a self-perpetuating cycle, by which religiosity and the context of reception influence each other in a sequence of mutual cause and effect, where barriers in the context of reception stimulate migrants' religiosity, and in parallel, migrants' religiosity reinforces these barriers; *third*, this self-perpetuating interplay unfolds in an iterative multilayered process, as being mediated by a state of sociocultural segregation, and a migrant-perceived context of reception (as opposed to a structurally studied context of reception).

My thesis also represents an original contribution in that it draws on migrant perspectives of both religiosity and context of reception; how do migrants themselves evaluate the importance of religion in their lives? How do they perceive the context of reception in their country of destination? The measurement of both has been, to date, more mechanical; this thesis draws rather on migrants' perspectives, which are both crucial and under-researched.

Theoretically, in order to elucidate that dynamics of interaction between religiosity and the context of reception, the thesis draws on a hybrid of theoretical underpinnings. This includes the theories of religiosity, migrant integration, and the context of reception. By combining these three theoretical approaches, the thesis contributes to literature in an original way. In specific terms, looking at religiosity, I draw most heavily on the theoretical approach of religiosity as a social

identity (Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010; Maliepaard and Phalet 2012; Karlsen and Nazroo 2013). I also explore the general role of religiosity among migrants by drawing on Hirschman's theory of religious reliance (2004), and Radzi *et al.*'s theory of the religious dimension of coping (2014).

With regard to sociocultural integration, I build on Berry's theory of acculturation (Berry 1997; Sam and Berry 2006; Schwartz *et al.* 2010), and on specific interpretation of Granovetter's (1973) concepts of strong and weak ties (Damstra and Tillie 2016). And finally, as for the theoretical underpinning of the context of reception, the thesis draws broadly on the theory of context of integration (Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Crul and Schneider 2010) in understanding the components of the context of reception and illuminating its linkage to religiosity and migrant integration.

In short, within this theoretical framework, and while conceptualizing religiosity and integration, I look at the context of reception from a twofold perspective: an institutional perspective (the system); and a societal perspective (the host society). I approach the first by theoretically discussing national models of integration, in terms of both the accuracy of the concept itself (models of integration), and the practicality of the philosophy (assimilation and multiculturalism). I explore the second component (the host society) by demonstrating the issue of secularism, particularly its interpretation in characterizing the host society.

## **II. Thesis Aims and Research Question**

My thesis seeks to answer one primary question: what impact does Muslim migrants' religiosity have on the trajectories of their sociocultural integration in a western European country of destination? A second question follows: does migrants' pre-existing religiosity, brought with them from a country of origin, differ than their religiosity after migration in a country of destination? If so, in what ways?

By empirically addressing these research questions, my research responds to important calls made for thorough empirical investigations on the relationship between Muslim migrants' religion and their integration (Maliapaard and Schaacht 2017; Damstra and Tillie 2016; Torrekens and Jacobs 2016), particularly, the calls for more focused research on the interaction between contexts of reception and migrants' religion (Connor 2010).

One aim of this thesis is to capture the bigger picture linking religion and integration of Muslim migrants in Europe. This aim necessitates looking at the issue from a wider and more practical perspective, by combining three significant disciplines of study in the domain of religion and migration; these are Muslim migrants' religiosity, sociocultural integration, and the components of the context of reception, or the receiving country of destination.

More specifically, the research aims at advancing existing literature which focuses on the importance of Muslim migrants' religiosity in understanding their integration into European host societies (i.e. Alba and Foner 2016; Bisin *et al.* 2008; Connor 2010; Bloemraad 2007). In doing so, the thesis identifies a number of gaps in related literature, and works towards filling these gaps.

One important limitation in literature is related to the limited scope of attention given to the domain of sociocultural integration of Muslim migrants in Europe. On that basis, and for a number of other reasons, my research restricts its focus on integration to the social and cultural domains of integration. These reasons could be summarized in the following: *first*, the focus on sociocultural integration serves to illustrate how religiosity matters most in influencing Muslim migrants' lives in European countries of destination. The sociocultural domain is one of the most domains of integration where migrants' religiosity and the context of reception interact in various ways; *second*, the importance of sociocultural integration also lies in its role in thrusting the host society into the center of migrant integration debate. By focusing on the social and cultural dimensions of

integration, it is possible to shift the focal point from just migrants, to their relationships with the host society, which makes this type of integration necessary in studying the personal contacts between Muslim migrants and members of the host society (Maliepaard and Phalet 2012); and *third*, sociocultural integration is a domain that situates integration far beyond the field of policies and structures, in order, then, to capture the everyday experiences of migrant integration (Koomen *et al.* 2013). For the most part, sociocultural integration subsumes dimensions that are not institutionally structured through markets or political processes and institutions (Algan *et al.* 2012). Therefore, as opposed to other forms of integration, such as structural integration (economic/labor, political, educational, etc.), the sociocultural one, I argue, is a major marker for the level of success or failure in bridging gaps between migrants and the host society.

Another significant gap is associated with the way by which Muslim migrants' religiosity is examined in academic research. In short, previous literature (Güngör *et al.* 2011; Smits *et al.* 2010; Kraler 2007; Voas and Fleischmann 2012; Connor 2010) has studied Muslim migrants' religiosity primarily by examining objective criteria (i.e. practice or visibility) to measure a subjective phenomenon, religiosity. This juxtaposition can be seen in the ways in which academic studies tend to look at migrants' religiosity less by its impact on their daily lives, and more through measurement of practices and rituals (Norris and Inglehart 2012). As such, religiosity has been, for the most part, measured by scale-based variables (Damstra and Tillie 2016), using quantitative surveys and structured questions (Van Tubergen and Sindradottir 2011; Lewis and Kashyap 2013).

My thesis aims to provide a more in-depth approach to Muslim migrants' religiosity. It addresses religiosity through a broader understanding, namely through its significance for migrants' daily life and broader sense of identity. The thesis defines religiosity here not as a purpose or a measurable scale, but rather as a state of being (or conditions of existence) which refers to an

attribute or a phenomenon of a present life experience. This phenomenon captures the impact of religion and its magnitude on Muslim migrants' daily lives, accompanied by the level of emotional reliance on, and conscious awareness of, one's own religion. Religiosity, in this sense, is an attribute that goes beyond structured rituals, codified procedures, or established institutions, as it, instead, provides codes of norms, values, and behaviors used in interpreting and perceiving daily life situations.

On the other hand, relying only on structural context of reception -with its set of policies and structures- in evaluating migrant integration is another important limitation in literature. Although this gap has been previously identified in academic studies, it is yet to be sufficiently filled (or it is still underemphasized). In this regard, while it is clear that national models of integration shape policy frameworks and set the level of openness or restrictiveness in each system, it has been argued that they do not provide a clear understanding for the success or failure of migrant integration (Betrossi 2011; Alba and Foner 2016). One key reason for this is that migrants' own perceptions of such models have not been sufficiently considered.

My research fills this gap by stressing the importance of the perceived context of reception as a solid framework of analysis in examining migrant integration. It contributes to literature by linking this perceived context of reception to the overall dynamics of interaction between religiosity and the context of reception. My thesis demonstrates that the influence of the context of reception on religiosity and, subsequently, on integration takes place primarily through a perceived context of reception by migrants, and that looking only at systemic differences is not enough. Thus, focusing on the perceived context of reception, especially the perceptions migrants have of the host society, provides a vital tool in understanding how the role of religiosity in migrants' lives can influence their sociocultural integration. Within such perceived context of reception, the thesis aims to shed

light on the role of the host society in shaping migrants' perceptions. Therefore, integration is not only conceived through the ability of states to develop a set of policies and structures in which Muslim migrants can be integrated, but also through the profound role of its host society in incorporating and accommodating those migrants, which is primarily manifested -in my thesis- in the perceived context of reception.

As a whole, it is important to note that this research is not about who is more religious and who is less religious, nor is it about whether the less religious integrate better than the more religious. It is rather about how certain aspects of religiosity among Muslim migrants, both the religious and the less-religious, influence their sociocultural integration, by interacting with the context of reception. In this respect, the research finds that religiosity highly influences the sociocultural integration of Egyptian Muslim migrants, but only depending on the dynamics of interaction between certain aspects of this religiosity with other aspects of the context of reception, regardless of the degree or level of religiosity among these migrants.

This thesis provides a point of departure for future research that will deepen our understanding of the dynamics of interaction between receiving states and societies and migrants' religion in the field of Muslim migrants' integration, a topic that will remain highly relevant from both an academic and political perspectives in the coming years.

### **III. Thesis Outline**

In sum, in order to thoroughly elucidate this dynamics of interaction, first, while laying out the main theoretical guidance of this research, the thesis starts by engaging in a theoretical discussion delineating the two main players of such interaction; the context of reception and religiosity. Then, it moves on to the first empirical part by exploring the different aspects of Muslim migrants'

religiosity. Subsequently, the thesis pulls together the two main factors (context of reception and religiosity) by combining them in what I refer to as the perceived context of reception. And finally, it builds on this to conclude the nature of the dynamics of interaction, by linking all the research findings together to frame the overall picture of such dynamics of interaction between religiosity and the context of reception. This takes place as follows:

Chapter Two presents the overall methodology pursued in carrying out this qualitative research. It discusses the significance of the selection of the three countries of destination under study, then moves on to demonstrate the main methods used in collecting and analyzing data, including issues such as interviews structure, topics addressed in the interviews, and the field definition. Finally, the chapter clarifies the significance of sampling, specifically, among Egyptian Muslim migrants, along with the main criteria used in recruitment. Throughout, the chapter also highlights the positionality of the researcher.

Chapters Three and Four set the theoretical context in this thesis. In Chapter Three, I demonstrate the theoretical underpinnings of migrants' religiosity and the issue of sociocultural integration. The chapter outlines the main theories employed in this research in studying these two issues. With regard to religiosity, it sets out the theoretical scope in looking at migrants' religiosity. The chapter, then, conceptualizes religiosity in this thesis by exploring a number of approaches in literature used in understanding religiosity within the main functions it offers to migrants as a source of social identity, emotional support, and resources. As for integration, the chapter addresses the concept of integration, most importantly, by conceptualizing the issue of sociocultural integration within Berry's (1997) theory of acculturation, along with highlighting the main other theoretical approaches used in approaching integration in this thesis. It, also, demonstrates how the issue of

Muslim migrants' integration is generally approached in academic literature, according to three central schools of thought.

In completing the theoretical picture, Chapter Four approaches the concept of the context of reception from a twofold perspective: an institutional perspective (the system); and a societal perspective (the host society). In short, the chapter sets out theoretically the main components of the context of reception across two main aspects: the national models/philosophies of integration, and secularism. As such, the discussion of these two aspects takes place over two levels of analysis: the institutional level and the societal level. The first level explores the institutional context of reception (the system), by demonstrating assimilation and multiculturalism as the two overarching philosophies characterizing integration models in the three countries under study. Whereas the second level addresses the societal context of reception (the host society), by underlining secularism as an interpreting tool in understanding the host societies and their level of receptivity towards Muslim migrants.

Chapters Five and Six explore empirically the main aspects of religiosity in this thesis. They examine the question of Egyptian Muslim migrants' religiosity in the three countries under study, highlighting how religiosity is lived among these migrants, and if reinforced, then how this reinforcement takes place. Briefly, these two empirical chapters argue that: *first*, religiosity is generally reinforced and revived among Muslim migrants in their European countries of destination; *second*, that this reinforcement in religiosity is not manifested in mere increase of practices/rituals, it is rather conceived as a state of being which is shaped by a hybrid of both what migrants bring from the country of origin and what they encounter in the context of reception; and the *third*, and final, argument is that this religiosity -as a state of being- is manifested through five

major aspects including 1) the demarcation of *halal* and *haram*<sup>1</sup>; 2) reinforced religious identity; 3) reinforced religious emotions; 4) the impact of what I refer to as acts of cultural liberties<sup>2</sup> on religiosity; and finally 5) the role of religiosity in raising children. These points emerged strongly through thematic analysis of my empirical data.

Building on Chapters Four, Five, and Six, Chapter Seven ultimately argues that although the structural context of reception is important in understanding the conditions of migrant integration, the question of the context of reception is primarily an empirical one. The chapter emphasizes that migrants' perception of the context of reception – as distinct from any objective list of policies or structures – is key in the dynamics of interaction between religiosity and the context of reception, and, subsequently, the impact of this interaction on sociocultural integration. It also explores the main elements of this perceived context of reception on both the societal level and the institutional level. These elements include a belief of wide cultural differences between migrants and the host society, a negatively perceived host society, and a positively perceived institutional system. The chapter, thus, draws on these elements to conclude that the context of reception is largely perceived as unwelcoming (based on the dominant role of the host society in shaping this perception).

Finally, Chapter Eight builds on the conclusions of previous chapters to substantiate the overall thesis argument, by elucidating the nature (and/or the directions) of the dynamics of interaction between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception. It brings together the empirical findings demonstrated in chapters Five, Six, and Seven to illustrate the existence of a self-perpetuating cyclic dynamics between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception. Accordingly, the

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<sup>1</sup> In Islamic provisions, *halal* refers to anything or any act that is known to be religiously permitted, whereas *haram* denotes anything or any act that is religiously prohibited, banned, or forbidden

<sup>2</sup> What I call acts of cultural liberties in this thesis (as shown in Chapter Six) refers to specific acts/behaviors that are related to the understanding of Muslim migrants of the host society's norms of sexual liberties and alcohol drinking.

chapter ultimately argues that: 1) the context of reception (which is largely perceived as unwelcoming) and religiosity are locked in a self-perpetuating relationship; and 2) that such interplay between religiosity and the context does not take place in a linear process, or in a direct form of causality, it rather unfolds in an iterative process through a mediating role played by a state of sociocultural segregation.

I draw from this to conclude that this overall self-perpetuating cyclic effect between religiosity and the context of reception, as mediated by sociocultural segregation, and a perceived context of reception, can have a negative impact on migrants' sociocultural integration in the three countries of destination.

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## **Chapter two: Methodology**

### **I. Introduction**

This chapter sets out the overall methodology of the research. It discusses the methods used to carry out this qualitative research. The chapter addresses the methodological approach of the research in three main sections: the first discusses the significance of the selection of the three countries of destination under study; the second presents the main methods used in collecting and analyzing data including interview structure, broad topics addressed in the interviews, field definition, as well as the language used throughout the interviews; and finally, the third section focuses on informants and sampling, including the significance of sampling specifically among Egyptian Muslim migrants, along with the main criteria used in recruitment. It is, in addition, relevant to note that the positionality of the researcher will be outlined over the second and third sections.

Before engaging with these issues, it is crucial, first, to highlight that despite the relatively substantial sample drawn upon in this qualitative study (128 interviews in the UK, France, and Belgium), the research does not seek to make claims neither about all Egyptian Muslim migrants in the three countries under study, nor about all Muslim migrants in Europe.

### **II. Why the UK, France, and Belgium?**

While chapter four lays out the details of the main characteristics of the UK, France, and Belgium through addressing the context of reception in this research, this section briefly outlines the major methodological factors that were pivotal in selecting these countries. Part of these factors is linked to a number of similar characteristics featuring the three countries, while the other part is, in

contrast, pertinent to the differences between them. This presents a diverse context in looking at migrants' religiosity in Western Europe. In other words, a number of similarities and differences can be identified with regard to the countries themselves, so that this combination of similarities and differences renders the UK, France, and Belgium an inclusive and diverse example in showing how Egyptian Muslim migrants experience their religiosity within distinct national models of integration, and how this religiosity may impact their paths of integration in contemporary Western Europe.

Apart from the variations in each, the UK, France, and Belgium share a number of significant characteristics. The three countries are known as secular western European democracies, and are three of the main countries of immigration in Europe. Despite the ethno-national differences of the dominant group of Muslim migrants in these three countries, Muslim migrants in general (or people originating from Muslim majority countries) form one of the biggest migrant communities in each of the three countries. Taking into consideration, in specific terms, that the UK and France are major destinations to Egyptian migrants, hosting (together with Italy) more than two-thirds of the Egyptian migrants in Europe (Zohry 2009).

In addition, and most importantly, secularism is known in all three countries to be a foundational feature of both the state and the society. While acknowledging the variations in each, it is evident that the system and the society in each country are highly secular, where religion, on the system side, is strictly confined to the private sphere, and on the society side, the role of religion appears to be quite limited.

Having said that, in parallel, the countries' characteristics display important elements of differences distinguishing each of them. They all, officially and theoretically, represent three different models of migrant integration in Europe, with each having its own distinct take on both

the philosophy of integration, and the understanding of secularism (as shown in Chapter Four). Moreover, each country hosts a distinct dominant community of Muslim migrants, which makes the ethno-national character of Muslims in each of them quite different. In the UK, it is south Asians who represent the Muslim majority community (mainly Pakistanis and Bangladeshis). Algerians are considered the dominant Muslim community in France, while in Belgium, Moroccans constitute the biggest community of Muslims.

Egyptian migrants are a minority, but present in all three countries under study. My research focuses on Egyptian Muslim migrants (as shown below in details) because of a number of reasons including the level of diversity characterizing this group of migrants (i.e. in terms of their socioeconomic backgrounds, waves of migration, gender, etc.), also, and most importantly, that they do not represent the dominant or majority Muslim community in any of the three countries under study, which gives them a different and indicative status in comparison to other Muslim communities, especially with regard to their relationship with the country of destination and its host society. This, in and of itself, adds a methodological leverage for Egyptian Muslim migrants in studying the issue of religiosity and integration.

### **III. Research Methods: Data Collection and Analysis**

#### **A. Interviews' structure and main topics addressed**

Drawing on grounded theory (Dawson 2009), the method used for collecting and gathering data in this research relied on face-to-face semi-structured interviews, including a number of story-telling questions, that were employed to ensure that the data coming out of those interviews are quite neutral and unguided. The questions were tailored based on five initial pilot interviews conducted in Belgium, and constructed in a way that meant to avoid directing or channeling informants

towards a certain tone or pattern of replies at the beginning of the interview. The major idea behind this was to avoid any sort of guiding inquiry or strict forms of structured result-oriented questions in collecting data, in order to be able to collect as unguided and neutral responses as possible.

In addition, these story-telling questions aim at gathering detailed in-depth information about informants' life-courses in migration, with regard to their lived religiosity in their personal inner sphere vis-à-vis their families, peer community, and host society. This enables the topic under study to have the space and the likelihood to emerge naturally in the interviews in the form of unguided themes. Insofar, this method is drawn on to allow informants enough room for telling their stories. Unlike structured questions (Mason 2002; Robinson 2014), story-telling questions allow for lengthy responses so that inferences related to the studied topics could be drawn objectively. In addition to neutrality, this method can help in identifying personal developments and changes among informants (Rubin and Rubin 2005). Furthermore, in line with one of the principles of grounded theory, these qualitative interviews were continued until saturation, and while covering the same topics in each interview, they have been tailored to enable flexibility for the inclusion of new unexpected information.

On the other hand, two main topics characterized the interview questions; these are religiosity and the context of reception. Given that the general topic under study in this research is the relationship between religiosity and integration, and based on the literature explored prior to fieldwork, as well as the pilot interviews conducted at the beginning of this fieldwork, informants' religiosity and the context into which they are received appeared to be the most important issues in investigating the topic under study. In addition, it is important to note, here, that at no time these topics were initiated explicitly by the researcher in the form of direct questions. The interviews questions were rather designed, tailored, and posed to allow informants to touch on these topics without being directly

asked about them. The researcher, thus, approached the questions of both religion and the context of reception objectively in a neutral manner, without being predisposed to preconceived views regarding the effect of either religion or the receiving state and society on migrant integration.

Follow-up questions were posed based on informants opening answers to my broad initial question. Although all questions were thematically the same in all interviews, the sequence of posing them varied depending on informants' initial answers, in order to ensure neutral interviewing and to achieve the most objective data, along with maintaining comfort and spontaneity throughout the interviews.

## **B. Data analysis**

In short, since the general purpose of qualitative research is to understand human behavior, and the context in which it takes place, as well as the meanings people ascribe to specific situations (Lopez *et al.* 2008: 1729), then grounded theory coupled with thematic analysis are considered here two appropriate research methods that are employed to suit the research purpose and the type of data collected. In this regard, it is important to note that, on the basis of grounded theory (Dawson 2009), data collection and analysis were carried out in parallel, where results coming out from earlier interviews have been used to refine and advance questions of later interviews.

More specifically, on the basis of the grounded theory approach, thematic analysis was the main method employed in analyzing the data. In this context, the data of this study is iteratively analyzed and evaluated (Bryman 2004) through themes emerging from within data themselves, which makes the analysis quite inductive (Dawson 2009).

Building on the understanding that a theme is a pattern found in the information which interprets aspects of a phenomenon (Boyatzis 1998: 4), data here have been analyzed by focusing on

identifiable (significant) themes and patterns of experiences, behaviors (Aronson 1995), as well as perceptions and interpretations of these experiences. Following Aronson (1994), these data are mainly derived from either direct quotes or paraphrasing common ideas. It is relevant to denote that these themes are argued to be identified by piecing together components of ideas that are often insignificant solely. In other words, thematic analysis, here, takes place by bringing together all data related to a specific theme, then organizing them into sub-themes, and linking them together to create a comprehensive picture of informants' experiences (Aronson 1995).

Moreover, thematic analysis is argued to be one of the most reliable methods in understanding and analyzing qualitative information. It is argued to be used as an important way of seeing and making sense of things, as well as 'observing a person, an interaction, a group, a situation, an organization, or a culture', and, most importantly, enabling researchers to use different types of information in a systematic manner, which increases the level of accuracy in interpreting observations about people (Boyatzis 1998: 5).

In addition, drawing on grounded theory, the study's emphasis lies mainly upon theories which are grounded in data, as well as upon the relationship between different codes (Flick 1998). Moreover, since the grounded theory has been used previously in a variety of research settings, mainly qualitative interviews, and has been combined with other data collection methods, following that, in this research, I stress the link between grounded theory and thematic analysis in evaluating and analyzing my data.

Overall, on the basis of grounded theory (Dawson 2009), interviews were conducted and analyzed in an iterative way that revealed the following: enough data about informants and settings were collected; detailed descriptions about the range of informants' views were obtained; signs of data saturation emerged (reflected in the absence of new information); data collected reflected nuanced

and subtle meanings and connotations (not only overt ones); analytic categories were developed from the gathered data; interview analysis reflects the way informants are grouped in the research; data collected imply the main issues that drive informants' attention/interest; and, finally, essential lines of comparisons have emerged in a way that can strongly inform the research conclusions.

### **C. Language and translation**

The vast majority of the interviews were conducted in Egyptian Arabic (the Egyptian dialect of the Arabic language), while several were conducted in English (only with a number of second generation informants). The aim at the beginning was to record all interviews so as to ensure a complete record, but after a round of initial interviews, I decided to rule out that option, as it was having a detrimental effect on the process of trust building, and subsequently on the amount of data produced. In those first interviews, despite their initial agreement, informants started expressing clear signals of disappointment for being recorded, by posing questions as to my intents and motives behind recording their inputs. This was shown through signs of hesitation, questions about utilizing the material, and requesting clarifications about the beneficiary of the research. Feeling that this was potentially undermining the research, as well as wanting to avoid any future informant feeling harmed, I then shifted to note-taking only. Interviews which were not recorded showed none of these doubts and behaviors.

On that basis, I opted for hand-writing notes during the interviews, in a very detailed and careful manner, requesting informants for repetition at times throughout the process, in order to maintain the highest level of accuracy. Interviews were typed shortly afterwards, with the same sequence of themes carried out, with special attention paid to quoted phrases and terms/expressions.

Translation of the interviews was carried out from Egyptian Arabic to English by the researcher, based on three main standards: meaning preservation; accurate interpretation; and wording rigor. The aim was to leave no room for slight changes in the essence or core meanings of informants' answers. This comes in line with general standards of research translation outlined previously, including accurate reproduction of the source text, the expression of all aspects of the meaning in an understandable way, and utilizing the natural form of the target language (Larson 1991).

In addition, having worked professionally in English for over fifteen years, besides being a native Egyptian Arabic speaker, the researcher enjoys solid competence of Arabic-English translation, and, as such, was able to ensure high quality and accuracy of translation carried out in this research.

#### **D. Field definition and informants' selection**

The core of this multisite fieldwork was conducted over a period of one year between August 2015 and October 2016. Chronologically, it started by Belgium, followed by the UK, and finalized by France. However, it was preceded by a number of preliminary visits in Brussels, which functioned as an important means of participant observation. These visits have helped enormously in tailoring, improving, and adjusting the interviews questions and the adopted fieldwork strategy, which comes in line with important methodological standards of the grounded theory (Dawson 2009).

Although it is set out to serve the purpose of a cross-national study, this research fits into some criteria of cross-regional (cross-cities) study as well. In the UK, it was carried out across a number of cities including London, Manchester, Bristol, Newcastle, and Cardiff, while in France it focused on Paris, Marseille, and Lyon. And finally in Belgium, for practical reasons, the research was confined to Brussels, with several interviews in Antwerp. The cities were selected based on the sampling methodology mentioned below.

The research interviews sought to ensure a high level of in-depth, elaborative, and detailed qualitative study, with each lasting between one and three hours. They also took place between public and private venues including cafes, restaurants, as well as informants' homes and workplaces.

## **IV. Informants and Sampling**

### **A. Why Egyptian Muslim migrants?**

The significance of looking at the Egyptian Muslim migrants in studying the relationship between religiosity and integration in this research can be attributed to the following:

*First*, a number of indicative characteristics render Egyptian Muslim migrants a diverse group for the study of migrant religiosity and integration. It has been noted, and indeed emerges here, that the Egyptian migrant community in Europe is not homogenous; it rather comprises a variety of social classes and socioeconomic statuses, displayed by various professions and educational backgrounds (Karmi 1997), and, in parallel, represents different waves of migration (Zohry 2006). In addition, this community is not known to be physically or spatially segregated, also it does not have an obvious distinguishing feature, such as physical appearance or occupation of certain work (Karmi 1997). Thus, it does not yet reflect a well-structured generic group of migrants who hold similar profiles irrespective to their country of destination, which have the Egyptian migrants defined as a community of migrants that is 'still fluid, shifting, and floating' (Médam 1993, qtd in Severo and Zuolo 2012: 530).

*Second*, the size of the Egyptian migrant population and their general status in their European countries of destination is another significant factor while looking at migrant religiosity in an integration context. Egyptians do not represent the dominant or majority Muslim migrants (and/or

community) in any of the three countries under study. In addition, they are known to keep a low profile, and have an almost invisible status as a migrant community in the west (Karmi 1997). While the invigoration of religious identity among many of the majority Muslim communities in Europe is associated with issues related to victimization, social and economic marginalization (Khattab 2009; Peach 2006; Karlsen and Nazroo 2013), Egyptian Muslims appear to have a different status. As such, they are not positioned in a problematic status with the host country or society, unlike other stigmatized dominant migrant communities in Europe.

Therefore, methodologically, sampling among a migrant community such as the Egyptian one, in studying the impact of religiosity on integration, serves here to function as a neutralizing (and/or a mitigating) element to non-religious variables that might affect the religiosity-integration relationship. So that issues such as political or ethnic friction with the host state and society, colonial history, physical segregation, and socioeconomic status can play a minor role at most in the impact of religiosity on Egyptian migrants' integration. In other words, since this study aims at focusing specifically on the issue of religiosity of Muslim migrants and its impact on integration, by looking at the Egyptian Muslim migrants, based on the characteristics outlined above, it is easier to look at the religious factor as separate from other factors in terms of its links to integration. This, in fact, responds to calls in literature for looking at certain Muslim population in Europe that could better inform academic research about whether or not Muslim migrants, for being Muslims, face added barriers to successful integration (Adida *et al.* 2016).

*Third*, this study fills a gap in literature. There is a clear gap in literature in studying Egyptian Muslim migrants in the west. Addressing Egyptian migrants, in general, is quite limited in academic literature, and studying Egyptian Muslim migrants, in particular, is even more limited. Very scant sources have previously addressed the integration of Egyptian Muslim migrants in

Europe. Karmi's (1997) study, for example, appears to represent one of the very rare available studies that looked at the issue of integration of Egyptian Muslim migrants in the UK.

In addition, available literature shows that Egyptian migrants, in general, have been looked at from one of two perspectives: either from an economic perspective, mostly related to examining the issue of remittances and its role in the Egyptian economy (Zohry 2005; Vadean, 2007; Nassar 2011); or from an ethno-religious perspective that specifically addresses the issue of Egyptian Coptic migrants (referred to as the Coptic community abroad, or what is called the Coptic diaspora), by focusing on their links with the homeland and their role in defending what is referred to as 'the Christian cause' in Egypt (Severo and Zuolo 2012; Boles 2001; Delhaye 2008). However, this ethno-religious perspective did not include Egyptian Muslims, especially in an integration context.

A *fourth*, and final, aspect of significance in studying Muslims' religiosity through the Egyptian migrant community is the researcher's positionality, and the advantages that could be brought to this research based on the researcher's status as an insider, of being not only an Egyptian Muslim, but also a migrant, and culturally identified (or ascribed) as a Muslim migrant, regardless of his cognitive belief or degree of religiosity.

More specifically, the fact that the researcher is an Egyptian, who has been raised a Muslim in Egypt, living and working for over 13 years in western societies, with a professional position, prior to PhD studies, that involves close engagement with both Egyptians abroad and host communities, all are factors that can contribute in adding to this study a nuanced level of analysis, especially in examining a sensitive, personal, and highly delicate topic such as lived Muslims' religiosity in migration.

In this regard, it is relevant to briefly outline the general advantages of being an insider researcher vs an outsider one. Being an insider, first, means belonging (or known to belong) culturally, religiously, and ethno-nationally to the same group of informants under study. The significance of insider-outsider researcher status has been highlighted previously in other studies. Scholars such as Wardana (2013), Abbas (2010), Bolognani (2007) and Kusow (2003) emphasized the importance of such status from different perspectives, mainly by underlining the advantages and disadvantages related to the researcher's inside or outside positionality.

More specifically, the study of Muslim migrants' religiosity in western societies is one of the major topics that could be influenced by the insider-outsider status. In this respect, it has been argued that such influence can be manifested in issues such as the researcher's degree of sympathy and understanding of the role of religion in the society, as well as the extent of familiarity with different aspects of religiosity and/or religious traditions (Abbas 2010; Wardana 2013).

Accordingly, on the one hand, being an insider researcher with shared cultural and religious background (cultural proximity) comprises numerous advantages for qualitative research inquiry, especially with regard to Muslim migrants. This includes: privileged access to various segments of the community; insightful interpretation and understanding of narratives and terms; strong rapport creation; potential of developing closeness and intimacy over a short period of time; familiarity of cultural/religious traditions and societal circumstances in the country of origin. It is relevant, herein, mentioning that my research demonstrates a wide range of benefits from these insider's advantages in both collecting and analyzing data.

On the other hand, for an outsider researcher, especially a western one, a number of obstacles could emerge in such study. This ranges from recruitment issues and access to different segments of the targeted group, along with the potential of developing an empathetic understanding of ethno-

religious traditions, up to language barriers and familiarity with the used discourse, mainly the extent of enjoying accurate interpretation of informants' narratives, including nuanced terms and expressions (Bolognani 2007; Ryan *et al.* 2011).

What exacerbates this challenge, in a study like this one, is the wide scale of negative representation of Islam and Muslims in the west, combined with the current highly politicized topic of migrant integration in European public debates, especially for Muslim migrants. These factors are likely to stimulate intimidation, stir doubts, and provoke a high sense of alienation among large groups of Muslim migrants in taking part in any research related to either their religion or integration. In general, it has been found that Muslim informants, for example, can be easily threatened and intimidated by questions touching on their religiosity (Kusow 2003), especially in the current circumstances. This comes in tune with Archer (2002) and Phoenix (1994), where they emphasized the likelihood of an insider researcher to capture more original and objective data compared to an outsider. The issue is argued to even take on an added significance if the sample under study is Muslims, and the studied subject is their religion, as Muslims are argued to reveal more bold views when interviewed by an insider researcher (Archer 2002).

It is worth mentioning, in this respect, that a number of informants in my sample were concerned about the beneficiary of the research. However, based on the strong sense of trust that the researcher managed to develop with these informants, they openly expressed their worries that some western institutions, mainly those affiliated to governments, might use the research findings to reinforce their own negative narratives about Muslims in Europe. These informants underlined their doubts about the neutrality of certain segments of western research on Muslims these days, where particular findings can be taken out of context and used as evidence in portraying Muslim

migrants as individuals who are unwilling to integrate, in order to further stigmatize them by illustrating their segregation.

Thus, the expected weak trust between Muslim migrants and outsider researchers derived from such factors, as well as Muslims' anxiety for perceiving themselves representatives of Islam while dealing with an outsider researcher (Wardana 2013), are factors that might shake the neutrality and/or objectivity of the empirical findings (or informants' responses) of certain studies looking at Muslims' religion or integration. This is because informants are more likely to question and doubt the motives and intentions of an outsider in such circumstances.

However, in general, being an outsider researcher still has some attributes that might work to the advantage of the research. Researchers' strong objectivity and neutrality are good examples of these advantages. In general terms, and depending on the topic studied, informants' possible non-restricted opinions, or bold responses, might emerge easier with an outsider researcher who has higher potential of being seen by informants as free of preconceived judgments that are more likely to be linked with an insider researcher. Nonetheless, in a research like the one under study, where the topic entails religiously driven views/perceptions about the host society, it is quite difficult to generate such bold paradigms of responses in the presence of a researcher who might represent the very culture (or society) that could be under criticism.

In specific terms, in this research, it is worth mentioning that despite the methodological drawbacks that could be associated with being an insider researcher (especially with regard to the relationship with informants), I sought to minimize their influence. First, it is relevant to highlight that such insider disadvantages were not actually related to my ethno-religious and national background, but were rather circumscribed in my previous professional profile and secular character. As such, despite being identified as a Muslim, the degree of my religiosity and the extent

of my religious affiliation could potentially have posed another challenge in my fieldwork interviews. Based on my cognitive beliefs, lifestyle, and views, I identify myself as a secular Egyptian who displays almost no attitudes or claims of any religious basis in his personal life.

However, I emphasize that the challenges related to being a secular educated researcher did not have much influence in conducting this research. In certain cases, this status could have created some sort of sensitivity and intimidation among informants who are more religious. It is expected that personal distance, intimidation, and limited trust might have been provoked had I exhibited clear signals of unexpected secular views or liberal social behaviors. Accordingly, in order to overcome such challenge, throughout the interviews I meant to maintain the highest possible level of neutrality in my appearance, views, and reactions to informants' responses.

As opposed to my secular character and professional profile, my ethno-national/religious background played a positive role in developing closeness, openness, and very straight forward (or bold) opinions, where informants exhibited clear signs of comfort and trust, enabling them to relate and open up to the researcher in discussing wide range of personal and sensitive matters, that might have been concealed with an outsider researcher, especially with one belonging to the host society.

## **B. Sampling and distinct groups of informants**

It is important, here, to note that this study included 128 final interviews across the three countries of destination, which were all transcribed, coded, analyzed, and revised. Interviews were divided between the three countries as follows: 53 interviews in the UK; 43 in France; and 32 in Belgium. The sample varied between males and females to include 101 male informants and 27 female informants across the three countries. Despite looking specifically at first generation migrants, 12

second generation migrants' interviews have been included. Informants' average age ranged from 25-50. Also, as shown below in this section regarding the criteria employed in this study in distinguishing migrants based on their socioeconomic backgrounds, the sample comprised 85 skilled informants, and 43 lower-skilled ones.

Informants were recruited using two main sampling methods: opportunity sampling, and snowball sampling (Daniel 2012). The opportunity sampling, including the researcher's existing networks, was used in the first place to recruit gatekeepers in the Egyptian communities, who then played a key role in recruiting a large number of informants, whereas snowball sampling was used to recruit additional informants possessing similar characteristics to the ones who were asked to provide further contacts.

In this study, first, I drew from a pool of Egyptian Muslim migrants who migrated from Egypt and have been living in the UK, France, and Belgium on a permanent, uninterrupted, basis for at least five years or more (noting that most informants exceeded ten years of stay). Muslims in this context are meant to be those who have been raised as Muslims, by Muslim families, in Egypt, regardless of their current cognitive belief or level of religiosity.

The sample selection aims at capturing the diversity of the long-term Egyptian Muslim migrants in Europe, by including informants from different socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, as well as different streams (waves) of migration. Thus, the selection of informants aimed, first, to render the sample as inclusive as possible, as to enable for the emergence of different lines of comparison between distinct groups of Egyptian migrants in the three countries under study, including single and married with children, male and female, skilled and lower-skilled professions in the countries of destination, first and recent waves (or streams) of migration (i.e. established vs contemporary migrants).

For example, in this sense, as mentioned above, although my study looks at first generation migrants, a number of second generation migrants in the countries of destination have been included. Second generation, in this context, stands for informants with one or two Egyptian parents, who were either born and raised, or only raised, in their country of destination. Similarly, informants included both genders, which provided a cross-gender perspective of lives in the countries of destination.

In addition, two main waves and/or streams of migration have been identified and included in this study: what is called established Egyptian migrants; and contemporary Egyptian migrants (Zohry 2006; Stocchiero 2004). The established ones, on the one hand, represent the first wave of Egyptian migration to the west, including informants who arrived in the 1970s and 1980s, and are known for being highly educated and economically established, belonging mainly to the group which I refer to here as skilled migrants. On the other hand, contemporary Egyptian migrants represent mostly the stream of migrants who arrived by the mid-1990s and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Zohry 2006; Stocchiero 2004), and despite being dominated by less economically privileged migrants (or lower-skilled migrants), this group comprises a mix of both skilled and lower-skilled informants depending on the country of destination.

Nevertheless, it is important to point out here that the research faces a limitation with regard to the proportionality in the diversity of the sample in terms of males and females, as well as between skilled and lower-skilled informants in the three countries under study. Although the study's substantial sample aimed to be as inclusive as possible in terms of informants' socioeconomic background and gender in each country of destination, due to practical and logistical reasons the sample was not similarly balanced in all three countries. In most part, these reasons are related to the difficulties for an individual -unfunded- researcher to recruit a large number of informants

while, at the same time, maintaining proportionality in their characteristics. In Belgium, the sample was more dominated by male lower-skilled informants compared to the UK and France. Whereas in the UK and France, despite being quite gender balanced, the sample in these two countries included more skilled than lower-skilled informants.

### **Skilled vs lower-skilled informants**

Moving on, in order to make this sample as diverse as possible, I included informants from all social backgrounds. However, due to the highly subjective and complex (multilayered) criteria that are known to distinguish different social classes in Egypt, and in the Egyptian society, a highly socially stratified society, a profession-based classification has been employed in this research, relying mainly on informants' professions (or jobs occupied) in the countries of destination, which are divided into two main sets.

On that basis, I distinguished between two general groups of informants, based on their socioeconomic status in their countries of destination. I, herein, refer to them as skilled and lower-skilled informants.

To further elaborate, on the one hand, skilled informants refer to those who hold what is argued in migration literature to be skilled professions (Iredale 2016; OECD 1997), associated with university education, such as doctors, academics, engineers, employees of multinational institutions/companies, bankers, students, etc. On the other hand, lower-skilled informants refer to those who are employed in what is referred to as low-skilled jobs in their countries of destination (Dadush 2014). In my sample, the latter group includes informants who work specifically in the restaurant business, grocery markets, construction, and cleaning.

In further distinguishing between the two groups in my research, the skilled group is, to some extent, gender balanced, characterized by both male and female informants, who are mostly accompanied by their families (spouses and children) in their countries of destination. On the other hand, the lower-skilled group is male dominant, who are mostly living without their families in the countries of destination.

Moreover, it is important to lay out how both terms are theoretically understood. In literature (Iredale 2016; Dadush 2014; Oreopoulos 2009; Dustmann *et al.* 2005; Borjas 2003), conceptualizing skilled vs lower-skilled migrants has been a long standing and contentious subject of academic debate. If to consider the concept ‘skilled’ to be the possession of knowledge, ability, and training to perform a certain task well, then classifying individuals of completely different professions as skilled and unskilled based on the type, and not the quality, of the task undertaken, is conceptually misleading (if not ethically problematic). Having said that, the terms ‘skilled’ and ‘unskilled or low-skilled’ have been widely accepted and used in a growing body of literature to connote specific professional and educational characteristics among migrants.

Language proficiency, educational attainment, and the kind of job occupied are the most common standards distinguishing between what is referred to as skilled and lower-skilled migrants (Iredale 2016; Dadush 2014; Oreopoulos 2009; Dustmann *et al.* 2005; Borjas 2003; Mahroum 2001). They are mainly distinguished based on how skills are defined and stratified in employment market in each country. However, in migration literature, they are specifically used as an accepted and common terms to distinguish between two different groups of migrants.

Identifying skilled and low-skilled migrants is generally derived from the OECD definition of skilled labor (or the definition officially developed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD). According to the OECD, skilled individuals are defined as ‘highly

skilled specialists, independent executives and senior managers, specialized technicians or tradespeople, investors, business people, key workers, and subcontract workers'(OECD 1997: 21).

In this regard, individuals of this group are argued to seek maximum reward for their level of education and training by targeting the highest paid or most rewarding employment benefits (ibid).

Whereas lower-skilled individuals are defined as a segment of the workforce characterized by its limited skill set or minimum economic reward for the work performed, along with lower educational attainment and smaller wages. Also lower-skilled (or low-skilled) is defined by the OECD as those whose education is less than upper-secondary (OECD 2010). In terms of the occupation itself, low-skilled has been defined as competence associated with a general education, usually acquired by the time compulsory education is completed. Jobs at this skill level may require short periods of on-the-job-training and knowledge of health and safety regulations (Migration Advisory Committee report 2014: 22).

As a whole, in my study, practically, lower-skilled informants are confined specifically in four major fields of work: restaurants and/or cafes (service business); construction (construction labor); cleaning; and grocery markets. The rest of the whole sample belongs, subsequently, to the skilled group of informants (i.e. holding jobs that mostly require a university degree such as doctors, engineers, IT specialists, bankers, executives of various national and international institutions).

## **V. Conclusion**

This chapter presents the overall methodology of this thesis. It discusses the significance of the selection of the three countries of destination under study, the main methods used in collecting and analyzing data, and finally, the methods of sampling as well as the methodological significance of studying Egyptian Muslim migrants.

It is important, first, to highlight that the core of this multisite fieldwork was conducted over one year between August 2015 and October 2016 in Belgium, the UK, and France. This study included 128 final interviews, which took place in the UK across London, Manchester, Bristol, Newcastle, and Cardiff. In France it focused on Paris, Marseille and Lyon. And finally in Belgium, most interviews took place in Brussels, with few in Antwerp.

The UK, France, and Belgium have been selected in this research based on a number of factors. Part of which is linked to the similar characteristics featuring the three countries, while the other part is, in contrast, pertinent to the differences distinguishing each of them, so that this combination of resemblance and distinction renders these countries an inclusive and diverse example in studying Muslim migrants' religiosity and integration.

In terms of similarities, the three countries are known as secular western European democracies, they are all main countries of immigration in Europe, and that Muslim migrants in general form one of the biggest migrant communities in each of the three countries, and most importantly, secularism is known in all three countries to be a foundational feature of both the state and the society. In parallel, the three countries officially and theoretically, represent three different models of migrant integration in Europe, with each having its own distinct approach to the philosophy of integration and the understanding of secularism.

Moreover, the significance of looking at the Egyptian Muslim migrants in studying the relationship between religiosity and integration in this research can be attributed to: 1) the existence of a number of diverse characteristics within this group of migrants, which render them a diverse group for the study of migrant's religiosity and integration; 2) Egyptians do not represent the dominant or majority Muslim migrants in any of the three countries under study, which gives them an advantage of being a suitable sample for studying the impact of religious factors on integration, as

separate from other factors; 3) filling a clear gap in literature in studying Egyptian Muslim migrants in the west; and 4) the researcher's positionality, especially the advantages that could be brought to this research based on the researcher's status as an insider.

In addition, data collection and analysis were carried out on the basis of grounded theory approach and thematic analysis. The data of this study are iteratively analyzed and evaluated (Bryman 2004) through themes emerging from within data themselves, which makes the analysis quite inductive (Dawson 2009). The study was conducted relying on face-to-face semi-structured interviews, including a number of story-telling questions. Two main topics characterized the interviews questions; these are religiosity and the context of reception.

Most importantly, interviews were conducted and analyzed in a way that indicated that enough data were collected, including detailed descriptions about the range of informants' views, with clear signs of data saturation. In addition, the data collected reflected nuanced and subtle meanings, implied the main issues that drive informants' attention/interest, and comprised clear analytic categories. Finally, essential lines of comparisons have emerged in a way that can strongly inform the research conclusions.

As for language and translation, the vast majority of the interviews were conducted in Egyptian Arabic, while several were conducted in English (with a number of second generation informants). Translation of the interviews was carried out from Egyptian Arabic to English by the researcher, based on three main standards: meaning preservation; accurate interpretation; and wording rigor.

Moreover, informants were recruited using two main sampling methods: opportunity sampling, and snowball sampling (Daniel 2012). They were selected based on a number of general criteria including a minimum of five continuous years of stay at the country of destination, along with

fulfilling, as one whole sample, a combination of features: single and married with children; male and female; skilled and lower-skilled professions in the countries of destination; first and recent waves (or streams) of migration.

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## **Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework**

### **A Threefold Reading of Muslim Migrants' Integration: Religiosity, Integration, and the Context of Reception**

#### **I. Introduction**

There are three overarching theoretical approaches which frame this thesis. These are the concepts of religiosity, of integration, and the context of reception. These three are all clearly complex and multifaceted theoretical questions, and scholars have not yet combined them all together to understand the integration of Muslim migrants in a Western country of destination. This chapter and Chapter Four do that, laying out the core elements of each of these theoretical questions, setting the scene for the empirical chapters which follow.

This study examines the relationship between Muslim migrants' religiosity and their integration process, taking into account the multi-dimensional nature and complexity of the concepts of religiosity and integration. The analysis of theories of religiosity, integration and the context of reception provides a vantage point from which to understand the interaction between Muslim migrants' religiosity and the trajectories of their integration process in the west.

The question of Muslim migrants' integration in Europe, and the role of religiosity in their integration process, has been a controversial subject of both public and academic debate (Van Tubergen and Sindradottir 2011), and has been discussed across three key schools of thought. As outlined in Chapter One, my research builds on the particular school of thought that emphasizes the role of both migrants' religiosity and the context of reception in influencing migrant integration (Maliepaard and Schacht 2018; Reitz 2002; Adida *et al.* 2016). My thesis contributes to that school

of thought by accentuating the importance of the dynamics of interaction between religiosity and the context of reception in better understanding the impact of religiosity on migrant integration.

Accordingly, in order to elucidate that dynamics of interaction, this thesis is guided by a hybrid of theoretical approaches. In this chapter and Chapter Four, I bring together three distinct theoretical approaches. This includes the theories of religiosity and migrant integration, to be addressed in this chapter, followed by the theories of the context of reception in Chapter Four. I am drawing on these theories to explore the interaction between Muslim migrants' religiosity and their sociocultural integration, as mediated through the relationship between religiosity and the context of reception. As such, one of the main contributions of this thesis to academic literature is that it brings these three distinct theoretical approaches together, and the insights that this combination provides in looking at the nature of the interaction between migrant religiosity and integration.

By doing so, I set the theoretical scope needed to address my basic research inquiry, which can be summarized in the following question: What impact does Muslim migrants' religiosity have on their sociocultural integration in a western European country of destination? In examining this question, it appears that another question becomes necessary: how does this religiosity differ between what migrants bring from the country of origin and what they encounter in the country of destination?

Looking at religiosity, I draw most heavily on the theory of religiosity as a social identity (Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010; Maliepaart and Phalet 2012; Karlsen and Nazroo 2013). In addition, I explore the general centrality of religiosity among migrants by drawing on the theory of religious reliance (Hirschman 2004), and the theory of the religious dimension of coping (Radzi *et al.* 2014). With regard to integration, I refer to Need and De Graaf's understanding of Durkheim's approach of social integration (Durkheim 1951; Need and De Graaf 1996, qtd in Van Tubergen 2007), and

I draw on Berry's theory of acculturation (Berry 1997; Sam and Berry 2006; Schwartz *et al.* 2010). With respect to the context of reception, as will be shown in Chapter Four, this thesis engages with a number of different approaches in analyzing the context of reception, and highlights its linkage to religiosity and migrant integration. This mainly rotates around the theory of integration context (Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Crul and Schneider 2010). These three bodies of theoretical literature serve to give the background for the following empirical chapters.

In so doing, the chapter is structured into two general sections: A first section, on religiosity, demonstrates the main theories employed in this research in studying the issue. It conceptualizes religiosity in this thesis by exploring a number of theoretical approaches used in looking at, and understanding, religiosity within the main functions it offers as a source of social identity, emotional support, and resources. In this regard, I approach religiosity, on the one hand, by identifying a major gap in literature, and proposing a response to that gap. In short, previous literature (Laurence and Vaisee 2007; Voas and Fleischmann 2012; Conor 2010) has studied Muslim migrants' religiosity primarily by examining objective criteria (i.e. practice or visibility) to measure a subjective phenomenon, religiosity. This gap can be seen in the ways in which academic studies tend to look at migrants' religiosity less by its impact on their daily lives, and more through measurement of practices and rituals (Alba and Foner 2015; Norris and Inglehart 2012). However, I argue here that these measurements cannot fully capture the complex and nuanced phenomenon of Muslim migrants' religiosity. On the other hand, this thesis seeks to address religiosity through a broader understanding, namely through its significance for migrants' daily life and broader sense of identity. In so doing, this thesis contributes to the literature in an original way.

A second section addresses the concept of integration, most importantly by conceptualizing the issue of sociocultural integration within Berry's theory of acculturation, along with highlighting the main theories used in approaching integration in this thesis. In so doing, it, first, demonstrates how the issue of Muslim migrants' integration is generally received in literature, according to three central schools of thought. Then, it briefly explores the general notion of migrant integration, and moves on to identify the main characteristics distinguishing sociocultural integration from other domains of integration.

It is important to note that this theoretical picture is set to be completed in the following chapter, in which the third theoretical approach on the context of reception is further introduced. This is in order to demonstrate the role of the context of reception in religiosity-integration relationship, and to explore how this context of reception can be seen and analyzed in terms of its embedded system and society.

## **II. Religiosity**

This section approaches the issue of religiosity along three main points: A) the theoretical underpinning used in this research in looking at migrants' religiosity; B) a brief conceptualization of the notion of religiosity, with a special focus on delineating religious identity from the overall notion of religiosity; and C) an overview about the centrality of religion for migrants in general, and Muslim migrants in particular.

### **A. Theoretical underpinning**

In approaching migrants' religiosity and its centrality, first, I start my theoretical discussion of religiosity by emphasizing that the disruption resulting from migration (along with its associated circumstances) paves the way for an increased form of religiosity among migrants under the

canopy of two main theories: Hirschman's theory of religious reliance (2004), and Radzi *et al.*'s theory of the religious dimension of coping (Radzi *et al.* 2014). Second, in conceptualizing religiosity, I refer to the theoretical understanding of religiosity as a social identity (Postmes *et al.* 2006; Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010; Maliepaard and Phalet 2012; Karlsen and Nazroo 2013), and I build on Jeldtoft's (2011) approach of Muslim's 'lived' or 'everyday' religiosity. This approach is adopted here in order to present a theoretical framework that allows for the understanding of the aspects of everyday religiosity of Muslim migrants in their personal/inner lives, including issues such as the demarcation of '*halal* and *haram*', religious identity, and religious emotions (which are discussed empirically in Chapters Five and Six).

Recently, the issue of migrants' religion has generated a growing volume of academic commentaries and studies across Europe. Of these, a considerable body of literature has given the salience (and/or centrality) of religion among Muslim migrants in European societies a special focus. Previous similar studies have looked theoretically at religion in a migration/integration context through factors such as increased ethnoreligious awareness, reconstruction of religious identity, growing impact of religious organizations, and the reproduction of religious traditions to subsequent generations (Warner 1993; Wardana 2013; Duderija 2008; van de Pol and van Tubergen 2014; Güngör *et al.* 2011; Kaya 2012; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000). My research presents a more comprehensive/ more nuanced angle in studying Muslim migrants' religiosity in an integration context, by focusing more on the concept of 'everyday religiosity'.

To further elaborate on the theoretical underpinning used in this research in approaching religiosity, *first*, the theory of religious reliance argues that migrants maintain their religious involvement and/or religiosity because religion provides them with the main resources and benefits needed in their migratory journey, while negotiating their identity (Hirschman 2004). *Second*,

according to the theory of the religious dimension of coping, the use of spiritual or emotional aspect of religiosity in the form of an adaptive manner can be an efficient means of coping with disruption resulting from relocation, and that performing religious rituals and connecting with religious feelings are ‘reported to lower anxiety and depression in the consequences of stressful life event’ (Vasquez and Dewind 2014; Radzi *et al.* 2014: 316).

In order to better understand these two theoretical approaches, it is relevant to refer briefly here to Norris and Inglehart’s insecurity theory (2004), as a complementing theoretical approach, in further corroborating the centrality of religion among migrants. According to this theory, individuals who experience insecure living conditions or feel vulnerable to personal, societal or even physical risks, are expected to believe in ‘a higher power’ with the preference of following ‘strict rules’ (Norris and Inglehart 2004; Van Tubergen and Sindradottir 2011: 274).

These theoretical approaches serve to guide this thesis in demonstrating the general salience and/or centrality of Muslim migrants’ religiosity in the three countries under study. Although these approaches are pivotal in elucidating the general role of religiosity in migrants’ lives, they are not directly linked to the impact this religiosity might have on migrants’ integration. This part is better understood through the theory of religiosity as a social identity.

In accordance with that, *third*, and most importantly, the theory of religiosity as a social identity is vital here for understanding the role of religiosity in this thesis, particularly in relation to the context of reception, and subsequently to sociocultural integration. In this respect, it is relevant to point out briefly that the theory of religiosity as a social identity draws on the basic essence of the classic social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979). According to social identity theory, identity is argued to exist based on its social validation in a particular social environment (Postmes *et al.* 2006; Maliepaard and Phalet 2012), where social relationships shape the way in which people

perceive and present themselves (Stryker and Serpe 1994). Moreover, social identity theory argues that the membership of a particular group results in an in-group bias, where an individual prefers members of one's own group as opposed to members of other relevant out-groups (Tajfel and Turner 1979). This theory, in essence, suggests that groups are constructed on the basis of their shared characteristics, where religion and language are the most salient (Bennett 2011; Leman 1999).

As will be shown empirically in further chapters, the social sphere is a prime context where migrants' daily religiosity is better understood. A significant aspect of Muslim migrants' social lives is guided, if not dictated, by their religiosity. This applies to migrants' perception of what should be done, what should not be done, with whom they interact (or not), etc. Thus, building on the theory of religiosity as a social identity is crucial in capturing the impact of religiosity in migrants' daily lives.

The theory of religiosity as a social identity asserts that one of the main functions of religiosity is to provide migrants with social identities, in order to facilitate their settlement in the country of destination (McMichael 2002; Karlsen and Nazroo 2013), and help them navigate their migratory journey while retaining their religion (culture) in their new homes. In this respect, religiosity functions to offer 'clear social identities and associated practice', as well as an 'opportunity of social engagement' (Torrekens and Jacob 2016: 2).

In other words, this theory argues that religiosity is not just a belief system, but rather a social identity (Maliepaard and Phalet 2012) that is anchored in a system of guiding beliefs and symbols, which is set out to shape migrants' social processes (Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010). It appears through the importance of group membership to the sense of self-being, or what is referred to as the self-concept (Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010). This can be attributed to the unique role and characteristics of

religion, which is linked to ultimate meaning and eternal membership, and thus, epitomizes an important social identity (Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010: 60; Maliepaard and Phalet 2012: 132). This thesis builds on Maliepaard and Phalet, drawing on their understanding of religiosity as a social identity and demonstrating the impact of religiosity on migrants' daily lives in a specific context of reception.

Moreover, as Ysseldyk *et al.* put it, facets of social identities, including the self-identification with a religious group, not only provide migrants with shared benefits, but also stimulate their belief that their group membership is pivotal to their self-being, since it provides them with 'personal and collective self-esteem' (2010: 61), along with social validation (Postmes *et al.* 2006). This validation, it then follows, in the context of Muslim migrants in the west, is best provided by other Muslims. Thus, frequent contact or close relationships with those who share the same social identity have been found to reinforce this identity and the group norms attached to it (Ethier and Deaux 1994; Maliepaard and Phalet 2012). Based on that, religiosity plays a key role as a binder of people who share the same social identity, where religion can be seen as an 'ethno-cultural source' that is able to 'bond' co-religious migrants regardless of their different ethnicities or race (Safran 2007, qtd in Wardana 2013: 41).

In parallel to that, and as will be discussed in Chapter Four, the level of receptivity in the context of reception is, as well, a pivotal factor in affecting how religiosity functions as a social identity for migrants. This is also empirically substantiated in Chapters Seven and Eight of this dissertation, while discussing migrants' actual perceptions of the context of reception.

## B. Religiosity: an overview of the notion

Here, building on Roy's (2007) approach to religiosity, religiosity is understood as an overarching notion that serves to capture various aspects of individuals' – in this case, migrants' – relationship with their own religion, including: identification (aspects of religious identity); emotions (the scope of emotional reliance); behaviors (acts based on '*halal* and *haram*'); rituals (i.e. praying, fasting, etc.); and conscious awareness of religion. In short, religiosity, in practical terms, in this research refers to how an individual migrant lives her/his religion in the country of destination.

### i. Objective measures of religiosity: a gap in literature

By and large, demonstrated and examined mostly by a hybrid of structured and quantitative approaches and methods, religiosity of Muslim migrants in religion and migration literature appears to be overemphasized in terms of its explicit degree or strength, but underemphasized in terms of its implicit impact on Muslim migrants' inner daily lives.

Previous research has focused on objective criteria/elements of religiosity (i.e. practices, visibility, views on sexual liberties<sup>3</sup> and gender equality, etc.). Scholars have undertaken structural examinations in order to provide an objective measurement for a subjective phenomenon (religiosity) (Laurence and Vaisee 2007; Voas and Fleischmann 2012; Conor 2010; Guveli and Platt 2011). As such, religiosity has been, for the most part, measured by scale-based variables (Damstra and Tillie 2016) in terms of religious practices and attendance (i.e. mosque visiting), as many studies draw mostly on quantitative surveys and structured questions (Van Tubergen and Sindradottir 2011; Lewis and Kashyap 2013; Connor and Koenig 2013; Torreken and Jacobs

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<sup>3</sup> Sexual liberties refer here to specific acts/traditions including premarital sex/relationship, public display of affection, and homosexuality.

2015). As valuable as this work is, it does not lend itself to a broader/deeper qualitative examination. This thesis proposes to provide that more in-depth examination.

For example, issues such as religious attendance and frequency of praying were examined using questions like ‘how often do you attend religious services?’ And ‘how often do you pray?’ even when religiosity was interpreted subjectively in certain studies (the self-evaluated religiosity), it was tested using structured questions like ‘how religious would you say you are?’ (Van Tubergen and Sindradottir 2011: 277). These methods may fall short, and may well draw inaccurate inferences and conclusions on the magnitude of religiosity and its practical impact on Muslim migrants’ daily lives, and, subsequently, on their integration in the west. As such, there is a need for further work in examining Muslim migrants’ religiosity.

### **Everyday religiosity: filling the gap**

In this thesis, and in order to fill this gap, I look beyond the objective criteria of examining religiosity and focus on the expressions of the overall religiosity of migrants in their daily personal/inner lives on both levels: the social level, or the level of the outside world (i.e. social behaviors interpreted/dictated by religion and associated with social sphere); and the non-social level, which exhibits no contact with the outside world (i.e. emotional reliance).

It is worth noting that this gap has been previously identified by some scholars (Alba and Foner 2015; Norris and Inglehart 2012). They emphasized, in their critique, that despite the wide range of academic studies about Muslims’ religiosity and integration in Europe, little is known about the meaning and impact of religiosity in Muslims’ daily lives. As such, they stress the importance for further empirical research on Muslims’ religiosity.

In accordance with these calls, several scholars started looking at religiosity on a micro level (Jeldtoft 2011), in daily lives of Muslim migrants. In this regard, Jeldtoft and Ammerman are prominent scholars in looking at the notion of everyday religiosity, focusing mainly on forms of religiosity that lie outside institutional settings (Ammerman 2016), and explaining how it implies the form of religiosity that takes place on the micro-level, where Muslim migrants can individually negotiate their identities, and where the larger frameworks of Islam are lived out (Jeldtoft 2011: 1138).

Although this approach has only been rarely used in looking at migrant integration, it showed how religiosity can be addressed in a more nuanced manner within a framework of a lived religion, comprising everyday practices and identities which are seen as a relevant form of social action, in order to be able to examine how Muslim migrants make sense of Islam on a ‘micro-level’ (or individualized level), as opposed to institutional/structured level (Jeldtoft 2011). This approach corresponds to what Orsi and Van Tubergen have argued, that religion for migrants ‘cannot be understood apart from its place in the everyday lives, preoccupations, and commonsense orientation’ (qtd in Vasquez and Dewind 2014: 263).

In further clarifying the concept, Ammerman (2016) argued that ‘everyday religion’ is better defined by what it excludes. She underlined that the concept includes ‘laity’ (or secularism) instead of clergy, practices instead of beliefs, especially those practices outside religious institutions rather than inside, it also includes individual agency and autonomy rather than collective tradition. On that basis, she argued for the expansion of the domain of everyday religiosity to include the traditions/aspects that have been excluded in previous academic studies (Ammerman 2016: 83).

Building on that, in my study, I advance the work of Jeldtoft (2010, 2011) and Ammerman (2016) in conceptualizing everyday religiosity to comprise influential daily aspects of religiosity such as

*‘halal and haram’*, as well as the emotional dimension of religiosity (as will be empirically demonstrated in Chapter Five). I look qualitatively into the core features of a lived religiosity that, on the one hand, shows how this phenomenon and/or attribute is practically lived in a western context of reception, and on the other hand, illuminates the intertwining elements between religiosity and integration, in order to identify the nature of the relationship linking both. This is to be able to sharpen the methodological and empirical approach in examining religiosity, and, thus, contribute to literature on how religiosity can practically influence Muslim migrants’ sociocultural integration.

In this respect, in sum, I conceptualize religiosity by building on Jeldtoft’s (2011) approach to Muslims’ ‘lived’ or ‘everyday’ religiosity, and Salvatore’s (2004) approach to Muslims’ traditions, as well as Maliepaard and Phalet’s (2012) understanding of religiosity as a social identity.

In further elaborating this, Jeldtoft suggested that religiosity is better looked at through analyzing ‘what identities, practices and feelings of being and belonging’ are associated with inner daily lives of Muslim migrants (2011: 1134). Such perspective exemplifies how the main pillars of Muslims’ religiosity can be understood in the daily situations of a migrant life. In the same sense, Salvatore noted that Muslims’ traditions are not just codified procedure or established institutions, but rather understood on a more complex sociological level seen in living tradition (2004: 1015). Jeldtoft (2011) and Salvatore (2004) argued for a more in-depth view of Muslim migrants’ religiosity, moving beyond the structured (and/or organized/institutional) approach. They, thus, sought to draw more attention to a nuanced version of religiosity that does not present itself immediately to structured analytical frameworks associated with the field of religion and migration. In other words, these approaches define religiosity less in terms of its established religious expression, and

more through its embodied practices and/or behaviors (which are not clearly overt, and sometimes do not appear to be primarily religious) (McGuire 2008: 11).

In light of that, while my approach (and later on my definition) to religiosity in this thesis builds heavily on these interpretations of migrants' everyday religiosity (that is primarily associated with migrants' social context in their inner daily lives), it contributes to literature by framing this understanding of religiosity in an integration context. As such, my approach to religiosity, also, relies on migrants' identification and their sense of sociocultural belonging with their peer Muslim community (or ethno-religious community) in certain contexts, which denotes, in parallel, their non-identification with the host society, following the theory of religiosity as a social identity.

## **ii. Delineating religious identity**

### **1. Religious identity vs religiosity**

In further conceptualizing religiosity, it is important to distinguish between the notions of religiosity and religious identity. Both identity and religiosity are central to this thesis. Conceptually, in a growing body of academic literature, religiosity and religious identity are portrayed as two overlapping and/or intertwining concepts, which carry, for the most part, a similar connotation. Religious identity stands as a valid conceptual substitute for religiosity on different counts. Practices and rituals, social behaviors, emotions and beliefs are all issues that have been referred to as aspects of either religious identity or religiosity. However, for the purpose of this research, since my approach of religiosity focuses on the 'everyday' or 'lived' religiosity that is taking place in migrants' inner lives, the delineation, then, of religiosity and religious identity serves to offer a clear understanding as to how different aspects of religion impacts migrant integration based on how it is practically lived and perceived.

In religion and in migration literature, distinguishing religiosity from religious identity is only rarely done, with several exceptions, such as Voas and Fleischmann (2012), as well as Güngör *et al.* (2011), who have raised the importance of delineating between the two.

This section, primarily, sets out to delineate the concept of religious identity from the overall notion of religiosity. It defines how this thesis approaches religious identity, and addresses its centrality both in general, and among Muslim migrants in particular. Most importantly, it demonstrates how the thesis considers the issue of religious identity as one prime component of religiosity, but not as a synonym for it. In other words, since overall religiosity possesses different forms of expressions, religious identity, in this sense, constitutes one major form of this religious expression, similar to beliefs, practices, behaviors, emotions, etc.

In a migration context, Young and Ebaugh (2001) argue that the transformation from a status of religious majority in the country of origin to that of a religious minority in a country of destination entails a strong impact on the construction of migrants' religious identity. However, they do not provide a clear explanation of what they mean by religious identity. This raises a number of questions related to the understanding of the concept: does religious identity refer to the overall essence of migrants' religion? Or, does it stand for a specific expression of religion? For example, does it only imply the degree of self-identification with one's religion? Or, is it employed to illuminate the function of religion as an ethnicity marker? Or both?

For example, with regard to Muslim migrants, previous studies have approached migrants' religious identity in different ways. In certain cases, it has been assessed in terms of mere practices such as Mosque attendance, *halal* eating, fasting Ramadan, and the issue of wearing the hijab (Laurence and Vaisse 2007). In other cases, religious identity has been looked at from the perspective of cultural threat (Velasco-González *et al.* 2008), based on the understanding that one's

own religion and identity are questioned (Maliepaard and Phalet 2012: 139). It, also, has been studied based on social interactions that rotate around religious narratives (Ammerman 2003).

In this regard, even scholars who call for distinguishing religious identity from religiosity, in a migration context, did not elucidate the main aspects of differences between the two notions. For example, Güngör *et al.* have considered religiosity to comprise three main components: religious beliefs, religious practices, and religious identification. While religious beliefs is meant to refer to the creed, knowledge, and acceptance of religious doctrines and provisions (i.e. Koraa'n), and while religious practices indicate observance of religious rituals (i.e. praying, fasting Ramadan) (2011: 1359), the issue of religious identifications was not portrayed as clearly as the others. Güngör *et al.* (2011) defined religious identification as the attachment to one's religious identity. But, again, how religious identity, itself, is understood as a concept remains to be clarified.

Since religion is argued to be an important cultural source of the formation of identity among migrants (Kaya 2012: 185), and since identity defines an individual's sense of self, group affiliation, and ascribed statuses (Peek 2005: 217), religious identity of migrants in my research is regarded, thus, as an important marker of the self-identification of a religious group, which serves to provide benefits, personal and collective self-esteem, as well as social validation.

These functions explain why religious identity of migrants has been widely understood as the role of religion in maintaining group identity and solidarity (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000), by preserving cultural and ethnic traditions, facilitating the settlement of first generation migrants in the new receiving/host societies, providing a source of identity for the second generation (Yang 1999; Peek 2005: 218), and, maintaining personal and social distinctiveness (Rayaprol 1997). In substantiating that, in previous studies, some have approached religious identity of Muslim migrants by focusing on the connection between religion and ethnic identity, and by highlighting the role of religion in

preserving norms and traditions, to function, then, as a source of identity for a large amount of migrants (Peek 2005).

Moreover, religious identity is also theorized as a dynamic variable that changes over time (McMullen 2000), reflecting a process of ‘becoming’, rather than just ‘being’ (Dillon 1999; Peek 2005: 2017). Identity’s changeable feature is reflected in literature by terms such as ‘identity formation’ or ‘identity construction’ (Duderija 2008), and is argued to be negotiated, changed, and modified in a migration context (Hall 1990; Wardana 2013).

More specifically, religious identity in this thesis can be understood within the periphery of the social identity theory. This rests on what has been argued earlier that religious identity constitutes one major component of religiosity, which, itself, is approached here as a social identity. In the same line, in examining the role of religion in religious identity construction, Duderija proposed a theoretical framework that draws on social identity theory, which is based on a sociological approach of identity construction (Dudejira 2008: 380).

In addition, the particularity of religious identity can be better understood by looking at it in comparison to other forms of identities such as ethnic, racial, and national identities. In this case, it is, then, possible to conclude that religious identity can be distinguished as the religious component of one’s overall identity (or of one’s sense of self-being), compared to national identity, for example, which represents the national component of identity. In this regard, religious identity gains its salience and/or significance among migrants, mainly, because it is argued to be the only kind of identity that could be claimed in the most ‘authentic’ (clear) way, unlike other forms of identities such as national, racial, and ethnic identities (Chen 2008; Voas and Fleischmann 2012: 534). In further elaborating (as will be demonstrated in the following empirical chapters), in the countries of destination, it is hard to signal a clear way by which migrants’ national or ethnic

identity, for example, could be claimed, maintained or preserved, whereas religious identity possesses intrinsic features that renders its retention achievable with a concrete course of actions.

This could be attributed to a number of reasons including: on the one hand, the unique characteristics of religion, and of the membership of religious groups, such as compelling affective experiences and a moral authority, which may add a personal significance to migrants' religious identity, exceeding that of membership in other groups (Wellman and Tokuno 2004; Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010: 61); and on the other hand, the increase of ethno-cultural diversity in western host societies, which stimulates migrants' awareness of their religious cultural tradition, and subsequently contributes to shaping their identity formation (Warner 1998; Wardana 2013: 51).

As such, religious identity, including the identification with a religious group for example, is argued to offer something that identification with another group would lack (Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010: 62). Thus, religious identities become more rooted in individuals away from home than is the case in the country of origin, and those identities undergo modifications over time (Warner 1998).

As a whole, as will be further outlined below regarding the centrality of religion in migration, a considerable body of evidence suggests that the religious component of migrants' identity takes on an added significance when uprooted from its original environment, by functioning as an anchor to identity resistance, maintenance and consolidation, especially if the surrounding environment is perceived as unwelcoming (Roald 2004; Duderija 2008: 147). This is also because religion plays a more significant role for migrants' definition of the self and group affiliation in the country of destination than the role it used to play in the country of origin (Peek 2005).

## 2. Multilevel perspective of Muslim migrants' religious identity

As for Muslim migrants, they are said to exhibit strong religious identities (Voas and Fleishmann 2012; Phalet *et al.* 2013), which are examined and/or studied using different perspectives. This research builds on previous research to argue that the religious identity of Muslim migrants in Europe is best studied from a multi-level perspective, with different elements coming together to provide an understanding of a perceived or a felt religiosity. More specifically, my theoretical approach to religious identity can be further clarified as follows:

- 1) Religious identity of Muslim migrants, in this research, is approached as a concept that is strongly linked with ethnicity, by representing an important symbolic marker for attachment and belonging to a particular culture (Peek 2005; Voas and Fleischmann 2012; Crul and Mollenkopf 2012: 208; Kaya 2012; Jeldtoft 2010), regardless of the level/degree of migrants' religiosity (i.e. religious/conservative Muslim, or atheist/secular Muslim - Hargreaves and Leaman 1995; Kaya 2012: 86). For example, even Muslim congregations are found in certain studies to be organized along ethnic lines (Buijs and Rath 2002; Voas and Fleischmann 2012: 535). In that sense, being a Muslim, studies show, is more about belonging to certain ethnic and cultural communities -which is understood in continuance with the religious identity (Jeldtoft 2010: 1147) - than about the adherence to certain beliefs and practices.

Accordingly, although my approach of migrants' religiosity is an attribute that takes place on an individual level, its religious identity component has a clear collective and/or group element. Since religious identity, herein, is strongly taken as an ethnicity marker, this adds a strong group/collective element to its understanding, which is used, for example, in distinguishing oneself from mainstream others, by emphasizing the sense of belonging to peer religious (or ethno-religious) community or group.

That is why individual migrant religious identity is better understood within the concept of ‘collective identity formation’, which is a self-referential process involving efforts by members of one group to distinguish themselves from whom they are not (Zolberg and Woon 1999; Akerlof and Kranton 2000). Accordingly, this process is characterized by the delineation of boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’, so that integration here (as will be shown later) is argued to be the process of negotiations in which migrants and the host society engage around this collective religious/cultural boundaries (Zolberg and Woon 1999: 8).

- 2) In my thesis, religious identity, also, involves strong elements of self-identification. Numerous studies have shown that Muslim migrants are characterized by perceiving themselves not only as Muslims, but also that being a Muslim represents the most important identity element that defines their ‘sense of self’ (Verkuyten and Yildiz 2010; Maliepaard and Phalet 2012: 135; Dudejira 2010). It is seen more as a sense of oneself, mainly, aimed at distinguishing a Muslim migrant from a perceived culturally and religiously different other (i.e. members of the secular host society).

In addition, since my thesis argument is developed with respect to the dynamics of interaction between religiosity and the context of reception, and following Hashmi’s (2003) emphasis that studying identity cannot take place efficiently without involving the society in which individuals live, the self-identificational element of religious identity, then, is strongly linked to the host society by which migrants are received and accommodated. This is reflected in how religious identity is framed and self-evaluated in relation to (or in comparison with) the identity of the host society. We can conclude that the host society’s identity may function here as a criterion in distinguishing Muslim migrants’ religious identities.

- 3) In further conceptualizing the notion of religious identity, I look at it as a feature and/or attribute that can both be chosen by migrants, and in parallel ascribed to them by members of the host

society. In short, following Peek (2005) and others, religious identity, then, is conceptualized in this research as both ‘chosen’ and ‘ascribed’ identity. It is argued to be ‘actively constructed by individuals and groups’, while in parallel being ‘defined, challenged, accepted, or rejected by other people, communities, and institutions’ (Peek 2005: 236).

In this regard, the issue of whether religious identity is a chosen/selected identity (Ammerman 2003; Akerlof and Kranton 2000), or an imposed/ascribed/assigned identity to which Muslim migrants adhere (Jeldtoft 2010; Schneider *et al.* 2012; Crul and Mollenkopf 2012), remains a subject of vigorous debate in academic literature (see Voas and Fleschmann 2012; Meer and Modood 2009).

Within that debate, some have asserted that religious identity is not given, it is rather chosen by individuals’ assignments to given social categories through means of actions corresponding to these categorizations (Akerlof and Kranton 2000), so that identities become connected to distinct cultural and social practices which may have ‘symbolic, interactional and discursive dimensions’ (Schneider *et al.* 2012; Crul and Mollenkopf 2012: 207). In contrast, others, such as Jeldtoft, argue that being a Muslim migrant in a minority context is not an identity that is chosen freely. It is rather strongly related to majority contestation and acts of categorization (2010: 1148). It comes in line with what has been outlined previously that identity labelling is not based on observable behaviors or objective attributes (Devereux 1978; Balibar and Wallerstein 1991). In this school of thought, it has also been argued that identity ascription is the way in which outsiders define groups, which instills or reinforces a certain value within the identity of this group (Van Heelsum and Koomen 2016).

In my thesis, drawing on both strands of research, religious identity involves a hybrid of both chosen and ascribed elements. As such, I argue that religious identity can be willingly chosen, and,

therefore, asserted by Muslim migrants in maintaining their religious distinctiveness, preserving their religious belonging, and protecting their religious beliefs, values and norms. Based on that, a migrant can develop a cognitive conception to choose to be identified primarily as a Muslim. In parallel, I stress that religious identity can also be ascribed/assigned to migrants by members of the host society, regardless of whether or not those migrants perceive/identify themselves as Muslims (i.e. it is mostly seen when a migrant does not consider him/herself as a Muslim, and yet is identified and characterized as one).

When it is chosen, religious identity is argued to involve a strong sense of self-awareness, individual choice, and acknowledgment of others (Peek 2005: 236). But when it is ascribed or assigned, particularly in the case of Muslim migrants in Europe, it is argued that religious identity here is mostly associated with prejudice, categorization and classification by others (Crul and Mollenkopf 2012; Laurence and Vaisse 2007).

In further substantiating how both perceptions coincide, religious identity has been referred to as ‘identity labelling’ that consists of three interactive processes: 1) self-ascription of the individual; 2) the habits of the category; and 3) the outside world’s perspective on the non-group member (Schneider *et al.* 2012; Crul and Mollenkopf 2012: 207). For example, empirically, there are many cases, including my study, in which the identities felt or even chosen by migrants differ from the ‘social categorizations’ that mainstream host society uses to describe them (*ibid.*). Accordingly, the growing identification and sense of belonging with Islam is argued to take place mainly as a reaction to migrants’ non-Muslim peers (host society), especially when they feel that they are essentialized by others as Muslims (Laurence and Vaisse 2007: 96). This argument is empirically corroborated in Chapters Five and Six of this dissertation.

## C. The centrality of religion in migration

### i. General overview

Having discussed the concepts of religiosity and religious identity, it is necessary, then, to elaborate on the issue of the general centrality of religion among migrants.

It has been outlined that many groups of migrants tend to be more religious than native host societies (Cesari 2013). It is important to point out, first, that part of the argument about the centrality and/or salience of religion in migration derives from the state of unfamiliarity resulting from relocation, where one's own religion is no longer the norm. As outlined extensively in previous literature, migration often implies a move from being close to the norm to being unusual (Cesari 2013; Bruce 2011; Levitt 2003). The expectation of conventional 'customary behavior', like hearing the native language and being surrounded by friends and family, can no longer be taken for granted (Hirschman 2004). In these circumstances, religion is considered one of the most critical variables in the adaptation process among migrants (Cesari 2013; Aleksynska and Chiswick 2012; Radzi *et al.* 2014). As such, it has been argued that the process of uprooting and resettlement, in and of itself, produces intensification of religious commitment (Smith 1978; Voas and Fleischmann 2012).

In emphasizing this centrality of religion among migrants, many scholars (Bruce 2011; Voas and Fleischmann 2012; Levitt 2003; Ammermann 2003; Young and Ebaugh 2001) have argued that religion in the country of origin deviates from its nature in the country of destination for a number of reasons including: different atmosphere and significance of congregation (Ebaugh 2003); larger role of religious institutions (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000); different meanings of being religious between countries of origin and destination (i.e. 'If everyone shares the same beliefs, they are not

beliefs; they are just how the world is') (Bruce 2011, qtd in Voas and Fleischmann 2012: 531); and finally, the development of new forms of religion in the country of destination, between what migrants bring and what they encounter (Levitt 2003).

Therefore, religion in migration takes on not only an added significance, but also new forms and functions in order to come to terms with the new culture that is characterized by largely unfamiliar and religiously diverse environment (Güngör *et al.* 2011: 1360). In the same line, Ammermann notes that 'circumstances and demands in a new culture inevitably reshape the beliefs and practices that were taken for granted in a home country' (2003: 208). The empirical discussion of these new forms of salience in migrants' religiosity is demonstrated in Chapters Five and Six of this dissertation.

Building on this state of unfamiliarity, and drawing on Hirschman's (2004) theory of religious reliance, which substantiates the salience of religion among migrants, a significant body of literature revolves around this idea of resources and support provided by religion. More specifically, in summarizing the set of benefits that religion can provide in migration, it has been noted that religion provides people -in general- with what is referred to as the 'three Goods' including an afterlife good, a spiritual good, and a social good (Azzi and Ehrenberg 1975; Iannaccone 1990). This is an argument that has been taken a step forward by Hirschman in studying migrants' religion. He argued that religion could also provide migrants with the 'three Rs': refuge, respect and resources (2004; Connor 2008: 244).

In addition, on the emotional level, the act of migration increases migrants' spiritual consciousness (Warner 1998; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000). This corresponds to the argument that dislocation is often interpreted in religious terms, and that the accompanying aspects of disruptions such as loneliness and alienation create a psychological need for the comfort and consolidation that

religion can offer (Voas and Flieschmann 2012: 529). Such comfort, for example, is developed by using religion to answer important life questions, most likely those relevant to meaning and purpose of life (Azzi and Ehrenberg 1975; Iannaccone 1990; Aleksynska and Chiswick 2012).

Limited attention has been given to the issue of religious emotions in the domain of migrant religiosity in comparison to other aspects of religiosity such as practices and identity. In my research, the centrality of religion is related not only to sociocultural and economic benefits, but is also strongly associated with emotional/spiritual benefits. Accordingly, the theory of the religious dimension of coping (Radzi *et al.* 2014) is adopted in this regard to substantiate the issue of religious emotions, or the emotional dimension of religiosity.

In general, studies demonstrate that religious involvement is associated with better levels of emotional well-being (Connor 2012). In the case of migrants, the separation from family, friends and community most likely leads to a search for ‘meaning and stability’. Within this understanding, Hirschman emphasized that religion, then, can fill migrants’ ‘psychological void’ and create ‘a sense of belonging and community’ (Hirschman 2004: 1228).

As a whole, we can understand the extent to which these benefits are linked to religion by looking at how migration is perceived by certain scholars as a ‘theologizing experience’ (Massey and Higgins 2011; Duderija 2008), where that the multi-dimensional centrality of religion in migrants’ lives is based on the set of diverse benefits it can offer including: means to cope with the challenges of relocation; a way to reproduce and pass on culture; consolidation of ethnic community; an opportunity to provide assistance in the settlement process (Ebaugh 2003: 228); and finally, as previously highlighted, an important identity marker that helps preserve individual self-awareness and cohesion in the group (Duderija 2008).

## ii. Centrality of religion for Muslim migrants

Muslim migrants are no exception when it comes to the centrality of religion and the reinforcement of religiosity in their new countries of destinations. Most importantly, the strong significance of Islam and the vital role of religion in Muslims' lives, in general, adds a particular dimension to this discussion. This is the case not only from the perspective of the sociology of religion discipline, but also with reference to the salience of religion among Muslim migrants in Europe which has been associated with sensitive political narratives including: integration, inclusion and social cohesion on the one hand; security and terrorism on the other; along with some complex related issues such as the alleged cultural conflict, as well as the clash of civilization rhetoric between Islam and the West. In this context, my research contributes to literature by showing empirically how such centrality of religion takes place among one group of Muslim migrants (Egyptian Muslims) through specific aspects of their everyday religiosity (as shown in Chapters Five and Six).

From a religiosity perspective, it has been outlined that many groups of Muslim migrants in Europe believe that religion plays an important role in their acculturation experiences (Güngör *et al.* 2011: 1357), and indeed higher levels of religiosity among Muslim migrants has been clearly signaled in a number of studies in terms of practice, belief and social attitudes (Lewis and Kashyap 2013). In many European countries of destination, religiosity, or Islamic religious traditions, is seen as a highly valued aspect of culture for first and second generation Muslim migrants (Güngör *et al.* 2011: 1358). As such, similar to other groups of migrants, and as highlighted in the previous section, Muslim migrants' religiosity is argued to contribute to their cultural adaptation by providing numerous benefits ranging from being a marker of Muslim identity and belonging, to a

source of self-esteem, social support and cultural continuity for second and subsequent generations (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Güngör *et al.* 2011).

Scholars such as Alba and Foner (2015) and Joppke (2015) have discussed the salience of religion among Muslim migrants, not from religious studies dimensions, but rather as an embedded part of the overall narrative of how religion has become both a challenge to integration and a significant social divide in Western Europe. For example, part of the unease between Muslim migrants and host societies has been attributed to ‘practical dilemmas and questions of principles’ triggered by the strong desire and efforts of Muslims to maintain their rituals (Zolberg and Woon 1999: 7).

Furthermore, in emphasizing the impact of migration and relocation on the centrality of Islam among Muslim migrants, Oliver Roy, for example, argued that one way in which migration increases Muslims’ religiosity is through purifying religion from its cultural components, so that the case of Muslims being uprooted from their societies and living in Europe ‘reinvents the essence of Islam’ (2007: 3), and fosters its revival.

Another important, and relevant, aspect of the centrality of religion among Muslim migrants appears in the role religion plays for them as an oppositional identity in different European societies, and as a way to claim dignity in the face of discrimination, prejudice, and exclusion. Such role is mostly approached in academic literature within the concept of ‘reactive religiosity’ (Reitz *et al.* 2009; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Diel and Schnell 2006). Within reactive religiosity narratives, it has been argued that Muslims’ identity functions as a suitable anchor to deal with exclusion (Cesari 2004; Khosrokhavar 2005), and to foster a source of ‘collective self-worth’ in the face of public hostility (Martinovic and Verkuyten 2012; Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010; Phalet *et al.* 2013: 124). In such circumstances, Islam is viewed by many Muslims as a manner of self-affirmation and resistance to the outside world (Freedman 2004), so that Muslims are expected to

‘reactively assert’ a religious identification, in order to uphold what is seen to be devalued by the host society (Brubaker 2013; Torrekens and Jacobs 2015: 2).

This understanding of everyday religiosity of Muslim migrants in the social and cultural spheres of their countries of destination, in which salient forms of religious identity and emotions are displayed, moves the discussion, thus, to the question of what impact this kind of religiosity can have on migrant integration. Accordingly, in order to be able to thoroughly address this question over the following empirical chapters, the concept of integration has, first, to be clarified.

### **III. Integration**

This section explores the issue of integration, looking at three main aspects: A) a summary about the variation in literature regarding the perception of the issue of Muslim migrants integration in Europe across the three key schools of thought; B) an overview on the concept of integration, focusing mainly on sociocultural integration; C) an overview on the main integration theories employed in this thesis; and finally D) a brief discussion on the importance of the domain of sociocultural integration in this research, along with its relation to the issue of segregation.

First, it is important to outline that integration, in this thesis, is approached as a dependent variable that is shaped by the effect of the interaction between both migrants’ religiosity and the context of reception. On that basis, the theories employed, and literature drawn on, serve to clarify this approach. A slightly similar connotation has been voiced in an extensive volume of literature, accentuating a two-way (or two-dimensional) philosophy of integration (Constant *et al.* 2009; Zolberg and Woon 1999: 10). This perception simply revolves around the idea that integration is an interactive process, or a two-way process, that involves both host societies and migrants.

Due to the complexity of the two main axes of integration, namely migrant characteristics and the context of reception, addressing them together in literature has been approached differently. Some define them as the micro and macro factors influencing integration, and specified them with issues such as socio-economic and political structures of the countries of origin and destination, along with migrants' characteristics such as religion, race, ethnicity, level of education, etc. (Alba and Nee 2003). Others refer to them more broadly, as the overall context of reception vs migrants' social capital (Cervan-Gil 2016; Algan *et al.* 2012; Statham and Tillie 2016).

Moreover, based on the significance of the role of both migrants and the host society in the integration process, integration, in its general essence, relies on the free choice and desire of migrants, coupled by a socially welcoming and culturally open character of the host society. This comes in line with has been noted previously that integration is expected to take place only when it is 'freely chosen and successfully pursued' by migrants (or the non-dominant group), and when the host society, in parallel, is open to cultural diversity (Berry 1997: 10). In this sense, integration has been signaled by a number of factors including the willingness for mutual accommodation between both groups (i.e. absence of discrimination and prejudice), as well as signs of social involvement in two cultural communities (i.e. migrants and the host society) (Gordon 1964; Berry 1997).

In short, migrant integration, in general, is the successful (a difficult term, of course) inclusion of migrants in their new societies, where they become an integrated and accepted part of their countries of destination. However, scholars have different takes on what they mean by 'successful inclusion' of migrants. This is manifested, for example, in the controversial narrative about the requirements for acceptance in the eyes of the host societies (Garces-Mascarenas and Penninx

2016: 14), as well as the different views on the specific domains/fields where such acceptance/inclusion matters the most (i.e. employment, education, political, cultural, etc.).

In this thesis, as will be shown in the following chapters, I empirically approach integration, on the country of destination level, by focusing on migrants' perceptions of the context of reception (which comprises perceptions of the general system and society of the country of destination), while, on the level of migrants' characteristics, I focus only on migrants' religiosity. Therefore, possible trajectories/paths of integration evolve based on the interplay between these two sets of factors.

#### **A. Muslim migrants' integration in Europe: a three schools of thought perspective**

Before looking at the general concept of integration, and demonstrating the theoretical guidance of sociocultural integration in this thesis, it is crucial, first, to explore how the issue of Muslim migrants' integration in Europe has been generally perceived in academic literature.

In this section, I demonstrate what I consider the three central schools of thought in academic literature addressing the integration of Muslim migrants in Europe, in order to set the stage for my empirical chapters which follow.

For some time, and before the surge of the challenges related to Muslim migrants' integration, the issue of integration, in general, has generated a wide range of public controversial debates. And recently, in the wake of the recent political events, it has been thrust to the fore of international political agenda. Briefly, the challenges of integration are argued to be exacerbated by the robust opposition of the host native societies to the presence of more migrants in Europe. This led to the rise of anxieties and fears about whether those migrants are capable of adapting, or their large scale presence run the risk of undermining 'the basic foundations of established ways of life' in

European societies (Alba and Foner 2015: 2). As Alba and Foner put it, these concerns became evident in popular writings, media discourse, opinion polls, and most importantly they have been voiced and exploited by politicians (2015).

At a later stage, over a course of political events, when the integration challenge became more associated with Muslim migrants (and/or minorities), the issue has taken on more heat and controversies across a larger scale of public and academic debate. Such debate comprised not only the challenges of how European countries of destination can manage cultural diversity (Fetzer 2004; Norris and Inglehart 2012: 228), but this debate also included the reasons behind the complications associated with Muslims' integration. These reasons varied based on scholars' perspectives and/or their points of departure in looking at the issue.

In this context, by taking a closer look at each of the main schools of thought addressing the issue of Muslim migrants' integration in Europe, the following can be outlined:

*First:* scholars representing one school of thought argue that the challenge of pursuing successful integration for Muslim migrants in Europe lies mainly with their religion, with Islam and/or Islamic traditions (Cesari 2004; Alba 2005; Lucassen 2005; Goldberg 2006; Bowen 2007; Foner and Alba 2008; Klausen 2005, 2008; Alba and Foner 2016). A significant volume of literature emphasized this argument from different angles (Alba 2005; Foner and Alba 2008; Klausen 2008). Of this literature, some underlined, in general, the strong conservative nature of Islam and its alleged incompatibility with western secular norms (Joppke 2015; Lucassen 2005; Bowen 2007). Others stressed the limited propensity among Muslims in accepting, or undergoing, concrete changes in terms of adopting a more liberal version of what Islam represents in their daily inner lives, especially with the existence of profound levels of sociocultural, if not spatial, segregation among Muslim communities in Europe (Joppke 2015; Bowen 2010; Kaltenbach and Tribalat

2002). A third approach in this school of thought focused on specific themes of critique in Islamic traditions in general, which are portrayed to contradict what is known as European secular values including gender equality, sexual liberties, and the issue of religious visibility, such as the headscarf (Norris and Inglehart 2002; Joppke 2015).

In this regard, from the perspective of those who stress a relatively conservative character of Islam (and Muslims) in comparison to other religions, it has been argued that Muslims' general culture and lifestyle are quite distant from European culture (Meer and Modood 2009; Asad 2012: 217), and that Islam is represented as a barrier which isolates Muslim migrants from host native societies, and hinders their cultural integration (Güngör *et al.* 2011). The argument has been even taken a step further by questioning the general compatibility between Islam, as a philosophy of living, and the west (Bloemraad *et al.* 2008; Bowen 2007; Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007).

On the basis of the theory of religious group boundaries (Phalet *et al.* 2013: 125; Alba 2005; Alba and Foner 2015), Islam in Europe is seen not only as an impediment to successful integration of migrants (and their children) to European societies, but also is capable of undermining and/or threatening western democratic values, rights and liberties (Kaltenbach and Tribalat 2002; Phalet *et al.* 2013; Alba and Foner 2015: 118).

Moreover, studies and surveys in different European countries found that the majority of the host societies believe that the growing sense of religiosity among Muslim migrants is responsible for preventing integration (Alba and Foner 2015: 123). Muslims' alleged responsibility for the complications of their integration has been put down to the irreconcilable character between Islamic culture and the West, an issue that has dominated public debates in Western Europe for years (Lucassen 2005: 4). In this regard, Muslims have been negatively portrayed in media and public discourses of different European countries, by drawing on 'essentialized images' of Muslim

culture that reflects the polarization between native self and Muslim other (Hervik 2002; Jensen 2011: 1154).

On the other hand, with regard to the potentials of Muslim migrants to undergo liberal changes concerning their religiosity, it has also been argued that the relatively conservative Islamic character among Muslims is unlikely to change towards a secular liberal version, and that any form of religious change is viewed to take place from within an Islamic framework, and not by stepping out of it, so that an expected moderate or liberal change has to happen from within, which gives no room for real adjustments capable of matching secular Europe (Bowen 2010; Joppke 2015: 170).

Finally, with regard to specific aspects of critique of Islam in western academic debates, Norris and Inglehart, for example, argued that the most salient fault line between Islam and western traditions does not involve democracy as much as it involves issues of gender equality and sexual liberties (2002: 16; 2012). The same was stressed by other scholars (Joppke 2015), as they shed light on the implications of what they see as an existing cultural gap between Muslims and western societies in terms of moral conservatism and sexual liberties.

*Second:* scholars representing another school of thought have emphasized that the difficulties facing Muslim migrants in integrating in Europe is not mainly about their religion, it is rather primarily represented by the range of barriers associated with the context of reception (Landolt 2008; Laurence and Vaisse 2007; Crul and Schneider 2010; Crul and Mollenkopf 2012). This includes institutional/structural barriers and, most importantly, societal barriers. The institutional barriers are mostly reflected in the system or immigration policies, encompassing points of weakness in distinct integration models in each country of destination. Societal barriers range from outright or overt discrimination and racism to passive acts of exclusion and prejudice. According

to this school of thought, such barriers in the context of reception are held primarily responsible for the challenges and/or complications facing Muslim migrants' integration in Europe. Discrimination and prejudice, for example, have been perceived as contextual factors having the strongest effects on negative patterns of integration (Maxwell 2009; Heath and Demireva 2014).

In some cases, this approach includes not only certain aspects of critique towards the context of reception, but also stresses the positive integrative role of religion or Islam, through emphasizing the various resources and benefits that can be obtained by participating in religious organizations (Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Fischer and Hout 2006; Laurence and Vaisse 2006; Foley and Hoge 2007; Warner 2007). This approach illuminates how vital religion can be in the adaptation process of migrants.

It is clear, here, that the interpretation of both the 'success' or 'failure' of the inclusion of Muslim migrants in Europe, and the factors that might help or hinder such inclusion, varies from one school of thought to another. As such, studies drawing on, or representing, the first school of thought rotate around the argument that highly religious Muslim migrants display low levels of integration in the host society, whereas non-religious (or more secular) Muslim migrants are associated with higher levels of integration in their countries of destination (Rooijackers 1992; Alba and Foner 2015). Or the other way around, this school of thought also argues that low integration in the host society (i.e. segregation) is associated with higher religiosity, whereas frequent contacts with the host society are associated with lower religiosity (Van Tubergen 2007; Phalet *et al.* 2008). In contrast, studies drawing on the second school of thought emphasize that the more welcoming the receiving state and society, the more integrated migrants are, whereas less welcoming receiving state and society are strongly associated with low levels of integration (Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Crul and Schneider 2010).

*Third:* in taking this issue a step forward, a third school of thought can be identified. Although scholars in this school of thought look only at structural domain of integration (i.e. employment/labor integration), some have built on the previous two schools to conclude that it is actually both Muslims' religiosity and an unwelcoming context of reception in conjunction which contribute to either encourage or impede Muslims' integration. This thesis, building on Adida *et al.* (2016), and Maliepaard and Schacht (2018), argues that certain aspects of migrants' religiosity combined with an unwelcoming (unreceptive) attitude on the part of the host society jointly bear the responsibility for what is seen as complications and challenges facing Muslims' integration.

In further substantiating the role of both migrants' religiosity and the context of reception, studies drawing on this school argue that Muslim migrants display religious characteristics that can impede successful inclusion in the country of destination, in different domains of integration (i.e. employment), whereas members of the host native society, in parallel, exhibit different patterns of (unprovoked) unwelcoming attitudes (i.e. discrimination, prejudice, racism, etc.) that can firmly thwart migrants' attempts of integration (Adida *et al.* 2016).

It is this third school of thought upon which my work is based, where I focus on the dynamics of interaction between both religiosity and the context of reception. The following chapters are set to show how my research findings present a more nuanced understanding, building on that third school of thought.

Moving on, in order to better understand the arguments presented in each of these three schools of thought on Muslim migrants' integration, it is important to take a closer look, first, at the notion of integration in general, and sociocultural integration in particular. The following section, thus, serves to present a conceptual analysis of sociocultural integration in this research.

## B. Integration: a general overview of the notion

It is important to note that in this research I restrict my focus to the social and cultural domains of migrant integration, or sociocultural integration. Other forms of structural/institutional integration (i.e. economic, political, educational, etc.) remain outside the scope of interest of this research. I look at the social and cultural elements of the everyday aspects of integration, which takes place (or not) on a micro level in terms of individual migrant social interactions with members of the host society, as well as his/her cultural maintenance (or lack thereof).

But prior to elaborating on how this thesis regards sociocultural integration, it is important to highlight, first, a number of general characteristics of the overall notion of integration, to which this research is strongly related. In general, scholars have approached integration from different angles leading to different interpretations. Primarily, this research, following Martinovic *et al.* (2009), looks at integration, in general, more as a dynamic process, and not as an end result/situation. Thus, it is more helpful to examine the process and not the level of integration.

The dynamic, process-based, status of integration has been highlighted several times in literature. On that basis, integration has been defined as ‘the process’ of becoming an accepted part of the society (Garcés-Mascreñas and Penninx. 2016: 14). It has also been seen as ‘the process’ that increases the opportunities of migrants ‘to obtain the valued stuff of a society’, and to acquire social acceptance (Alba and Foner 2015: 5). In the same sense, Conner and Koenig argue that integration is an ‘open-ended process comprising cognitive, structural, social, and identificational dimensions’ (2013: 7).

I conceptualize integration, in this thesis, in a broad sociological sense, building on Maliepaard and Schacht (2018). This approach, on the one hand, corresponds to the way in which integration

is assessed and evaluated in this research, which is understood to take place in an implicit manner based on migrants' daily inner lives and stories. And on the other hand, conceptualizing integration in a broad sociological sense is useful in understanding how the cultural and social lives of migrants are involved in their integration process.

Practically, integration does not just take place in a comprehensive manner, but rather that integration may be stronger or weaker in specific domains/ contexts, including: employment/labor market integration (or economic integration); education; politics; as well as social and cultural integration. To restrict the discussion to a manageable size, and also believing that this is foundational, I look only at the social and cultural domains of integration, or sociocultural integration.

### **Sociocultural integration**

This section demonstrates how my thesis understands sociocultural integration within a hybrid of theoretical approaches. On the cultural side, it builds on Berry's acculturation theory (Berry 1997; Sam and Berry 2006; Knipscheer and Kleber, 2006; Algan *et al.* 2012), while on the social side of integration, it draws on the social integration theory (Durkheim 1951, qtd in Need and De Graaf 1996; Damstra and Tillie 2016), as well as on Granovetter's (1973) concepts of 'strong and weak ties'. In general, following Alba and Nee's (2003) approach of sociocultural integration, I refer to sociocultural integration, from this point forward, to mean the process where the social distance and cultural differences between migrants and the host society appear to narrow over time, due to an extensive range of informal interactions between both groups. This takes place based on two major criteria: social contacts and cultural retention and/or maintenance. As such, I refer to sociocultural integration in this thesis as the aspects of migrants' social proximity to the host society, as well as the extent of maintaining and pursuing their religiosity (or not).

As demonstrated above, sociocultural integration subsumes dimensions that are not institutionally structured through markets, political processes or institutions (Algan *et al.* 2012: 21). In other words, as Bertossi put it, it is the absorption of minorities into the ‘would be’ sociocultural mainstream (2007: 5). It is argued to be the domain of integration that is associated with the social and cultural spheres, involving values, traditions, religion, and language.

Most importantly, on other words, this thesis’s approach to sociocultural integration comes in line with what has been noted previously that sociocultural integration is the process in which differences between migrants and the host society narrow over time, with regard to aspects of social behavior and cultural characteristics (Alba and Nee 2003; Bennett 2011). The concept is appropriate for this thesis because of its focus on cultural-religious distance and social factors in shaping Muslim migrants’ lives in their countries of destination.

In this thesis, and following Berry (1997), Damstra and Tillie (2016), and Alba and Nee (2003), there are two main criteria on the basis of which sociocultural integration is analyzed and examined: cultural maintenance (or retention) and social contacts. This is also referred to in literature as cultural characteristics (including religiosity) and patterns of social interactions (Alba and Nee 2003; Bennett 2011). Cultural maintenance, in this regard, refers primarily to the maintenance or retention of religiosity. Social contacts, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which migrants become socially involved in the host society by either displaying high levels of intergroup interaction with members of the host society, or by mingling and interacting only with members of peer community.

To further elaborate on the concepts of social and cultural integration, it is important to outline the following:

*First*, social integration, drawing on Granovetter's (1973) concept of 'weak ties', is argued to be the extent to which migrants engage in social interaction with the host society (Martinovic *et al.* 2009). In further clarifying the issue, Granovetter (1973) referred to 'weak ties' as the ties which go beyond the in-group or peer community linking migrants to acquaintances from another group (i.e. host society), whereas 'strong ties' are those in-group ties which take place only within closed groups or communities (i.e. close friends and family). In a migration context, he argues that the wide existence of weak ties provides more resources and benefits to migrants (the minority) due to extended networks with the host society (the majority) (Damstra and Tillie 2016).

On that basis, weak ties refers to the extent of social links and/or relationships between migrants and members of the host society, and the extent to which both groups are able to mingle, interact and socialize with each other. It is seen/epitomized in positive social contacts between both groups such as visiting neighbor, or spending time with friends (Maliepaard and Phalet 2012: 133), as well as the scope of friendships and personal relationships including intermarriages. More broadly, it has also been described as the end-point of the process of minority incorporation into the majority society (Favell 2003), and understood as the multi-ethnic composition of friendship relations (Van Tubergen 2007).

In this thesis, as will be shown in further empirical chapters, weak ties refers to the level of informal social interactions that connects Egyptian Muslim migrants to members of the native host society in the UK, France, and Belgium, and is actually considered a significant marker of social integration (or lack thereof).

Social integration can perhaps be better understood through looking at elements of social exclusion and inclusion. Reitz *et al.*, for example, have outlined a number of indicators of social integration, including a hybrid of inclusion and exclusion elements such as: friendship networks, feelings of

trust, and identification with the mainstream society as elements for inclusion; along with discrimination, racism, and fears of victimization representing the exclusion elements (2017: 7).

*Second*, cultural integration, on the other hand, refers to acculturation to the host society. These could range from relatively minor cultural changes (i.e. food, dress code, etc.), to crucial and deeper ones such as changes in religion (value system) and language (Berry 1997: 17). Cultural integration is understood in this thesis to lie between the extent of migrants' adoption/acquisition of values, customs, norms, and traditions of the receiving host society, and the extent of their retention of values and norms of their country of origin (mainly religious values) (Alba and Nee 2003; Van Tubergen *et al.* 2004; Martinovic *et al.* 2009; Karlsen and Nazroo 2013). In other words, cultural integration is looked at in this thesis based on the changes, or lack thereof, in migrants' religiosity in the direction of the country of destination.

Cultural integration, here, is evaluated based on three elements: the basis of migrants' identification with their co-ethnic/co-religious group; their identification with certain religious norms and traditions (or practices) characterizing these groups; and finally the extent to which these norms are valued. The retention of cultural and/or religious norms vs the acculturation to (or the acquisition of) the host society's norms is the point at which the nuances of cultural integration lies (Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx. 2016: 15), and where this thesis is focused.

Finally, it is important to note, here, that it is precisely the interaction between migrants and the host society which are crucial in understanding the issue of sociocultural integration. Thus, despite the significance of migrants' preferences or choices in shaping their sociocultural integration, such preferences are conditioned by the receptivity of the host society (Martinovic *et al.* 2009: 872).

### C. Theoretical underpinning

Based on the previous two sections, in moving on with this theoretical discussion, it is useful to have a brief overview of the overall theoretical underpinnings in approaching integration in this thesis. In my research, sociocultural integration can be better understood as a twofold theoretical approach, involving both the social and the cultural aspects of integration:

*First*, with regard to the theories employed in approaching the social dimension of migrant integration, I build on two overlapping theoretical approaches: 1) social integration theory (Durkheim 1951; Need and De Graaf 1996; Van Tubergen 2007); and 2) Damstra and Tillie's understanding of Granovetter's (1973) concepts of 'strong and weak ties' (Damstra and Tillie 2016).

These theories serve to demonstrate this thesis's approach to integration as a phenomenon that takes place on a micro-level in migrants' everyday lives across their social and cultural spheres, outside the organized or structural/institutional domains. These theories, in addition, establish a useful framework within which we can draw a link between migrants' characteristics (religiosity) and the context of reception (with key variables are the perceived acceptance of the host society and system).

More specifically, social integration theory (Durkheim 1951, qtd in Need and De Graaf 1996) is an important base through which the issue of Muslim migrants' sociocultural integration in Europe can be better understood. I refer, herein, to Emile Durkheim theory of social order (1951; 1985) and his approach of integration. Briefly, according to Durkheim, integration is considered 'a property of system of relationships, power relations, and stratification', where a society can be seen integrated when all its 'constitutive parts' work to reinforce its cohesion (qtd in Crul and Mollenkopf 2012: 54).

The significance of this approach lies in Durkheim's emphasis of 'power relations'. This emphasis supports the thesis's understanding of the host society as one of the most powerful players in the integration process, for how it is instrumental in influencing migrants' trajectory of integration compared to what the system (legislations, laws or rules) bans or allows in various structured institutions. In addition, referring to Durkheim's approach to integration, in particular, is important due to its strong emphasis on the interaction between migrants' characteristics (here religion) and the host society, where previous research used it to derive hypotheses about religion (Need and De Graaf 1996). More specifically, in underlining such link, this approach stresses the issue of compatibility between migrants' values and those of the host society (Crul and Mollenkopf 2012: 55).

In general, social integration theory is a strong framework that links migrants' culture (and/or religion) with their social lives. In this regard, it has been argued that social groups influence individual members through shared norms and understanding of reality (Maliepaard and Phalet 2012: 133). As such, people who are strongly integrated into a social group are more likely to adopt the norms and traditions of that group, including religious norms (Van Tubergen *et al.* 2004; Van Tubergen and Sindradottir 2011). In a migration context, social settings of migrants play a key role in shaping their religious environment, and, subsequently, are vital in shaping migrants' overall religiosity (Kelley and De Graaf 1997).

Social integration theory is employed here to emphasize how the social setting in which migrants participate impact their religiosity (Van Tubergen 2007: 748). This impact is evident whether this social setting is dominated by members of peer community only (segregation), or characterized by more involvement and interactions with members of the host society (integration), or a setting that

constitutes actually both groups. Thus, this theoretical approach substantiates the link between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception in this thesis.

On the other hand, looking at the issue of social capital is also essential in conceptualizing social integration in this thesis. In this regard, following Damstra and Tillie (2016), I refer to Granovetter's (1973) concepts of 'strong and weak ties', in order to draw particularly on the concept of 'weak ties'. As mentioned above, 'weak ties' refer to the ties or networks that go beyond people's own social group, in order to provide them with the information needed to obtain certain resources, which is vital for migrants' integration (Damstra and Tillie 2016: 238). Accordingly, weak ties function as a bridge that connects migrants to the host society (Damstra and Tillie 2016:239), enabling them to have access to natives, which in turn facilitates other forms of integration such as economic and cultural integration (Martinovic *et al.* 2009: 870). It is also defined as a means of bridging social capital and representing a basis of social cohesion across groups (Statham and Tillie 2016: 181).

*Second*, drawing on Berry's (1997) understanding of acculturation, acculturation (or cultural integration) in this thesis refers to the process of adaptation over two main dimensions: the retention of ideals, values, and beliefs of migrants' culture of origin; and the acquisition of ideals, values, and beliefs of the host culture. Between both dimensions, I argue, the process of migrants' cultural integration is best understood.

Acculturation theory, in this regard, is strong guidance in explaining the changes that occur as a result of the interaction and/or contact between culturally distinct individuals or groups (Gibson 2001; Schwartz *et al.* 2010). It can be referred to as 'the set of processes by which individuals and groups interact when they identify themselves as culturally distinct' (Berry 1997: 8). It can also be understood as the level of cultural adaptation (Knipscheer and Kleber, 2006) defined by the process

of change that takes place when two ‘ethno-cultural groups come into continuous contact with each other’ (Sikand 1980: 133). As outlined earlier, in a migration context, acculturation refers to cultural changes that take place among migrants in their new countries of destinations (Berry 1997, 2006; Schwartz *et al.* 2010).

In looking at Muslim migrants, the importance of this two-dimensional interpretation of acculturation lies in how it reflects the interaction between migrants’ attitudes in retaining religion and their attitudes in becoming part of the new host society’s culture (Phinney *et al.* 2001). And since these attitudes interact with ‘actual and perceived level of acceptance’ of migrants among the host society, and influenced by national immigration policies (Phinney *et al.* 2001: 494), they, then, represent a good example of how acculturation theory can strongly reflect the interaction between migrants’ religiosity and the context of reception.

In further elaborating, Berry has taken the issue of the interaction between migrants’ religiosity and the context of reception a step forward by proposing an acculturation typology of four main strategies, in which the acquisition of the host culture and the retention of the culture of origin take place in one of these four strategies (Berry 1997). He raises two key questions in addressing the issue: do migrants continue to act in the new setting as they did in their country of origin, or they change their behavior to suit this new setting? Or, most importantly, is there a complex pattern of continuity and change of how migrants live their lives in the country of destination? (Berry 1997: 6).

In approaching sociocultural integration, my research relies heavily on Berry’s model of acculturation. According to Berry, and from the point of view of the ‘non-dominant’ group (represented here by migrants), there are four types (strategies) of cultural trajectories: 1) assimilation, is when individuals decide not to maintain their cultural identity of origin and instead

‘seek daily interaction’ with the dominant culture (the dominant here applies to the host society); 2) separation, is when individuals decide to hold on to their culture while in parallel avoiding interactions with others; 3) integration, is when individuals are interested in both maintaining their own cultural identity while being in daily interactions with the other group; and finally 4) marginalization, is when individuals cannot maintain their cultural identity and also not being interested in interacting with the host society (Berry 1997: 9).

From Berry’s typology, a number of inferences can be drawn: 1) the interaction of migrants’ religiosity and the context of reception, in this research, is expected, then, to lead to one, or more, of these four directions of integration; 2) maintaining (or not) one’s culture appears to be more a matter of choice and decision; and 3) the two trajectories of ‘separation’ and ‘integration’ share the feature of maintaining one’s own culture, but deviates on the decision of interacting with the host society. In this regard, we can discern that while separation involves the rejection of the host society’s culture, integration involves ‘two positive orientations’ (Berry 1997: 24). Thus, it is important to see how this distinction unfolds empirically, taking into account that part of my research is set out to investigate whether the choice to interact (or not) with the host society is achievable at the first place when culture is, primarily, epitomized in religion (taking into account the degree of receptivity of the host society). And, if it is achievable, would it lead, here, to neat parables of ‘separation’ vs ‘integration’?

It is relevant noting, in this regard, that Berry’s model has been the basis for the development of a more detailed integration-path model in related studies (Vertovec and Rogers 1998; Vertovec 2009). Other scholars have built on Berry’s trajectories of acculturation in further identifying an integration path model for Muslim migrants in Europe that is characterized by its religion-driven trajectories. For example, it has been argued that Muslim migrants are expected to take one or

more ethno-religious paths in their European countries of destination including: the secular path, which implies the rejection of one's religiosity (referred to as assimilation in Berry's model); the cooperative path, which comprises a hybrid of an adapted form of religiosity (or contextualized religiosity), combined with religious traditions of the culture of origin (integration in Berry's); and the cultural path, which indicates adopting only the culture of the country of origin (separation in Berry's) (Vertovec 2009, qtd in Wardana 2013: 50 ).

## **D. The significance of sociocultural integration and sociocultural segregation**

### **i. Why is sociocultural integration important?**

It has been demonstrated that integration in general is strongly associated with sociocultural adaptation (Phalet *et al.* 2018). And based on what has been outlined about the significance of religion, in general, in the process of Muslim migrants' integration (Cesari 2013; Aleksynska and Chiswick 2012; Voas and Fleischmann 2012; Landolt and Wei Da 2005; Landolt 2008; Laurence and Vaisse 2008), and given the strong link between Muslim migrants' religiosity and the issues of cultural maintenance and social contacts (as the two main criteria in this thesis in which sociocultural integration is evaluated) (Schwartz *et al.* 2010 Phinney *et al.* 2001), these all represent important factors that gives the domain of sociocultural integration in this thesis an added significance.

On that basis, and building on the previous sections, it is important to highlight what makes sociocultural integration more important in this thesis than other domains of integration. Such particularity can be attributed to the following:

- 1) The special focus on Muslim migrants' religiosity in this thesis, and its role in channeling (and/or influencing) migrants' lives in the country of destination, generates similar focus on migrants'

social and cultural lives in their countries of destination. Accordingly, the domain of sociocultural integration becomes quite important in this respect. Sociocultural is one of the most common domains of integration where migrants' religiosity and the context of reception interact in various ways. It represents the specific context of integration which captures the range of common/shared values and norms between the host society and migrants (or lack thereof).

- 2) In line with the thesis's interest in the role of the host society, by focusing on the social and cultural dimensions of integration, it is possible to shift the focal point from just migrants to their relationships with the host society, so that the question is not only limited to what migrants do, but also with whom do they interact and identify themselves (Garcés-Mascreñas and Penninx. 2016: 14). Given that the role of intergroup contacts in integration has been underemphasized generally in literature (Brown and Hewstone 2005), focusing on sociocultural integration, then, becomes crucial in looking at the personal contact between migrants and the host society.
- 3) Emphasizing sociocultural integration captures its broad meaning of being a 'unifying activity' that possesses a 'symbolic value', which situates integration beyond the field of policy (Koomen *et al.* 2013: 200). As opposed to other forms of integration, such as structural integration (economic, political, educational models of integration), the sociocultural one, I argue, is a major marker for the degree to which gaps between migrants and the host society are bridged. For example, looking at educational attainment or labor market outcomes independently as markers of integration, apart from cultural characteristics and social ties, does not provide an accurate assessment of the level of interaction between migrants and the host society, but rather provides information about institutions that are relevant to migrants' incorporation.

## ii. Sociocultural segregation

As will be shown in Chapter Eight, the issue of sociocultural segregation appears to be vital in demonstrating the nature of the dynamics of interaction between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception. It is, thus, important to outline the theoretical understanding of sociocultural segregation in this thesis.

Sociocultural segregation appears to be the counterpart of sociocultural integration. It has been argued that levels of segregation can be seen as a lens through which a country's progress in integration can be measured, so that patterns of segregation are regarded to symbolize a lack of integration (Phillips 2007: 1150). In public and political discourse, different forms of segregation (spatial, social, cultural, etc.) have been seen as a sign of integration failure, or an outcome of 'the misguided precepts of multiculturalism' (Phillips 2007: 1151).

In this thesis, I refer to sociocultural segregation as the social and cultural isolation of migrants in the country of destination, apart from their level of spatial segregation. In other words, sociocultural segregation refers to the absence of friends or acquaintances from members of the host native society, accompanied by limited engagement (and/or effect) with the host society's culture. In parallel, it involves only mingling and socializing with members of the peer community. In sum, sociocultural segregation, in this context, is the status where migrants situate themselves (or being situated) in a cultural and social sphere comprising only members, norms and traditions of their own peer ethnic/religious/national community, while being in parallel distant from the host society.

Academic research about the reasons and forces of segregation has debated the issue from the perspectives of choice and constraint (Huttman 1991; van Kempen and Ozuekren 1998; Johnston *et al.* 2005; Phillips 2007). As such, it is important to outline that it is not only ethnic preferences

that bring minority groups, including Muslim migrants, in segregated atmosphere, it is also the compelling role of the host native society (Smith *et al.* 2014).

This state of sociocultural segregation has been divided in literature into two main types: the first is driven by a preference/choice of migrants to befriend and mingle only with members of co-ethnic/religious peers, as they represent the in-groups that share similar cultural/religious background; and the second is argued to be imposed on migrants by constraints in the context of reception, restricting their interactions and opportunities to meet members of that host society (Mouw and Entwistle 2006; Vermeij *et al.* 2009; Smith *et al.* 2014: 33). This thesis builds empirically on these two types of segregation, adding nuance to the discussion.

## IV. Conclusion

Three overarching theoretical approaches thus frame this thesis -- the concepts of religiosity, integration, and of the context of reception. This chapter addresses the first two concepts, religiosity and integration, and we now move to the following one which focuses on the third concept, the context of reception. These three bodies of theoretical literature serve to set the background for the next empirical chapters, which will empirically demonstrate the nature of the interaction between migrants' religiosity and their integration process in a western context of reception.

First, in conceptualizing and understanding religiosity, I build on four main theoretical approaches: Hirschman's theory of religious reliance (2004); Radzi's *et al.* theory of the religious dimension of coping (2014); the theory of religiosity as a social identity (Postmes *et al.* 2006; Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010; Maliepaard and Phalet 2012; Karlsen and Nazroo 2013); and finally, Jeldtoft's approach of Muslim's 'lived' or 'everyday' religiosity (2011).

My thesis identifies one main limitation in examining religiosity in previous research and works towards filling this gap. In short, a number of ‘objective’ criteria/elements of religiosity (i.e. practices, visibility, views on sexual liberties and gender equality, etc.) have been examined structurally (or even mechanically) in order to provide an assessment for a phenomenon (religiosity) that is clearly ‘subjective’.

In filling this gap, my approach (and later on my definition) to religiosity is primarily associated with migrants’ social context in their inner daily lives. As such, I employ religiosity as an overarching notion that serves to capture various aspects of migrants’ relationship with their own religion, including: awareness (more or less meaningful); identification (aspects of religious identity); emotions (the scope of emotional reliance); behaviors (acts of ‘*halal* and ‘*haram*’); and rituals (i.e. praying, fasting, etc.). In addition, the chapter delineates the concept of religious identity from the overall notion of religiosity. It considers the issue of religious identity as one prime component of religiosity, but not a synonym for it. In practical terms, religiosity in this sense refers to how individual migrant lives her/his own religion in the country of destination.

Second, with regard to integration, this chapter looks at the broader understanding of the concept of sociocultural integration. On that basis, building on Berry’s acculturation theory (Berry 1997; Sam and Berry 2006; Knipscheer and Kleber, 2006; Algan *et al.* 2012), and on social integration theory (Durkheim 1951; Need and De Graaf 1996; Damstra and Tillie 2016), and drawing on Alba and Nee’s (2003) approach, I look at sociocultural integration as the process that is evaluated based on two main criteria: cultural maintenance, and patterns of social interactions (social contacts).

Finally, it is then important to move on, in the following chapter, to the final concept in completing this theoretical puzzle, which is the context of reception. In this regard, in contextualizing religiosity-integration relationship, it is worth outlining that Muslim migrants’ integration takes

place in a specific context of reception. And, inasmuch as integration relies on migrants' characteristics (represented here by religiosity), it is also strongly influenced by the conditions of the context of reception. These conditions are understood, here, by looking at the main components constituting that context of reception.

Thus, in Chapter Four, I shift to a more detailed discussion about the context of reception, highlighting its linkage to religiosity and migrant integration. By drawing on the theory of integration context (Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Crul and Schneider 2010), I address the context of reception along two main dimensions: its system, national models, or national philosophies of integration on the one hand; and its host society, on the other hand.

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## Chapter Four: The Context of Reception

### I. Introduction

Context of reception is the third and final overarching theoretical approach in this thesis. Building on the thesis's approach to integration in chapter three, it is important to outline that while migrants' characteristics (and/or human and social capital), including religion, education, etc. clearly play a role in their integration (Cervan-Gil 2016; Algan *et al.* 2012; Statham and Tillie 2016), the processes by which migrants are received and incorporated, including their trajectories of sociocultural integration, depend strongly on the context of reception, or the integration context (Crul and Schneider 2010). Insofar, looking at the context of reception is crucial for understanding the dynamics of interaction between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception.

In other words, it is not only migrants' own background and characteristics (including religiosity) which play a role in their integration, but the destination country's context of reception is also a significant factor influencing their incorporation (Portes and Rumbau 2006; Mooney 2013; Connor 2008). The context of reception is broadly understood along those lines, as being constituted by conditions that shape the opportunities available to migrants, as well as influencing how they are treated and perceived by members of the host society (Portes and Böröcz 1989; Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

More specifically, migrant integration takes place within a country of destination's system and society. On that basis, this chapter theoretically approaches the concept of the context of reception from a twofold perspective: an institutional perspective (the system); and a societal perspective

(the host society). It is the system and society by which migrants are received and incorporated in their countries of destinations.

This chapter sets out theoretically the main components of the context of reception which have an impact on migrants' religiosity, and thus on their sociocultural integration. It explains part of a structural context of reception in the UK, France, and Belgium, in order to lay the basis for the empirical data addressed in the following chapters, with the aim to distinguish between such structural context of reception and an empirically perceived context of reception by migrants (discussed in Chapter Seven). This structural context of reception is meant here to be the theoretical understanding of the three countries of destination in terms of their models of integration as well as their host societies, including their different interpretations of secularism.

If we are to understand the context of reception's impact on migrant integration, we can best proceed from a multi-level perspective. Philosophical approach, policy application, and societal understanding are those three levels.

On that basis, I construct my discussion across two main aspects: the national models/philosophies of integration, and secularism. This discussion takes place over two levels of analysis: the institutional level and the societal level. The first level explores the institutional context of reception (the system), by demonstrating assimilation and multiculturalism as two overarching philosophies characterizing integration models in the three countries under study. The second level addresses the societal context of reception, by underlining secularism, as an interpreting tool in understanding the host societies, and their level of receptivity towards Muslim migrants. More fundamentally, however, an overview of the concept of the context of reception is quite important.

The chapter addresses the theoretical approach of the context of reception in this research over three main sections including: 1) a brief overview on the concept of the context of reception; 2) an outlook on the philosophical understanding of the national models/systems of integration in the UK, France, and Belgium, including the major aspects of critique in each model; and finally 3) a discussion on secularism in Europe in general, and in relation to Muslim migrants in particular.

Along these three sections, the chapter shows that: *first*, the context of reception, as a whole, is often neither fully positive nor fully negative; *second*, that the official system in each country solely, or its general approach to integration, does not provide a persuasive understanding for the success or failure of migrant integration. The UK, France and Belgium, in this research, are not exceptional, as in such models, gaps between ideals and outcomes and between theory and practice reflect the challenges of relying only on structured models of integration in assessing the countries' actual performance towards migrants.

This can be attributed to the following: 1) the concept of 'models of integration', in and of itself, does not reflect an accurate understanding for the actual process of migrant integration on the ground, as it seems to focus more on ideals and principles than on the nuances of the complicated process of integration; 2) official institutional arrangements related to migrant integration are not practically implemented in the ways they are politically or philosophically portrayed; 3) different philosophical understandings of integration underemphasize the role of agency, such as the host society, and therefore they make little difference on the attitude of the host society towards migrants; and 4) in reality, a national model of integration is not an ideal type (fully multicultural or fully assimilationist), but it evolves over time to embrace some elements of other models, which subsequently develop a sort of ambiguity within each model. Overall, in practice, then, national

models of integration are neither coherent with their own philosophy, nor do they influence the host society's general perception.

*Third*, in the final section, the chapter also stresses the general interpretations of secularism in Europe, and the extent to which Muslim migrants conform to such interpretations, which in turn play a key role to shaping the public perceptions of Muslim migrants. Through the understanding of secularism in each country of destination, religion (or the perception of religion) forms an important part of the context of reception in Europe. The significance of drawing on secularism in discussing the context of reception is not about the essence of secularism, in and of itself, as a foundational feature of modern Europe, but it is rather about the reactions of the host country and society to the perceived challenges that have emerged with the presence of large number of Muslim migrants in Europe.

It is crucial to highlight here that although the stated philosophical approaches to integration may differ -multiculturalism in the UK or assimilation in France-, the actual application of those models does, as noted above, result in a less clear-cut distinction. There are other features which are more critical in this regard. Insofar, the empirical chapters that follow are not structured by the country of destination, but rather thematically, based on the core elements that strongly emerged from my data (which –with few variations- appear to be quite similar in the three countries under study).

## **II. The Concept ‘Context of Reception’**

### **A. General overview**

In approaching the context of reception, the chapter draws on the theory of integration context (Crul and Schneider 2010; Portes and Rumbaut 2006), which, at its most basic, argues that the more positive (receptive) the receiving state and society, the more successful the integration of

migrants, whereas the more negative the receiving state and society, the more complicated and less successful the integration of migrants. Based on this theoretical approach, the context of reception is vital in shaping the opportunities available to migrants, and influencing how they are treated and perceived by members of the host society (Portes and Borocz 1989; Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

In this research, the context of reception refers to the system and society by which migrants are received and incorporated in their countries of destinations. More specifically, it is the combination of the state's general philosophy/approach of migrant integration, its institutional framework organizing this approach, and most importantly, its host society, which constitutes the prime context where the integration process (or lack thereof) takes place on a daily basis.

Most importantly, due to its intertwining components, the overall context of reception cannot be seen from a binary perspective, as either fully positive or fully negative, it rather evolves as a hybrid of both, including both positive and negative elements (Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Schwartz *et al.* 2014). The context of reception is generally formed by a hybrid of institutional and societal factors, each having its own terms and conditions that determine the ways in which the state's institutions and society assess the specific necessities in dealing with migrants (Vermeulen 1997; Crul and Schneider 2010: 1259).

Institutional and societal factors of the context of reception, do not influence migrants independently of each other. Instead, it is a combination of both institutional and societal factors, including governmental arrangements, relations with the host society, public opinion, labor market conditions, and pre-existing ethnic relations, which all interact together in what is referred to as 'variable geometry' shaping an overall context of reception, which contributes (along with migrants' characteristics) in channeling migrants into certain trajectories (or paths) of integration

(Portes and Borocz 1989: 620; Reitz 2002). In that sense, piecing together these institutional and societal factors provides a better understanding for what the context of reception actually means.

## **B. Institutional context of reception**

The institutional context of reception, usually guided by a broad philosophical understanding, comprises a number of factors such as legislations including citizenship and institutional arrangements in education, the labor market, religion, and housing. We can posit that these factors constitute a national model of integration. These national models manifest the state's philosophy of integration, and the institutional arrangements designated to implement them, in accommodating migrants (Crul and Schneider 2010). In that respect, it has been argued that integration is mainly about how such institutional/structural national models can unify a diverse society (Favell 2003: 18), so that this national model is laid out to determine how migrants become part of their new societies, or the successful inclusion of migrants from a state's perspective. Such model not only shapes the willingness of a state to acknowledge its migrants, in one way or another, but also influences relevant policies and political decisions (Alba and Foner 2015: 9).

In Western Europe, these national models of integration, constituting the institutional context of reception (or the system), are broadly characterized by philosophies that range from multiculturalism to assimilation. Multiculturalism and assimilation are often perceived in academic literature as the two main overarching philosophies characterizing the state's approach in managing/negotiating the institutional elements of the context of reception. In other words, multiculturalism and assimilation (with their different variations and developments) are considered, as they are here, the two general approaches which seek to set out how the state's institutions function in integrating migrants (and/or minorities), or how migrants will be positioned

as outsiders, and, most importantly, in what ways they are incorporated into the host society (Crul and Mollenkopf 2012: 44).

In addition, the importance of looking at the theories of multiculturalism and assimilation here is not only related to their substantial role in shaping the specific national models of integration in many European countries, but also due to the close link between these two philosophies and migrants' sociocultural integration.

Although multiculturalism and assimilation are discussed in the following section on a country-based level, it is important first to present a brief background on each approach.

## **i. Multiculturalism**

Multiculturalism is a philosophy which is based upon the principles of individual equality and preservation of cultural values. It is argued to primarily reject the idea of cultural incompatibility, and advocates for a culturally pluralistic society, based on the principles of coexistence of different cultural norms and values (Bloemraad 2011; Parekh 2002; Taylor 1994; Wright and Bloemraad 2012). Multiculturalism emphasizes that migrants' cultural characteristics will be constantly reshaped over time during the integration process (Algan *et al.* 2012: 5). It has been noted that the ideal of multiculturalism stems from the principle of extending recognition to migrants and minority cultures (Modood *et al.* 2006: 26).

In terms of institutional policies, multiculturalism refers to policies that provide migrants and/or minorities not only with recognition of cultural distinctions, but also with sufficient resources and facilities to maintain these distinctions following principles of individual equality (Koopmans 2013: 157; Adida *et al.* 2016: 172). In this research, following Wright and Bloemraad, I consider multicultural policies to be 'specific government policies designed to positively recognize

diversity and help minorities maintain cultural and religious practices while integrating them into public life' (2012: 78). Such policies, in principle, aim at reducing both groups' inequality, and negativity towards cultural differences (Uberoi and Modood 2013).

Theoretically, if multiculturalism is the dominating approach/philosophy characterizing a state's institutional context of reception, these states' institutions would, then, logically pursue a variety of cultural recognition policies in interacting with migrants. This takes place structurally in different domains, such as employment and education, where institutional arrangements provide migrants with resources, rights, and facilities needed for attaining their culture of origin.

Hence, in this research, multiculturalism is one form of the institutional context of reception, or the system, which includes a variety of institutional arrangements that are developed to celebrate cultural and diversity rights (Koopmans 2013: 148). Cultural and diversity rights, thus, refer to the protection of cultural group rights such as religious practices, naturalization, and foreign language provision (Koomen *et al.* 2013). Multiculturalism can be also referred to as the politics of differences (Taylor 1994), or a quest for minority group rights and the recognition of disadvantaged groups (Joppke 1996: 450).

## **ii. Assimilation**

On the other hand, assimilation, as the other major institutional form of the context of reception, is the philosophy by which integration is expected to take place over time through a gradual shift from the culture of origin to the culture of destination, accompanied by higher levels of socioeconomic attainment (Alba and Nee 1997: Phalet and Swyngedouw 2003).

It has been applied as a form of forced assimilation in the past, has been expected to various degrees, and has been highly criticized (Goodman 2010; Koopmans 2013). Above all, assimilation seeks to achieve social cohesion by the erosion of cultural differences (Algan *et al.* 2012), as, in

principle, it aims at achieving overall parity in public institutions, while advocating for clear cultural and social changes in migrants behavior (Alba and Foner 2015). It is understood as the absorption of minorities into the ‘would be’ sociocultural mainstream, along with the relegation of any cultural or religious difference to the private sphere (Bertossi 2006: 5).

If assimilation is the philosophy dominating a state’s approach towards migrants (and/or minority groups), then, the general expectation is that the structured institutions of this state assimilate migrants’ cultural characteristics by trying to render them as ‘indistinguishable’ from the mainstream host society as possible (Uberoi and Modood 2013: 130; Freedman 2004). Hence, diverse groups of migrants are expected to ‘melt’ into the host society’s culture through an ‘inter-generational process of cultural, social, and economic integration’ (Algan *et al.* 2012: 4).

Assimilation does not materialize in just one form, it rather takes different forms based on the domain it targets. On that basis, in one of the foundational works on assimilation, Gordon identified seven stages of assimilation, also seen as forms of assimilation: cultural assimilation, which he also referred to as acculturation; structural assimilation, which involves access to organizations and institutions; marital assimilation or amalgamation; identificational assimilation, which denotes the ‘creation of a sense of peoplehood at the societal level’ (1964: 72); attitudinal receptional assimilation (absence of prejudice in the host society); behavioral receptional assimilation (absence of discrimination in the host society); and finally, civic assimilation (Gordon 1964: 71-72). Drawing on these stages, this thesis focuses on cultural, attitudinal, and behavioral assimilation.

### C. Societal context of reception

Building on the thesis's conceptualization of sociocultural integration as a notion that subsumes dimensions that are not institutionally structured through markets or political processes and institutions (Algan *et al.* 2012: 21), but rather seen in social contacts and cultural maintenance (Alba and Nee 2003; Damstra and Tillie 2016), and based on the main integration theories outlined in Chapter Three, including Berry's acculturation theory (1997) and Granovetter's (1973) approach of strong and weak ties, the role of the host society leaps out as a fundamental factor in the understanding of the social and cultural aspects of migrant integration. The basic criteria of sociocultural integration, outlined previously in chapter three, whether related to social contacts or cultural maintenance, rely heavily on that host society.

The immediate ways in which migrants are either accepted or excluded, as well as the intensity of personal interactions play a pivotal role in shaping the context of reception (Stepick and Dutton Stepick 2009: 2), and subsequently integration. In this regard, the role of the host society has been emphasized in previous literature (Gordon 1964; Reitz 2002; Van Tubergen 2006; Karlsen and Nazroo 2013; Torrekens and Jacobs 2015; Maliepaard and Schacht 2018), which generally argued that the host society influences migration outcomes inasmuch as migrants' characteristics can influence these outcomes. The host society, its value system and its prevailing attitudes towards migrants, is also central to migrant integration, with different opinions and behaviors of that host society are decisive for the integration of migrants (Council of Europe 1995). For example, it has been argued that the host society can restrict migrants' access to socialize and mingle with members of that host society through acts of social exclusion (Karlsen and Nazroo 2013: 690). Thus, following this line of argumentation, the level of intergroup relationships between members

of the host society and migrants depends heavily on this societal context of reception (Kinket and Verkuyten 1999).

However, the role of the host society did not receive adequate attention, and has been generally underemphasized in academic studies related to migrant integration, particularly Muslim migrants. In this regard, Gordon (1964) and Reitz (2002) emphasize the role of the host society in successful integration, but have not sufficiently engaged with the topic empirically. While identifying different types of assimilation, Gordon argues that the attitudinal and behavioral assimilation, on the part of the host society, which involves the absence of prejudice and discrimination, is crucial for successful assimilation (Gordon 1964). Nevertheless, he did not demonstrate how this role of the host society takes place in migrants' daily lives.

In light of the significance of this role played by the host society, the relationship between migrants and members of the host society becomes key determinant of a rather more positive or a negative context of reception (as will be shown empirically in Chapter Seven). Such relationship depends highly on the host society's perception of migrants, which is, in fact, conceived as an important part of the context of reception (Portes and Borocz 1989; Portes and Rumbaut 2006). This role of the host society depends on the nature of pre-existing ethnic or race relations and intergroup attitudes (Reitz 2002: 1007).

In practical terms, the significant role of the host society in migrant integration is captured when both groups come face-to-face in neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools, where the essence of such interactions extend beyond the personal level to impact local politics, school environments, and the sense of community in different neighborhoods (Stepick and Dutton Stepick 2009: 2-3).

Finally, it is important to note that religion, in and of itself, has been conceived by some (Foner and Alba 2008; Portes and Rumbaut 2006) as an element of the societal context of reception. Cultural characteristics or apparatus of the host society, including its religious characteristics, as well as the host society's experiences in dealing with cultural diversity (Jaworsky *et al.* 2012: 85), explain how religion can strongly shape the context of reception. On that basis, the context of reception also implies the role of religion (or lack thereof) in the host society. This is further elaborated below in this chapter in discussing the issue of secularism as a major characteristic of the host societies in the three countries of destination under study.

### **III. National Models of Integration: Countries of Destination**

This thesis is not a comparative study about the models of integration in the UK, France, and Belgium, and it does not seek to examine how each model functions. The idea of drawing on these models here is to present a brief theoretical overview about the institutional context of reception, in order to set the scene for the following empirical chapters, which demonstrates how migrants practically perceive that context of reception.

It has been argued that national models of integration may shape policy frameworks, but they do not provide satisfactory explanation for the success or failure of migrant integration (Alba and Foner 2016: 10). This section sets out to substantiate this argument, while demonstrating the institutional context of reception in the three countries under study. It posits that while national models of integration constitute a major component of the context of reception, namely the institutional context of reception, they are not the key factor to set the tone for migrant integration. Part of this argument is discussed here theoretically through the critique of each model, while the

other part will be demonstrated empirically in Chapter Seven by discussing the actual perceptions of migrants of the context of reception (the perceived context of reception).

The UK, France, and Belgium have relatively long experiences in migrant integration, based on both guest-worker migration programs as well as post-colonial movements. In general, these experiences included various institutional measures ranging from re-elaborating national identities to developing institutions, legislation, and integration policies, with the aim of incorporating cultural and religious diversity (Modood *et al.* 2006: 2).

By looking at the philosophical understanding (or approaches) of integration in the three countries under study, as well as their distinct institutional arrangements used in implementing these approaches, this section asserts that: 1) the official system clearly reflects the set of diversity rights (or lack thereof) relevant to migrants' integration; and 2) the models of integration are not homogenous, but rather each system evolves practically to embrace elements of other systems. Along these two points, a number of common characteristics appear to exist in the three countries.

## **A. An overview of the three national philosophies/approaches of integration**

### **i. The UK**

Historically, large scale immigration to the UK began in the post-war and post-colonial period, under the British Nationality Act of 1948, with Asian migrants from former colonies (in particular India and Pakistan), and the Caribbean forming the core population of foreign born newcomers to the UK. However, these waves of migration were restricted in the 1970s by the Immigration Act of 1971, only to rise again starting from the mid-1990s, being driven mainly by family reunification, economic motives, and to some extent official asylum seeking programs.

With regard to the national philosophy of migrant integration, the UK represents one of the widely known and fairly open paradigms of multiculturalism. British multiculturalism is described as ‘specific government policies designed to positively recognize diversity and help minorities maintain cultural and religious practices while integrating them into public life’ (Wright & Bloemraad 2012: 78; Koopmans 2013: 151). It has been outlined that the UK opted for the multicultural model based on its pragmatic approach to integration, compared to what is seen as compulsory, influential, and sophisticated French model (Garbaye 2005; Joly 2017; Bertossi 2011: 1569), so that the UK’s multicultural policies appear to be more accommodating, in terms of cultural and religious right to Muslims, compared to the French ones (Koomen *et al.* 2013: 198).

In the UK, integration is argued to have two main objectives: the fight against discrimination, and establishing good relations between different groups and communities (Bleich 2003). At first, the focus was on racial and ethnic difference, then, by the late 1990s it developed to include religion, which became a central element in British integration objectives (Bertossi 2011: 1569).

In short, as in most multicultural systems, multiculturalism in the UK is seen as a system of ideals, beliefs, and behaviors that recognizes individual equality and respects the presence and particularity of all diverse groups in a society, it acknowledges their sociocultural differences, and encourages their ‘continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context which empowers all within the society’ (Rosado 1996: 2). According to the British model, successful integration is best achieved by supporting a culturally pluralistic society based on the principle of coexistence of diverse cultural norms and values (Bloemraad 2011; Parekh 2002; Taylor 1994; Wright and Bloemraad 2012, qtd in Adida *et al.* 2016).

Moreover, in the UK, the state institutionalized the idea of multicultural society in the Race Relations Act of 1976 (Koenig 2005: 227). As such, theoretically, it has been argued that British

multiculturalism embodies numerous advantages which are known to have facilitated the adaptation process for migrants, by accommodating cultural norms and traits. This includes: the absence of cultural assimilation requirements for having access to rights (Heath and Demireva 2014); legislative recognition of multiculturalism; the adoption of multicultural programs in school curricula, and the funding of bilingual education; the inclusion of ethnic representation in the mandating of public media; exemptions from dress codes; the funding of religious/ethnic group organizations to support cultural activities; affirmative action in supporting disadvantaged minorities (such as binding quotas and preferential hiring) (Koopmans 2013: 152); accommodation of Islamic practices outside public institutions (call for prayers, animal slaughtering, and building Mosques); and cultural rights in public institutions (such as funding Islamic schools, mother-tongue education, right to wear headscarves at school and work). All these rights are guaranteed by legal provisions such as the 2006 Racial and Religious Hatred Act and the 2006 Equality Act (Heath and Demireva 2014: 165).

## **ii. France**

In France, as in the UK, immigration increased significantly during the post-war and decolonization (wars of liberation) period in the 1950s and 1960s. Historically, migrants to France originated mainly from North African or Maghrebian countries, in particular Algeria and Morocco, especially in the wake of Algerian independence in 1962 (Hamilton et al. 2004). Most of these migration waves embodied guest-worker or labor migration programs. However, by mid-1970s, as a result of the oil crisis, and the end of labor migration programs, the immigration pace fell heavily. This decline has been maintained up until the mid-1990s when flows of migrants started rising again by 1997.

France is known for its republican assimilationist model of integration, with assimilation being a key feature of the French republican ideology (Hargreaves and Leaman 1995; Freedman 2004). The French republican system represents an example of what has been called color-blind assimilation and universal citizenship (Bertossi 2012: 248). The notion of the republic underpins the French definition of citizenship, as well as migrants' integration through citizenship. It also organizes the separation between public and private spheres (Silberman 2007; Statham 2014).

In theory, following Algan *et al.*, in France, assimilation is a process that is expected to take place over three central and sequential steps: first, different ethnic/religious groups start sharing a common mainstream culture through a process where they have equal access to socioeconomic opportunities similar to the native majority; second, this process leads to a gradual disappearance of cultural traits of the country of origin in favor of the mainstream host culture; third, 'once set in motion', the process moves 'inevitably and irreversibly' towards what is seen as a complete state of assimilation (2012: 4), with an almost complete erosion of original culture and the adoption of the mainstream culture. Hence, migrants are expected to 'melt' into the mainstream culture, through what is referred to as 'intergenerational' process of sociocultural and economic elements (2012: 4-6). This process is argued to be implemented through compulsory assimilationist policies and programs (Goodman 2010; and Koopmans 2013).

Like the UK, the French republican assimilation sought, at its origins, to secure equality and parity to all citizens, natives and migrants, believing that differences could lead to inequality. In theory, then, the rejection of cultural diversity and ethnic community did not arise because of discrimination or cultural superiority. The aim in theory was to achieve a level of equality for all individuals in the eyes of the state, so as to be able to enjoy the full set of rights provided by citizenship (Statham and Tillie 2016), such as parity at public institutions including the labor

market (Alba and Foner 2015), as well as freedom of conscience and of worship (Chelini-Pont and Ferchiche 2017). In practice, however, as we will see, migrants -and others- interpret the system as rather more prescriptive.

### **iii. Belgium**

Similar to the two other countries, Belgium, also, witnessed a post-war and post-colonial surge in its migration inflows. In the 1960s, the system was established to attract inflows of migrant guest-workers from a number of countries, mainly Morocco, Turkey, and southern Europe (Petrovic 2012). Similar to the UK and France, by the mid-1970s, Belgium started a more restrictive approach towards labor migration, and since then regular aspects of immigration has taken place mainly through family reunification and asylum seeking programs (Martiniello 2003).

With regard to the institutional system of integration, migrant integration in Belgium is not fully derived from a mere multicultural vision or from a rigid assimilation conception. It was rather positioned in the cross road of both approaches, mainly for political reasons associated with the fragmentation of the Belgian political system itself (Bousetta and Jacobs 2006: 28). The Belgian model of integration is a mix of both multiculturalism and assimilation, with each of the three federal regions of the country adhering to a different policy. In Flanders, multiculturalism is the primary model of integration, whereas in Wallonia, assimilation is adopted as the main model. Brussels, a bilingual region, has adopted a hybrid model of both assimilation and multiculturalism (Martiniello 2003; Jacobs 2004; Statham and Tillie 2016). Hence, Belgium does not represent a homogenous model of integration, but rather a model that comprises different approaches in different regions of the country (Martiniello 2003).

In accordance with that, what specifies the Belgian model is that policies of integration have been decentralized to come under the authority of each region, based on case by case situation (Modood *et al.* 2006), leaving the federal government as just a regulator (Erk 2003; Kaya 2012).

Being characterized by elements of both multicultural and assimilationist approaches of migrant integration, and given that the system reflects the theoretical understanding of assimilation, along with recognizing diverse ethnic cultures and identities in the private sphere (Phalet and Swyngedouw 2003: 4), the Belgian model of integration comprises a variety of rights for migrants and/or minorities. In general, Belgium's understanding of integration stresses rights related to social inclusion, cultural adaptation in the public sphere, and protection from discrimination.

In other words, the set of migrants' rights embedded in the Belgian system is mainly shown in the state's general approach to integration. Integration in Belgium, thus, touches on three main principles: assimilation; promotion of emancipation and pluralism; and finally respect of cultural diversity (Bousetta and Jacobs 2006; Kaya 2012). As such, assimilation, is understood in political debates in Belgium as a compulsory principle, where migrants should comply with the demand of the public order, but accompanied by the promotion of pluralism as necessary for migrants to become compatible with the host culture, and finally, such system emphasizes clear respect for cultural diversity which is seen as mutual enrichment in all other domains of social life (Kaya 2012: 32).

## **B. General critique of the three models**

As noted earlier, however, despite that these are three clear models, there are strong similarities. This can be seen in three key points: 1) official institutional arrangements related to migrant integration are not practically implemented as they are politically or philosophically understood

(Favell 2003); 2) different philosophical understandings of integration underemphasize the role of agency, such as that of the host society, and therefore they make little difference to the attitude of the host society towards migrants in the three countries; 3) in reality, a national model of integration is not homogenous (fully multicultural or fully assimilationist), but evolves over time to embrace elements of other models (Joppke and Morawska 2002; Koopmans *et al.* 2006), which leads to some sort of ambiguity in implementing each model.

## **i. Common points of critique**

While the three models in the UK, France, and Belgium thus represent three distinct approaches of integration – multiculturalism, assimilation, and a hybrid model – they can be critiqued on a number of common points. As outlined earlier in this chapter, official national models of integration constitute an important part of the context of reception, but they do not provide a satisfactory explanation for the success or failure of migrant integration (Duyvendak *et al.* 2013; Alba and Foner 2016). This can be attributed to the following intertwining aspects:

The *first* is seen in the general notion of ‘models of integration’ itself. The concept ‘models of integration’ emerges to reflect a narrow understanding (or falls short of capturing) of the actual process of migrant integration on the ground, as it seems to focus more on ideals and principles than on the nuances of the complicated process of integration and its volatile circumstances. Indeed, the general conceptual understanding of the models of integration, in and of itself, does not provide relevant frameworks of analysis for different national contexts of reception (Betrossi 2011; Duyvendak *et al.* 2013; Billiet *et al.* 2003).

The UK, France, and Belgium are not exceptional. In such models, gaps between ideals and outcomes and between theory and practice reflect the challenges of relying on structural models

of integration in assessing the countries' actual performance towards migrants, and in drawing conclusions about general policies of integration.

Accordingly, a *second* important critique, which is closely linked to the first, questions the homogeneity of official integration models. Being non-homogenous, in principle, is not likely to be regarded as a point of weakness for an integration system or policy, however, when the lack of homogeneity involves elements of contradiction, such system can be undermined. To speak of French republican assimilationist and British multicultural models, Bertossi, for example, argue that such models are not homogenous, as their ideals differ largely from their social, political, and institutional implementation, and as such, these ideals allow for contradicting principles to be claimed in the name of the same model (2011: 1573).

As such, these models become ambiguous, in the most part, where theoretical and political ambiguity of assimilation and multiculturalism makes them easily manipulated by different actors who seek different outcomes. For example, advocates of certain policy/ideology/philosophy, across the spectrum of public and political domain, can easily use such ambiguity in bending the model's ideals to fit their own narratives, this involves important issues such as the different interpretations of secularism.

A *third* critique, which is built on the two previous ones, lies mainly in how the interpretations of the 'models of integration', such as French republican assimilation or British multiculturalism, underemphasize the role of agency (i.e. on the part of the host society) and collective interests in shaping relevant institutional arrangements (Bleich 2003; Brubaker 1992). By looking at numerous institutional policies/programs of migrant integration, we can discern that little attention has been given to the role of the actual players in the integration equation, mostly the host society. In this context, critics of existing conceptualizations of national model of integration have argued that the

notion of ‘models of integration’, itself, appears as self-evident, which ‘provides an account of a social world with no agency but a top-down elite-driven structure’ (Mathieu 2000, qtd in Bertossi 2011: 1563). This substantiates why the issue of understanding the host society of a country of destination based on its official philosophical model of integration is highly questioned in this thesis.

These models, thus, are not the starting point of integration, but the result of the negotiations on the meaning and the solution of integration in Europe (Bertossi 2011). These points of critique also demonstrate that examining these different national models of integration is actually an empirical question (Joppke 2009; Brubaker 2010; Alba and Foner 2016), or, as I demonstrate in Chapter Seven, a question of empirical perception and not of philosophical approach.

By looking at a more precise critique of each country’s system, we further set the stage for the empirical analysis.

## **ii. Countries of destination**

### **1. The UK**

*First*, in general terms, one of the main facets of critique of the British multicultural system is that it fell short in delivering what the system vowed to achieve. Drawing on studies aimed at evaluating multicultural policies in Europe, Koopmans concludes that the general outcomes of multicultural policies reflect positive effects in political integration, but had little effect on socioeconomic integration, and, most importantly, had a negative effect on sociocultural integration (2013).

More specifically, despite the emphasis of the British multicultural model of an open and tolerant multicultural approach for achieving social inclusion, multiculturalism as both policy and concept

has been widely criticized (Joppke 2004; Guveli and Platt 2011). It has been argued that, in reality, multiculturalism outcomes did not reflect what the system was set out to do (Joppke 2009). It has also been outlined that the British multicultural system has overemphasized diversity and underemphasized social cohesion (Berry 2001; Joppke 2009; and Manning and Georgiadis 2012), falling short, thus, on inclusion.

In political and public debates, the British system has been criticized for allocating numerous resources for diversity rights and cultural retention (for migrants/minorities) at the expense of social cohesion, that is manifested in larger interethnic relations, successful patterns of weak ties, with, at least, indications of cultural changes. In this sense, it is argued that multiculturalism offers migrants more than it asks from them in return. The critique of multicultural integration policies has been focused on how these policies allow for group-based mobilization rather than supporting individual citizenship (Joppke, 2009; Koopmans *et al.* 2006).

Accordingly, critics of multiculturalism have argued that what is seen as exaggerated recognition of diversity fosters separate communities. This, in turn, is said to reinforce preservation of some traditional practices among migrants that might run counter to social cohesion, and may play a role in developing unwillingness to participate in the mainstream social life (AlSayad and Castle 2002; Scalvini 2013; Heath and Demireva 2014).

On that basis, if the purpose of the multicultural approach in the UK is to help migrants maintain cultural and religious practices while facilitating their integration into public life (Wright and Bloemraad 2012: 78), then the part of encouraging migrant integration into public life seems to have received much less attention than what it was expected to get within the British multicultural approach (Joppke 2009; Manning and Georgiadis 2012).

*Second*, on the other hand, in the UK, the attitude and behavior of the host society towards migrants, as well as their levels of social interactions does not reflect the philosophical ideals of multiculturalism in the UK, or the purpose of the set of rights and benefits that the model comprises (Alba and Foner 2016; Bertossi 2011; Joppke 2009).

Despite the range of diversity rights and tolerance emphasized in the British multicultural system, the British public is argued to hold very different positions towards certain groups of migrants (such as Muslims) than what would be predicted by multiculturalism. Negative media rhetoric and public discourses towards migrants (and/or minorities), along with acts of discrimination and prejudice all are factors which, when combined together, can reflect the general host society's behavioral framework towards migrants (Reitz 2002; Stepick and Dutton Stepick 2009). In this respect, Joppke, for example, argues that the most 'deceptive' thing to expect in the UK is 'respect and recognition' (Joppke 2009: 470).

Overall, Multiculturalism in the UK has been criticized for not focusing on the real origins of social divisions and causes of inequality, and instead, being focused on issues such as 'saris, steel bands and samosas' (Modood and May 2001; Modood and Ahmad 2007: 188), giving minimal attention to the interactions between migrants and members of the host society, or to the face-to-face frictions that might take place due to the overemphasized acts of cultural maintenance coupled with unwelcoming attitudes of the host society.

*Third*, based on the above aspects of critique, and in filling the gap between ideals and outcomes, the British system evolved to embrace elements of other models of integration. This is signaled mainly through political narratives that started emphasizing issues such as social cohesion, shared values, citizenship and national identity (Cantle 2012; Rietveld 2014). On that, scholars have argued that British multiculturalism is not fully homogenous, involving pure multicultural policies,

but rather has shifted to embrace new approaches, such as a new civic integration approach (Joppke 2007; Goodman 2010), or ‘civic rebalancing’ (Meer and Modood 2007: 473). The model, thus, started adopting ideals/principles of other philosophies of integration, which can be seen in the increase in hybridity and the decrease in the homogeneity of Multiculturalism.

Because of the challenges facing multiculturalism in the UK, including the critiques in public and political debate about its controversial outcomes (Heath and Demireva 2014; Joppke 2009), scholars and politicians have been encouraged to call for a shift in the multicultural system towards a more assimilationist model (Pilkington 2008; Vasta 2007).

As a whole, some (Modood 2005; Parekh 2000) perceive the work done in the UK, mainly on the issue of morphing the institutional arrangements to focus less on cultural diversity and more on shared values and social cohesion, as an attempt to move away from the current traditional approach of multiculturalism to a more ‘public normative conception of multiculturalism’ (Bertossi 2011: 1569). As such, while the UK has traditionally embodied a multicultural approach of integration, other scholars argue that it is shifting to diversity approach (Schiller 2017). In filling the gap between ideals and outcomes, diversity, herein, refers to a pragmatic combination of a variety of ideas about integration/migration policies synthesized under the notion of diversity (Schiller 2017: 268).

## **2. France**

Similar to British multiculturalism, the general critique of the French model is that its assimilationist policies similarly have not led to assimilationist outcomes (Brubaker 2010: 534), and that for a number of different reasons, integration in France is challenged by limited social cohesion and distinct cultural differences between various ethnic groups.

More specifically, while the ideals of the French assimilationist model were meant to secure equality and parity to all citizens, in order to be able to enjoy the full set of rights provided by citizenship (Statham and Tillie 2016), its implementation has not been smooth. Scholars have critiqued the French assimilationist model strongly with respect to a number of issues including: its heavy reliance on a cultural-based approach, while being dismissive towards diversity (Lefebvre 2010); its influential (and/or vigorous) assimilationist character; its actual outcomes in attaining the model's ideals of cultural assimilation and social cohesion; and finally, what is seen as its 'single dimension' approach of cultural assimilation (Lefebvre 2010; Koomen *et al.* 2013; Lazear 1999; Algan *et al.* 2012: 14).

Thus, in contrast to the British multiculturalism, it has been argued that the French assimilationist model overemphasizes the potential of cultural change, and underemphasizes the impact of diversity, pluralism and multiple group membership (Alba *et al.* 2012; Crul and Mollenkopf 2012: 56; Koomen *et al.* 2013). The French system in practice has thus advocated for substantial cultural changes among migrants, without focusing on the actual characteristics of those migrants needed to attain such changes, or considering the impediments (in the context of reception) that might forestall the integration process at its origin.

French *laïcité*, or secularism, forms a foundational feature of the French national model of integration. Although secularism is addressed extensively in the following section, it is important to note the critique of *laïcité* in this context. One of which is what is seen as contradictory interpretations of the notion of *laïcité* itself. It is argued to be ambiguous about pivotal issues such as the boundary distinguishing public and private spheres, and the contradictory nature of the secular principles of the recognition of all religions equally in the eyes of the state, on the one hand, and the exclusion of religion from the public sphere on the other (Kastoryano 2004; 2006).

On the other hand, being characterized as single dimensional, in academic debate, the French model is argued to be seen by migrants as an ‘either-or’ choice, so that they either shift their membership (and identity) to the majority, or preserve their community’s membership (Crul and Mollenkopf 2012: 56). This is strongly linked to the overemphasis of cultural changes in the French model, which can generate a sort of oppositional identity among migrants, thinking of reactive ethnicity. Consequently, this can lead to exacerbating differences instead of minimizing them, through provoking a reactive mobilization against assimilatory pressures (Brubaker 2010: 534).

Finally, although the French model is premised upon equality for all citizens, regardless of origin, there remains low level of acceptance of migrants among the French public (Kaya 2012). Those of non-French origins continue to face discrimination and stigmatization in their daily life (Koomen *et al.* 2013; de Rudder *et al.* 2000).

In short, structural and institutional assimilation in France, it is argued, has not been reflected in similar behavioral and, what Gordon (1964) referred to as, attitudinal assimilation on the part of members of the host society (Kaya 2012; Brubaker 2010). Thus, following Gordon (1964), it is unlikely for migrants to be fully integrated in such circumstances (Algan *et al.* 2012; Crul and Mollenkopf 2012).

### 3. Belgium

Given that the main feature of the Belgian model of integration is its nature as a hybrid of both multicultural and assimilationist approaches, that fragmented practical implementation of the policy is perhaps not surprising.

*First*, in academic literature, the Belgian system has not been seen as systematic or institutional, but rather as fragmented along double perspective from a material and linguistic point of view,

and portrayed differently across the three regions (Modood *et al.* 2006: 27). As such, in practice, it is argued that fragmented migration policy is the result of fragmented institutional character of the country itself, which, in turn, hinders effective negotiation and cooperation of integration policies. Indeed, policy making in Belgium is undermined by conflicting political agendas across multiple local, regional and national levels of governance (Billiet *et al.* 2003; Favell and Martiniello 1998).

*Second*, although the philosophical understanding of integration in Belgium stands at the cross-road between assimilation and multiculturalism (where Wallonia is inspired by the French assimilationist tradition, and Flanders by the Dutch/British multicultural approach), in practice, these two approaches are argued to have less empirical differences than expected from how they are politically or ideologically portrayed (Billiet *et al.* 2003; Modood *et al.* 2006).

In this regard, previous analysis of the Belgian model(s) of integration emphasizes that both approaches (multiculturalism and assimilation) in the three regions have led, in most part, to similar outcomes with regard to migrant inclusion (Kaya 2012; Modood *et al.* 2006). On the one hand, scholars argue that multicultural recognition, in Flanders and parts of Brussels, has been ambiguous, by stressing the politics of identity and cultural particularity which embraces cultural diversity, while at the same time holding protectionist character in the public sphere (Billiet *et al.* 2003: 243). On the other hand, the assimilationist approach, in Wallonia and other parts of Brussels, is portrayed to be ethnically and religiously blind, denying migrants their cultural and religious particularity, and not introducing a viable alternative for cultural accommodation of those migrants. This is said to have migrants (including Muslims) to develop their own alternative strategies of integration, mainly through ethno-cultural and religious institutions (Kaya 2012: 111-114), again thinking of reactive ethnicity (and/or reactive religiosity).

*Third*, as in the UK and France, in Belgium also the host society does not uphold its role in embracing the ideals of assimilation and multiculturalism. The attitudinal and behavioral context of the Belgian host society towards migrants cannot be explained by either multiculturalism or assimilation (Billiet *et al.* 1990; Phaet and Swyngedouw 2003).

For example, in multicultural Flanders, as opposed to what the official system stipulates, segments of society, it is argued, do not embrace cultural diversity, based on their cultural protectionist character (Van Houtte and Stevens 2009: 233). Whether in Flanders, Wallonia, or Brussels, it has been outlined that, while mainstream Belgian society accepts some degree of cultural diversity in the private domain, the public expression of cultural diversity creates unease between certain groups of migrants (mainly Muslims) and the Belgian hosts (Phalet and Swyngedouw 2003: 16).

In addition, it is relevant to point out here that the fragmentation of the Belgian system has its impact on the host society as well. In this regard, it has been argued that fragmented integration policies contributed to the development of fragmented regional identity politics among the native host society, which, in turn, have negatively affected the acceptance of certain groups of migrants (De Raedt 2004; Billiet *et al.* 2003).

Finally, similar to what has been outlined above about the British system, the Belgian model extended its hybridity to the regional level, where each region started embracing elements of other regions. In practice, for example, Wallonia slowly opened up to issues linked to cultural diversity, whereas Flanders focused more on social and economic considerations in its integration policies. In parallel, Brussels continued developing its own approach by combining elements from the two available models (Martiniello 2003: 230).

Having explored the issue of the national models of integration as a defining element of the context of reception, and going briefly through different aspects of critique across these models (in the UK, France, Belgium) it is crucial, in order to complete the theoretical picture, to move the discussion towards the final, and most significant, characterizing element of the context of reception; secularism.

## **IV. Secularism in Relation to Muslim Migrants**

### **A. Introduction**

Since religion is a central element in Muslim migrants' integration, and also is argued to be, itself, a context of reception (Mooney 2013), then the principle of secularism -which is central in Europe- is key in this thesis. Only by understanding secularism in Europe, can we have a full picture of the context of reception, and how its components can actually function with regard to Muslim migrants' integration.

In this section, I demonstrate the significance of secularism in shaping the context of reception for Muslim migrants across two major points: A) an overview about the common interpretations of European secularism, and the main aspects where the establishment of Muslim migrants questions the principles of secularism; and B) a brief discussion, on the countries of destination level, about secularism in relation to Muslim migrants, which is constructed on both domains the institutional and the societal in each of the three countries under study.

Secularism constitutes a profound element of both institutional and societal context of reception in the UK, France, and Belgium. Given that the discussion of the context of reception in general in this chapter is constructed over these two dimensions, the institutional and the societal, similarly, the discussion of secularism in this section will follow.

The significance of drawing on secularism in discussing the context of reception is not about the essence of secularism, in and of itself, as a foundational feature of modern Europe, but it is rather about how the reactions of the host country and society to what is seen as challenges facing secularism that have emerged by the presence of a large number of Muslim migrants.

On the system side, it has been argued that secularism plays an important role in setting the discursive context of multiculturalism and assimilation (Modood *et al.* 2006). And on the society side, as outlined earlier in this chapter in demonstrating the societal context of reception, secularism is a central feature of European societies. Cultural characteristics or apparatus of the host society, including its religious characteristics, as well as the host society's experiences in dealing with cultural diversity (Jaworsky *et al.* 2012: 85), explain how the position towards religion, namely here secularism, can shape the context of reception. In short, secularism, throughout this thesis, is used as an important tool in interpreting the role of the host society in the overall migrant integration process.

Moreover, through the understanding of secularism in each country of destination, religion forms an important part of the context of reception in Europe. In this thesis, such understanding is vital on two levels: first, in conceptualizing and clarifying the context of reception as a whole, which constitutes the third domain of theories in this research (besides religiosity and integration); and second, in setting the stage for the empirical data demonstrated in the following chapters, specifically with regard to migrants' views and perception towards the countries of destination and their host societies.

Conceptually, secularism in Europe has been widely understood based on three fundamental principles: the exclusion of religion from the public sphere (Cesari 2004); the separation between church and state, or between religion and politics (Bruce 2011; Joppke 2015; Alba and Foner

2015); and finally the state's recognition and acceptance of all religions based on the principle of state's neutrality towards all religions, and the equality of rights and duties of all citizens regardless of their religious identification (Kastoryano 2004; Willaime 2015). Overall, as Casanova (2006) argued, secularism indicates both the decline in the societal power and significance of religion (and/or religious institutions), and the general decline of religious beliefs and practices among individuals.

These interpretations of secularism have been known to be stable and taken for granted in public and political debates in Europe for quite a long time. However, the establishment of a large number of Muslim migrants in Europe (especially during the post war and post-1974 period) exposed a number of principles of European secularism to serious challenges and questions (Kastoryano 2004), and, to some extent, has destabilized the public perception of European secularism. This argument revolves around the idea that Muslims' religious values are seen as potentially conflicting with secular values (Banfi *et al.* 2016).

In accordance with that concern, in Western public discourse, Muslims are regarded as the representative of the 'other' in contemporary democratic polities (Gianni and Clavier 2012; Modood *et al.* 2006, Parekh 2008). Such representation can be attributed to how Muslims in Europe are seen to possess fixed cultural-religious attributes, which is argued to run against the basic ethos of western democracies, most importantly secularism (Banfi *et al.* 2016: 3).

Another important factor in this representation of Muslim migrants in Europe can be traced back to perceived cultural threat that is posed by the presence of Muslim migrants. In general, perceived intergroup threats, such as symbolic threat and negative stereotyping, are strong predictors of negative attitudes towards migrants, and that such forms of threats lead to prejudice, regardless of whether or not the threat is real (Stephan and Stephan 1996). This is understood within the

interpretation of the theory of cultural threat (Velasco-González *et al.* 2008; Stephan and Stephan 1996; Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007), which, in this thesis, forms an important theoretical guidance in understanding the challenge that Muslim migrants seem to represent to European secularism (as will be shown empirically in Chapter Eight).

The cultural threat represented by the presence of large number of Muslim migrants has been extensively argued in a growing body of literature (Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007; Dagevos and Gijsberts 2007; Kamans *et al.* 2009; Kaya 2012; Bohman and Hjerm 2014; Phalet *et al.* 2013; Torrekens and Jacobs 2015; Alba and Foner 2016) to be one of the main factors of the negative representation of Islam and Muslims. In this context, Muslims are perceived to be threatening European cultural norms and values including secularism (Scroggins 2005). Most importantly, the perception of this threat (as opposed to the objective or real threat) is argued to provoke prejudice, discrimination and negative attitudes towards Muslim migrants (Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007; Velasco-González *et al.* 2008).

Overall, following the emergence into public sphere of Muslims' religious and cultural traditions, many questions were raised. These included issues such as confining religion to the realm of the private sphere, social claims based on religion, and separation of church and state. However, these challenges associated with secularism are not only related to the criticism of Muslims for not abiding by secular norms and principles, but also pertain to the controversial debate about which interpretation or principle of secularism should be recognized most strongly in the society. As a result, secularism – and the host society's perception of the notion as being under threat – has become a key issue relating to the integration of Muslim migrants.

## B. Overview on European secularism

By and large, secularism has been regarded over three main dimensions: first, it has been known as the elimination of the social influence of religion in the public sphere, where it possesses an ‘ideological function’ that is most likely manifested in different political and cultural narratives (Cesari 2004: 43-44); second, the ‘universality’ of secularism relies on the principle of neutrality of the state towards all religions. This neutrality shies away from religion, but at the same time ensures recognition and freedom of conscience (Kastoryano 2004: 1243). As such, a secular state is a state that involves the secular character of public institutions, but is neutral and impartial towards any religion among its population. Thus, it does not necessarily mean that the society of that state has to be secular, as people can have different religious affiliations (Willaime 2015: 785); and third, secularism is also interpreted as the separation between church and state, or religion and politics. The latter is referred to as the respective autonomy of the state and religion, which means both the freedom of the State in relation to religions, and the freedom of religions in relation to the State (Bruce 2011; Joppke 2015; Alba and Foner 2015; Willaime 2015).

In general, these interpretations are key in understanding how religion shapes the context of reception, and in particular how secularism is vital for defining the host society and its attitudes towards Muslim -or more religious- migrants on the one hand, and on the other hand, how Muslim migrants practically perceive the societal context of reception by which they are received and accommodated.

The establishment of a large number of Muslim migrants in Europe has exposed a number of the basic principles of European secularism to serious challenges and questions (Kastoryano 2004). In this regard, I restrict my discussion to two main aspects of critique of European secularism

representing these challenges: 1) the blurred boundaries distinguishing the public and private spheres; and 2) the controversial interpretation to the notion of secularism between the principles of ‘recognition’ and ‘exclusion’.

- 1) With regard to public-private sphere distinction, in line with the principle of the state’s neutrality, the public sphere in Europe, in the most part, is meant to be devoid of any sort of religious manifestation (Asad 2003). The aim was to provide necessary protection for various segments of the society from presumable cultural intrusion or disruption, so as to render that public space as neutral and impartial as possible. Accordingly, it is argued that confining religion within the private sphere (or what is referred to as the privatization of religion) is seen as a principle that protects individuals from what is called ‘the invasive power’ of religion (Fadil 2013: 734).

In this context, given that these issues are mainly contextualized in relation to Muslim migrants’ integration, it is worth mentioning that what is referred to as ‘privatized’ Muslim religiosity does not carry the same connotation of ‘privatized’ religion identified in Christianity (Ammerman 2007). Thus, the notion of religious ‘individualization’ is unlikely to be applied to Muslim migrants in western societies (Peter 2006; Jensen 2011).

As such, the presence (and in certain cases official recognition) of Islam in Europe has questioned the place of religion in the public sphere (Kastoryano 2004: 1247). For the significance of the public sphere, even Muslims’ integration has been referred to as their inclusion in the public sphere (Salvatore 2004: 1014). The establishment of Islam has been argued to disrupt the ideological function characterizing secularism with regard to the presence of religion in the public sphere (Cesari 2004: 44; Bousetta and Jacobs; Torrenkens and Jacobs 2015).

Much of the substantiation of this idea rotates around the argument that for Muslims there is no delineation of the public and the private spheres (Modood *et al.* 2006; Ammerman 2007), or, more

precisely, that the public sphere for Muslims is quite different than how Western countries and societies perceive it in terms of the role of religion in the society (Norris and Inglehart 2002). Also, others attributed this to what they see as the ambivalence of secular norms in the public sphere (Salvatore 2004). In this regard, scholars have underlined that the implications of the establishment of Muslims in Europe involve issues such as the common debate of church-state separation, public-private delineation, and Muslims' identity. These issues, thus, are important in explaining how secularism and Muslim migrants mutually interact in a western context of reception (Modood *et al.* 2006).

For example, Muslims' public visibility is seen as a critique to the secular version of the public sphere (Gole 2002: 173), triggering contentious debates about the presence and visibility of Islam in the European public sphere, which is argued to have a negative impact on Muslims' general representation in Europe (Torrenkens and Jacobs 2015; Koomen *et al.* 2013; Bousetta and Jacobs 2006). The impact of Muslims' religiosity on issues such as premarital relationships, sexual liberties, alcohol, etc. all have a presence in the public sphere in the countries of destination (this will be empirically elaborated in Chapter Six). In practice, a number of Muslims' traditions and religious claims expose the blurred distinction between public and private spheres in the European context of reception, on various issues including: the successive headscarf (or hijab) controversies and the regulation of the face-veil (niqab) in France and Belgium; debates on ritually slaughtered meat in the UK; Islamic education and schools funding in the UK; and claims for prayer rooms in workplaces in Belgium (Reitz *et al.* 2017; Fadil 2013).

On the basis of such situations, scholars have argued that public spaces in Europe are shaped by 'collective narratives' which mostly represent Islam in terms of 'fear, distrust and hostility' (Modood *et al.* 2006: 32). They have also emphasized that, because Islam is seen in Europe as a

‘legitimizing ideology’, certain claims of Muslim migrants (such as sharia courts) may also destabilize the European perception of church-state separation, and subsequently public-private distinction (Ferrari 2012; Joppke 2015: 132).

- 2) As for the controversial interpretation of secularism between the principles of recognition and exclusion, it is important noting that exclusion refers to the exclusion of religion from the public sphere in the context of state’s neutrality towards all religions (Kastoryano 2004), while recognition is the principle that upholds the ideal of acceptance and equality of all religions in the eyes of the state (Dillon 2010; Alba and Foner 2008; Yegenoglu 2012; Joppke 2015). The latter brings religion straight back to the public sphere for equal representation, especially for Muslim migrants (Kastoryano 2004: 1245). A key part of the controversial interpretation of secularism takes place within the understanding of these two principles.

In explaining both principles, it has been argued, on the one hand, that the exclusion of religion from the realm of the public sphere is the principle that stresses the importance of confining religion within the private sphere, and emphasizing a clear separation between church and state, or between religion and politics. Recognition of all religions based on state’s neutrality, on the other hand, is the principle upholding the idea of acceptance of all religions. From this perspective, freedom of worship is endorsed, as well as the acknowledgment of the equality of all religions in the eyes of the state (Dillon 2010; Alba and Foner 2008; Yegenoglu 2012; Joppke 2015). However, interpretation of recognition in secularism is not restricted only to rights and freedoms, but also comprises the cooperation between the state and religious authorities (which is something that is not quite common in Islamic traditions) (Ferrari 2016).

Despite the nuances in the way by which ‘exclusion’ and ‘recognition’ are understood across Europe, this two-dimensional approach is questioned (as my empirical data demonstrate in further

chapters) if the principles of secularism are seen in relation to Muslim migrants. With the existence of blurred distinction of public-private spheres (Ammerman 2007), the principle of exclusion, thus, is argued not to be properly followed, when it comes to Muslim migrants (Kastoryano 2004), due to the existence of Muslims' religious expressions in the public sphere. In addition, 'recognition', ensured by secularism in Europe, did not only brought official acceptance to Islam in Europe, but also provided Muslim migrants (minorities) with numerous resources, benefits, and privileges in both multicultural and assimilationist models, which, in turn, stimulate the presence of religion in the public sphere. As such, the principle of recognition entails issues including, for example, rights to obtain legal status, to build mosques, to freely establish their organizations (Ferrari 2016; McLoughlin and Cesari 2016), to receive public funds for Islamic organization and Islamic schools, along with other accommodative arrangements such as allowing *halal* meat at schools or applying flexibility on the calendar of Islamic holidays.

On the other hand, based on the above mentioned two aspects of critique to secularism, as being questioned by the presence of large number of Muslim migrants in Europe, countries of destination started perceiving this as a challenge (and in some cases a threat) to their long standing understanding of European secularism, and reacted with a variety of acts, narratives, debates, etc. directed towards Islam and Muslims in Europe.

In literature, such reaction has been referred to as the 'consolidation of secularism' (Reitz *et al.* 2017) by both the country of destination and its host society. It is a reactive mobilization materialized in a number of forms including heated public and political debates on protecting secularism (particularly the place of religion in the public sphere), restrictive measures, on the system level (the institutional level), towards different forms of public expression of religion, and a rise of calls for revisiting the essence of secularism (or re-conceptualizing secularism on the basis

of the new conditions and circumstances), along with the development of discriminatory attitudes on the society level.

In further elaborating this consolidation of secularism, it has been argued that the revival of notions like ‘the secular state’ and ‘western civilization’ in European public debates emanates from a self-resistant reaction to the unfamiliarity of the presence of the ‘other’ represented here by Muslim migrants and their religious traditions (Asad 2003: 160). The presence of Muslim migrants – with visible markers of their religiosity such as the hijab – in the public sphere triggered an ongoing debate about the place of Islam and Muslim migrants in the European public space, and most importantly their capacity and/or desire to integrate in a secular context of reception.

Based on these debates, scholars have argued that religion has clearly returned as a contentious issue to the public sphere in Europe (Casanova 2008: 101). This resulted in a range of contested measures ranging from constraints on public expression of religion (as in France), to the adaptation of institutions to cope with Muslims’ practices (as in the UK) (Reitz *et al.* 2017: 3). But, in parallel, it also resulted in multiple calls for revisiting and redefining the secular character of the public sphere (Fadil 2013).

On the host society level, issues such as rising discrimination and prejudice mark one of the numerous implications of this consolidation, or reactive mobilization, of secularism in Europe. It is emphasized that anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric can be traced back to issues relating to the understanding of secularism (Crul and Mollenkopf 2012). For example, visible display of religiosity in the public sphere is a key factor in reinforcing a belief among the European public about the challenges facing secularism, which, in turn, further exacerbates anti-immigrant feeling.

It is worth mentioning, here, that these different forms of consolidation of secularism –as a reaction to the cultural challenge represented by the presence of Muslim migrants- can be strongly linked to the issue of cultural threat. Building on the theory of cultural threat (Velasco-Gonzalez *et al.* 2008; Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007) and the intergroup threat theory (Stephan and Stephan 1996), the narratives and attitudes associated with the consolidation of secularism in the face of the presence of Muslim migrants imply that unwelcoming context of reception -as evidenced in anti-Muslim rhetoric and discrimination- is not only triggered by cultural differences, but also by the extent of perceived cultural threat included in these distinctions.

Finally, exposing certain principles of secularism to challenges, through the presence of Muslim migrants, triggered a debate about the core essence of secularism itself. This includes, for example, a call for multicultural politics to embrace a ‘moderate secularism’ instead of ‘radical secularism’ (Modood 2005: 3). In this regard, scholars have argued for the reconceptualization of secularism, by touching on elements such as: reconceptualization of secularism from the concepts of neutrality and strict public-private interpretation, to a moderate secularism based on institutional adjustments; reconceptualization of equality from sameness to an incorporation of respect for difference; and a pragmatic, case by case, negotiated approach to dealing with controversy and complicated interpretations of secularism (Modood *et al.* 2006: 173; Modood 2005).

### **C. Secularism across the three countries of destination**

On the country level, it is significant to note that although each country in Western Europe is considered a secular state in terms of concepts, vocabulary and institutional practices, each has its own distinctive take on the interpretations of secularism (Bhargava 2014; Birt *et al.* 2016). This section demonstrates the theoretical distinction of secularism across the three countries under

study, with a special focus on the level of the host society, to argue that irrespective of the different interpretation of secularism in the UK, France, and Belgium on the institutional (system) level, on the societal level, they all share very similar positions towards secularism, mainly in understanding and situating Muslim migrants.

Within the philosophies of multiculturalism and assimilation, the interpretation of secularism differs in each country under study based on its broad understanding of the principles of exclusion and recognition, and, most importantly, on the host society's perception and/or prioritization of these principles, especially with regard to Muslim migrants. The UK, France, and Belgium differ in their approach to secularism broadly along these lines. The UK emphasizes the recognition approach, while France adheres to the exclusion perspective. In Belgium, a hybrid approach is favored, based on the hybrid character of the country's national model of integration.

It is important to note that between both (exclusion and recognition) lies the nuances where the question of everyday secularism practically takes place with regard to Muslim migrants. Indeed, most national models of integration are a combination of exclusion and recognition, resulting in a number of different constellations. However, in practice, it has been argued that case by case situations show that the exclusion-recognition approach is not as binary as it is portrayed, but is rather more nuanced (Modood 1998). It is in the daily interaction where these nuances are seen.

## **i. The UK**

In line with multiculturalism, on the system/institutional level, the British multicultural system emphasizes the recognition approach of European secularism. It provides numerous rights, benefits, and resources to religious minorities, including Muslims and their children. This is based

on three religious dimensions: no religious discrimination; equal treatment for all religions; and positive inclusion of religious groups (Modood 2006: 42-44).

Moreover, the UK exemplifies the understanding of a secular state as the state that involves the secular character of public institutions, but does not mean that its society has to be secular (Willaime 2015). The secular sphere in the UK is argued to be reflected in the existence of secular institutions (Calhoun 2008). In addition, scholars have argued that the understanding of secularism in the UK mainly rotates around the principle of non-discrimination among religions, and the guarantees of human rights for all citizens regardless of their religion (Birt *et al.* 2016).

Regardless of the complex and ongoing debate about the place and essence of secularism in the British system, if to consider secularism as the state-religion relationship and the understanding of the role of religion in the society, then, secularism in the UK is clearly manifested in the British multicultural approach. The system has even been referred to as secular multiculturalism (Van der Veer 1994), where the state is seen as holding the traditions of a moderate secularism with an established Anglican Church, and a support of multi-faith inclusion (Birt *et al.* 2016).

On the other hand, on the host society level (or the societal context of reception), the situation with regard to secularism is quite different than what the system entails. Various signals of what has been referred to as consolidated secularism or reactive mobilization of secularism (Reitz *et al.* 2017), towards a perceived threat facing the country's secular norms, appears to evolve on the level of the host society in the UK. While the UK system is known to be openly multicultural, envisioning secularism through its multicultural institutional arrangements on the one hand, the native British host society, on the other hand, has a clear secular character (Birt *et al.* 2016). Some (De Graaf and Need 2000) define it as one of the highest secular societies in Europe.

The society is argued to emphasize the exclusion approach of secularism, and increasingly stresses/advocates the elimination of the social influence of religion, or the very absence of religion in the public sphere (Birt *et al.* 2016). The resounding question about what values and commitments bind citizens together in the UK, and the critical views about the limitation of shared values between minorities and the British native host society, are all issues closely linked to the role of religion, and mostly Islam, in the British public sphere (Calhoun 2008).

Numerous critiques of British multiculturalism can be traced back to the significance of secularism -or the understanding of the role of religion- in the British society. Secularism, within multiculturalism, implicitly affects the British public perception of Muslims, and emerges in debates addressing the extent to which Muslims are committed (or not) to what is seen as core western values of freedom, democracy, and gender equality (Modood and Ahmad 2007: 188).

The general understanding of secularism among the British host society -as the exclusion of religion from the public sphere- could be seen for example in the claim that multiculturalism is responsible for what is regarded as ‘culturally unreasonable or theologically alien demands’ made by Muslims (Modood 2006: 34; Meer and Modood 2009: 474). It is also reflected in public debates dominated by fears and threats from Muslim migrants who are seen as decisively different from an imagined British norm (Calhoun 2008). On that basis, for example, in the UK Muslims are seen as the group that is most frequently discriminated against, facing a wide range of prejudice (Abrams and Houston 2006; Karlsen and Nazroo 2013).

As will be shown empirically in Chapter Seven, due to the secular character of the British society, scholars have argued that the social distance between Muslims and the host society is wide, attributing this to the lack of acceptance of cultural/religious differences, which is epitomized in a range of behaviors, from implicit avoidance to hostility (Statham and Tillie 2016: 179).

## ii. France

In France, unlike the UK, the issue of questioning the principles of secularism by the presence of Muslim migrants, or the consolidation of secularism, could be seen on both the system level and the society level (and not only circumscribed to the society level as in the UK).

Institutionally, secularism is a foundational principle that defines the French republican system under the French notion of *laïcité*, which was officially introduced in the 1905 French law on the separation of church and state (Kastoryano 2006; Alba and Foner 2015). It is, subsequently, a pillar of the French assimilationist model of integration.

On the one hand, French *laïcité* stems from strict church-state separation and the exclusion of religion from the public sphere (Statham and Tillie 2016), where the state situates religion in the realm of the private sphere, and rejects providing recognition to cultural/ethnic distinctions (Koopmans 2013). Accordingly, the public sphere is expected to be strictly secular, and all governmental institutions should be devoid of religious matters (Leane 2011: 1042). In parallel, on the other hand, French *laïcité* emphasizes the state's neutrality towards all religions, which ensures the freedom of religious practicing and conscience for all individuals regardless of their religion (Modood and Kastoryano 2006; Statham and Tillie 2016).

Based on this neutrality, various religious rights and freedoms, which are constitutionally guaranteed, have been granted to Muslims in France. In this regard, the State leaves full freedom of conscience and worship to its citizens, who have the right to believe (or not), 'personally and collectively', in any religion, along with providing full freedom to religious groups to organize under private law (Chelini-Pont and Frechiche 2017: 310), where they can be recognized, for example, as an association of worship that receives a tax-exempt status (US Department of State

report on Human Rights practices 2018). In addition, French *laïcité* prohibits discrimination on religious basis (Chelini-Pont and Frechiche 2017). However, a different understanding (and/or application) of secularism, within the exclusion principle, undermines those religious rights.

With regard to Muslims in France, given the different character and interpretation of what is called privatized religion in Islam and among Muslims, France exemplifies the ambiguity of European secularism. In this sense, Muslim migrants in France are seen, by the system and the society, to be questioning French secularism over three aspects: being a minority, and specifically a religious one; public-private spheres distinction; and, the contradicting interpretations between the secular principles of exclusion and recognition (Freedman 2004; Kastoryano 2004; Koopmans 2004; Cesari 2004; Alba and Foner 2015).

More specifically, it has been argued that Muslim migrants' traditions raise a double challenge to secularism in France, that of a migrant minority in an assimilationist republican state which rejects the concept of minorities, and that of religion in the public sphere (Kastoryano 2004: 1246). In addition, the expectation of having a muted religious identity in the public sphere runs counter to certain visible features of Muslims' religiosity (Statham and Tillie 2016: 191). As outlined before, if the exclusion principle in secularism emphasizes the exclusion of religion from the public sphere under state neutrality, then, in dealing with Muslims, the recognition principle brings religion straight back to the public sphere for equal representation.

The headscarf issue in France is, in fact, a central example of the consolidation of secularism on the system level, which reflects the degree of controversies over exclusion-recognition interpretations, and public-private sphere delineation. Kastoryano, for example, explains that this issue thrusts Islam to the fore of the negotiations concerning the relationship between state and religion (2002). The intensity of the debate led the Conseil d'Etat in France (French highest

administrative court) to give an interpretation of *laïcité*, stating explicitly that wearing the headscarf is incompatible with the principles of French *laïcité* (Leane 2011: 1038).

Based on these vigorous complications and contested interpretations, the French system, then, has been subject to a number of changes involving secularism (Kaya 2012). These changes stem from practical necessities, and are referred to as pragmatic management of existing cultural differences in the society. They involve a slight shift in the interpretation of the notion of neutrality by expanding the space given for religious recognition (Kastorayno 2004: 1245-1246). In particular, such changes comprise institutional/official recognition of Muslims as a religious minority, providing them with facilities to further maintain their religious rights and freedoms (Weil and Crowley 1994; Bleich 2005). The establishment of the French Council of the Muslim Religion in 2003 (Conseil Français du Culte Musulman) is an important example of these changes.

Hence, these changes epitomize how the official model of integration is not fully homogenous (neither fully assimilationist nor fully multicultural), but rather has evolved to embrace elements of other models. In practice, while the French system is portrayed as highly secular assimilationist, based on these changes, it is argued to be shifting slightly towards ‘timid’ multiculturalism (Kaya 2012: 75).

On the other hand, on the societal level, French host society is known for its profound secular character (Adida *et al.* 2016). In France, Muslims’ traditions are not only affecting the institutional arrangements of the French republican system, but also have a strong impact on the French society’s perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors on the basis of perceived cultural threat. Thus, what is referred to as consolidated secularism is strongly seen in France on the societal level as well.

In this respect, discrimination and anti-immigrant rhetoric in French society is closely linked to Muslims' religious traditions and/or visible religiosity (Alba and Foner 2015; Adida *et al.* 2016; Koomen *et al.* 2013). This can be traced back to society's opposition to public display of religiosity (such as the hijab), and sensitivity in accepting claims based on religious grounds (Joppke 2015). Accordingly, there is a general belief among the French public that Muslim migrants do not want to integrate because of cultural barriers associated with their religion, and many of those barriers are linked to how Muslim migrants' traditions may run counter to French secular norms (Banfi *et al.* 2016).

The headscarf (or the hijab) debates, as an example of reactive mobilization of secularism, were not only voiced on the system (structured) level in France, but also constituted an important part of the public discourses taking place on the society level, mainly about Muslims' compatibility with what is referred to as French secular norms (Freedman 2004; Alba and Foner 2015). The public wearing of the hijab is widely interpreted among the French public as an example of Muslims' negative representation in France, being seen as 'a confirming signal of female submission to male dominance' (Adida *et al.* 2016: 89). This vigorous debate also showed how the French public was torn between defensive republicanism and pluralistic liberalism (Kastoryano 2004: 1239).

As a whole, because of issues mostly related to either challenging or consolidating secularism, it has been argued that French host society shows not only situation-based discrimination against Muslim migrants, but also a sort of cultural distaste, reflected mostly in avoidance and limited interethnic relations (Adida *et al.* 2016: 108).

### iii. Belgium

In Belgium, as in France, the negotiations of secularism because of the presence of Muslim migrants also takes place on both the institutional and societal levels. On the institutional (system) level, and based on the country's hybrid model of integration, secularism itself in Belgium is not unified, or homogenous and is rather approached from two perspectives. One adheres to the French model of *laïcité*, while the other stresses the multicultural recognition approach of religious diversity (Fadil 2013: 732). In addition, it is argued that Belgian secularism is not characterized by a strict ideological interpretation, but rather relies on an overarching principle of state's neutrality (Willaime 2015).

Secularism in Belgium provides Muslim migrants with various rights and resources to maintain their religiosity and/or religious traditions. Belgium is considered to follow what is referred to as 'active neutrality' by recognizing and financing religions, including Islam (Willaime 2015: 791-792). As a result, institutionally the country displayed an open and tolerant system in officially recognizing Islam as a religion, and Muslims as a religious group. It provides them with a number of accommodating facilities including Mosques, allowing *halal* food at schools, and flexibility for Islamic holidays (Fadil 2013). But at the same time, it has been argued that it does not show the same tolerance with other aspects of Islamic traditions (Bousetta and Jacobs 2006: 31), which reflects the impact of the French *laïcité* in organizing part of Belgian secularism.

Furthermore, similar to France, in Belgium, on the system level, it has been outlined that the presence of Muslim migrants puts into question a number of the country's secular norms and principles. Scholars have argued that such questioning involved a number of controversies: the interpretation of the secular principles of recognition and exclusion; and, public-private sphere

delineation (Bousetta and Jacobs 2006; Phalet and Swyngedouw 2003). With regard to particular institutional arrangements, issues such as the hijab for teachers at schools, and prayer rooms at workplaces exemplify such controversies in Belgium (Kaya 2012; Fadil 2013). As Fadil argues, while the principle of state neutrality in Belgium reflects ‘the state’s commitment to remaining distant from religious expressions’, the existing ‘institutional landscape’ of the country is organized according to a number of ‘ideological divisions’ (2013: 732) which revolve around the understanding of secularism in Belgium.

These issues generated an ongoing vigorous public debate about secularism and Muslim migrants in Belgium. This debate is manifested in various forms including official reports, recommendations, policy papers, etc., which addresses issues such as banning the hijab, and reconsidering the usefulness of what is referred to as reasonable accommodations provided to Muslim migrants (Fadil 2013: 730-731).

As outlined earlier while addressing the common aspects of critique of secularism in the three countries, it is important noting that this debate, in and of itself, with its various views of opponents and defenders, reflects the contradicting interpretations of recognition and exclusion. It also reflects how distinct modes of justification are invoked by destination state and society to maintain certain secular principles in Belgium (Boltanski and Thévenot 1991).

As a whole, on the institutional/official level, although Belgium follows, in general, an open and tolerant system in approaching secularism, the country’s system displays different signals of what is regarded as challenges or complications, resulting from the presence of Muslim migrants (and/or minorities), in maintaining its secular principles.

Similar to the system level, on the societal level, the issue of defending the neutral or secular public sphere against Muslim traditions -among other factors- is argued to shape the Belgian host society's perception of Muslim migrants (Fadil 2013; Kaya 2012). In other words, what is seen as challenges represented to the neutrality of the public sphere by Muslims' traditions and the independence of state and religion, affect, to a great extent, the overall perception of the Belgian host society towards Muslims and Islam (Bousetta and Jacobs 2006; Phalet and Swyngedouw 2003).

Because of the significance of secularism within Belgian society, the public expression of Muslims' religiosity remains a sensitive issue among the Belgian public (Fadil 2013). It is argued that while the status of Muslim migrants is slowly progressing towards equal opportunities, rights, and access to social provisions on the institutional/system level in Belgium, the Belgian host society is not receptive to visible religiosity among Muslim migrants, or the existence of religion in the realm of the public sphere (Phalet and Swyngedouw 2003). Studies, for example, explain that in Wallonia and Brussels, members of the host society express explicit concerns towards Muslims' religious traditions, whereas in Flanders, the concern is mainly restricted to the belief that Muslim migrants are incapable of adapting to the mainstream dominant culture (Kaya 2012: 111-112). The critique in Flanders appears not to be focused on religion per se, but rather on the degree to which Muslim migrants are adhering to the host's interpretation of secularism.

Other studies show that while most Belgian hosts accept some degree of cultural diversity in the private domain, the public expression of cultural diversity (referring here to Muslims' religious traditions) triggers a source of complications between Muslim migrants and Belgian hosts (Phalet and Swyngedouw 2003). This seems to be derived from unease in the Belgian host society, including the multicultural Flemish, toward accepting cultural/religious diversity in the public

sphere (Phalet and Swyngedouw 2003: 16). Hence, we can draw the conclusion that Belgian society displays a strong secular character despite the country's hybrid philosophical model of integration.

## **V. Conclusion**

The context of reception is a key factor for migrants' integration (Reitz 2003; Landolt and Wei Da 2005; Landolt 2008). This is attributed to its role in shaping the process by which migrants are received and accommodated, as well as its impact on migrants' characteristics, including religiosity. On that basis, it is not only migrants' own background and characteristics which play a role in their integration, but the destination country's institutional and societal context of reception as well (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006 qtd in Mooney 2013: 108).

The general framework of that context of reception is not seen as either fully positive or fully negative, it is rather a hybrid of both (Crul and Schneider 2010). In addition, the context of reception is generally formed by a combination of institutional and societal factors interacting together in what is referred to as a variable geometry shaping an overall context of reception, which contributes in channeling migrants into certain paths of integration (Portes and Borocz 1989).

In general, this chapter demonstrates theoretically the context of reception and argues that: first, the context of reception, as a whole, is often neither fully positive nor fully negative; and second, that the official system in each country, or its general approach to integration, does not provide a solid explanation for the success or failure of migrant integration. This can be attributed to the following: 1) The concept of 'models of integration' itself does not reflect an accurate analysis for the actual process of migrant integration on the ground, as it has a stronger focus on ideals and principles than on the nuances of the complicated process of integration; 2) official institutional

arrangements related to migrant integration are not practically implemented as they are politically or philosophically understood; 3) different philosophical understandings of integration underemphasize the role of agency, such as the host society, and therefore they make little difference on the attitude of the host society towards migrants; and 4) in reality, a national model of integration is not homogenous (fully multicultural or fully assimilationist), but has evolved over time to embrace some elements of other models. Hence, it has been argued that these models are considered not the starting point of integration, but rather the result of the negotiations on the meaning of the integration problem and its solution in Europe (Bertossi 2011).

Furthermore, religion - or the state-religion relationship - clearly forms a significant part of the context of reception for Muslim migrants in Europe (Foner and Alba 2008; Portes and Rumbaut 2006), with secularism – the understanding of the role of religion in society – playing a key role in shaping it. As such, it is significant to underline that although each country in Western Europe is considered a secular state, each has its own distinctive take on the interpretations of secularism. In this regard, this chapter briefly explores the issue of secularism to emphasize that irrespective of the different interpretation of secularism in the UK, France, and Belgium on the institutional (system) level, on the societal level, they all share very similar positions towards secularism, mainly in understanding and situating Muslim migrants (Norris and Inglehart 2012). It is relevant to note that this argument is crucial not only in substantiating the thesis's overall argument, about the dynamics of interaction between religiosity and the context of reception, but also in organizing and structuring the following empirical chapters.

Overall, this chapter explains theoretically part of a structural context of reception, in order to be able to distinguish it from an empirically perceived context of reception, which will be discussed in Chapter Seven. In this regard, since individual migrants may perceive the context of reception

differently than how sociologists studied it (Schwartz, *et al.* 2014), we can conclude that although the structured context of reception (addressed in this chapter) is important in understanding the conditions of migrant integration, the question of the context of reception is primarily an empirical question. This will be clearly laid out in further empirical chapters.

Finally, prior to discussing this perceived context of reception, it is important first to explore empirically one major factor in shaping it; this is migrants' religiosity in their countries of destination. Such discussion takes place over the two following chapters: Chapter Five: religiosity in migration: an everyday perspective; and Chapter Six, religiosity through the upbringing of children and the acts of cultural liberties.

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## Chapter Five

### Religiosity in Migration: An Everyday Perspective

#### I. Introduction

The previous two chapters set the scene for this one and the subsequent chapters, by demonstrating a hybrid of theoretical approaches to elucidate the dynamics of interaction between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception. This included bringing together the theories of religiosity, migrant integration, and the context of reception. This theoretical approach serves to lay the basis for the empirical discussion about religiosity and the perceived context of reception. The complexity of religiosity in an integration context was theoretically demonstrated, on the one hand, in Chapter Three, which explored the main functions of religiosity as a source of social identity, emotional support, and resources.

On the other hand, Chapter Four explored the components of the context of reception where this religiosity occurs, examining the tolerance or support in each country under study for degrees of Muslim migrants' religiosity. Ultimately, Chapter Four demonstrated that the official system in each country, or its general approach to integration, varies and does not, on its own, give us sufficient insights into the system's role in affecting the success or failure of migrant integration. In short, Chapter Four argued that although the structured context of reception is important in understanding the conditions of migrant integration, the question of the context of reception is primarily an empirical question, much more than it is a question of philosophical approaches.

Building on this theoretical picture, this chapter and the following one examine that empirical question. They examine the question of the Egyptian Muslim migrants' religiosity in the three

countries under study, whether or not it is reinforced, and how it is most significantly manifested. This is in order to be able to examine in Chapter Seven the empirically perceived context of reception. In further substantiating the dissertation's overall argument about the self-perpetuating cycle (or the cycle of reciprocal cause and effect) between barriers in the context of reception and religiosity, it is crucial to highlight how religiosity is lived among Muslim migrants in the countries of destination, and if reinforced, then how this reinforcement takes place. By doing so, on the one hand, the research explains the role of religiosity in shaping the perceived context of reception (or informants' perception of the host country and society), and on the other hand, in parallel, it also shows how religiosity is a result of this perceived context of reception.

Based on the core elements emerging from the thematic analysis of my empirical findings, and drawing on the theory of religiosity as a social identity (Maliepaard and Phalet 2012; Karlsen and Nazroo 2013), the theory of religious reliance (Hirschman 2004), and the theory of the religious dimension of coping (Radzi *et al.* 2014), this chapter, and Chapter Six argue that: first, religiosity is generally reinforced and revived among Muslim migrants in their European countries of destination; second, this reinforcement in religiosity is not manifested in just an increase of practices/rituals or a salience of specific religious activities, it is rather, conceived as what can be called a state of being which is shaped by a hybrid of both what migrants already have (i.e. traditions of the country of origin) and what they encounter in the context of reception (i.e. degree of welcome, reactions to secularism and models of integration, etc.). In other words, such religiosity is thrust to the fore in migration based on both certain pre-existing religious characteristics already held by informants before arrival, and specific conditions they encounter within the context of reception after arrival, including the impact of relocation and the migratory event itself.

Finally, the chapter argues that this religiosity -as a state of being- is manifested through five major aspects. Three of which are addressed in this chapter, while the other two will be discussed in Chapter Six. These aspects include: 1) the demarcation of *halal* and *haram*; 2) reinforced religious identity; 3) reinforced religious emotions; 4) the impact of what I refer to as acts of cultural liberties on religiosity; and 5) the role of religiosity in raising children. These points emerged strongly through thematic analysis of empirical data.

In so doing, this chapter is structured as follows: A first section presents a definition of religiosity as a state of being, then moves on to demonstrate the circumstances and/or essence of the general increase or reinforcement in this religiosity. It briefly highlights the overall reasons behind this reinforcement. A second section demonstrates the demarcation of *halal and haram* in informants' daily life, in order to set out the general scope of religiosity reinforcement. In Islamic provisions, *halal* refers to anything or any act that is known to be religiously permitted, whereas *haram* denotes anything or any act that is religiously prohibited, banned, or forbidden. This emerged as a major determinant and/or marker of religiosity among informants, and appears in the existence of a salient demarcation of *halal* and *haram* in informants' daily inner lives.

The dichotomy of *halal and haram* has always been a significant marker of Muslims' religiosity in their countries of origin. Nevertheless, in migration, especially in a western secular context, the conceptualization of *halal* and *haram* takes on an added significance, and becomes a major determinant of informants' perceptions, attitudes, and value system. Thus, arguably, it has more influence on individuals' beliefs and behaviors than in the country of origin.

A third section addresses the significance of religious identity, as one of the main aspects of the overall reinforced religiosity among Migrants. In so doing, the section empirically demonstrates the understanding of religious identity in this thesis based on the thematic analysis of my data, and

building on the delineation between religiosity and religious identity (Voas and Fleischmann 2012; Güngör *et al.* 2011), outlined in Chapter Three.

For providing a better understanding of its practical significance, the section approaches the issue of religious identity from what is referred to as a contextual or a thematic standpoint. Based on my approach of religiosity as a state of being, the section highlights specific themes and contexts where religious identity is most strongly present (or lived out in the country of destination). This approach contributes to the literature; existing literature and studies draw mainly on structured and quantitative approaches in examining religious identity. Whereas my research presents more insights about migrants' understanding and/or awareness of religious identity, by identifying themes which emerged in my data and connotes strong sense of the religious component of migrants' identity. Insofar, the findings here contribute to the existing literature as a means of further advancing the conceptualization of religious identity of Muslim migrants.

A fourth, and final, section of this chapter addresses the issue of religious emotions, or the scope of emotional reliance on religion, as another major aspect where religiosity is manifested. In so doing, the chapter presents three main themes where religious emotions are most strongly exhibited: a) linking religiosity to success in professional life and migratory experience; b) relying on religiosity in overcoming harsh time and calamities in the country of destination; and c) experiencing enhanced emotions in carrying out different rituals.

On the other hand, it is important to highlight that from this point forward the empirical data that will be presented over this chapter, and the following ones, will not be organized on a country level basis (unlike the theoretical demonstration of the context of reception), however, minor distinctions in these findings between the three countries under study will be highlighted. One compelling factor in this is explained by the nature of the empirical data themselves, and how they

came out from informants in the three countries. The similarities in empirical findings across the three countries under study were striking, with differences certainly occurring, but the cross-country similarities being stronger. Indeed, clear thematic findings did not emerge on the country level, but on other factors. It is these thematic findings on which the presentation of my empirical data is based.

Indeed, Chapter Four demonstrated that -in practice- the differences between the systems in the three countries of destination were less significant than might normally be expected. My empirical data support that argument. In reiterating what has been outlined earlier in Chapter Four in this respect, in short, the concept models of integration, in and of itself, does not reflect an accurate understanding for the actual process of migrant integration on the ground. This is because the official institutional arrangements related to migrant integration are not practically implemented as they are theoretically portrayed, since they underemphasize the role of agency, such as the host society.

On this basis, we can discern that such models make little differences on the attitude of the host society towards migrants, which is an under-measured component of the context of reception. In addition, irrespective of the different interpretation of secularism in the UK, France, and Belgium on the institutional (system) level, on the societal level, they all share very similar positions of secular norms, mainly in perceiving and situating Muslim migrants. And finally, Chapter Four noted that national models of integration are not homogenous, but evolve over time to embrace elements of other models.

Even so, the thesis recognizes a number of minor distinctions from one country to another that emerged from the data analysis. As such, at the end of the two empirical chapters addressing the different aspects of migrants' religiosity (Chapters Five and Six), a last section in Chapter Six

draws on themes emerging from data analysis to set out the main distinct trajectories in informants' religiosity.

## **II. Religiosity as a State of Being: The General Reinforcement**

### **A. Definition**

In general, scholars arrive at different definitions of Muslim migrants' religiosity in Western European countries, yet draw on distinct methods, priorities, and approaches. They all draw on some elements of measurements. Some define religiosity in terms of individuals' active participation in different types of religious organization (Jensen 2011; Connor and Koenig 2013). Others look at religious practices and rituals including Mosque attendance (Laurence and Vaisse 2007). Another approach referred to religiosity through combining religious identification with religious practices (Maliapaard and Phalet 2012), or religious practices with beliefs (Hall 1997; Neitz 2011; Aune 2015; Voas and Fleischmann 2012). And in certain studies, religiosity has been examined specifically in terms of belief, daily rituals, and social attitudes (including views on sexual liberties and gender equality) (Lewis and Kashyap 2013).

Furthermore, other scholars stressed more the identificational perspective of religiosity (religious identity), where religiosity is tested through the self-identification to the Islamic faith (McAndrew and Voas 2014). This approach downplays the significance of practices, while stressing the symbolic character and value of religiosity as a marker of cultural affiliation and/or identification that can be seen through issues such as religious festivals, halal food, and fasting Ramadan (Cesari 2003; Kaya 2012).

Having explored these definitions in literature, and before going through the details of the empirical discussion about the circumstances of the general reinforcement of religiosity in my

study, it is important first to present a definition of what is meant by religiosity in this thesis. Thematic analysis of my data clearly demonstrated a state of religiosity which did not necessarily correspond to the exercise of religious practice. For example, Park and Ecklund (2007) defined religiosity as a system of guiding beliefs by which one can interpret his/her experiences and give them meaning. My approach, as such, builds on the concept of everyday religiosity or lived religiosity (Jeldtoft 2010; Ammerman 2016; Edgell 2012; Salvatore 2004).

Muslim migrants' religiosity in this thesis is defined, thus, not as a purpose or a measurable scale, but rather as a state of being (or conditions of existence) which refers to an attribute or a phenomenon of a present life experience, that captures the impact of religion on Muslim migrants' daily lives. Religiosity, on that basis, is an attribute that goes beyond structured rituals, codified procedures, or established institutions, and instead, provides codes of norms, values and behaviors used in interpreting and perceiving daily life situations. Accordingly, the thesis captures the impact of religion on Muslim migrants' daily lives.

This interpretation informs how Muslim migrants' religiosity can be addressed in a more nuanced manner within a framework of a lived religion over three main themes: identification (and/or belonging); the emotional reliance on religion (religious emotions); and, acts/behaviors/attitudes in different situations and circumstances that are dictated by religion, and mostly associated with the context of reception, with a focus here on *halal* and *haram*.

Accordingly, and on the basis of my empirical data, I argue that religiosity is not directly linked to or manifested in rituals or practices, it is rather a state of being that reflects the magnitude and/or role of religion in informants' daily lives, accompanied by the level of emotional reliance on, and conscious awareness of, one's own religion. Empirically, in the three countries under study - the UK, France, and Belgium - practices and rituals were not decisive in marking, indicating, or

implying an accurate interpretation of the daily religiosity, nor did they capture the actual magnitude and role of religion in informants' lives, as expressed in interviews.

Informants who reported a general decline or no increase in their rituals (i.e. the five daily prayers, fasting Ramadan, paying Zakat, etc.) as well as those who did not express interest in preserving their rituals, on the other hand, expressed a strong sense of religiosity in their countries of destination as did those who reported an overall increase in their rituals and practices. This will be explored in more depth, but this thesis, then, argues that relying solely on the measurement of practices and rituals in examining Muslim migrants' religiosity, based on structured questions and measurable variables, does not give a complete picture.

While this thesis argue against looking at Muslim migrants' religiosity solely through the observance of religious practices and rituals, it is crucial to highlight, in parallel, that across the UK, France and Belgium, empirical data signal a general decline in the level and/or frequency of informants' practices and rituals compared to the country of origin. This applies, for example, to the five daily prayers, Friday prayers, and fasting Ramadan. To some extent, this resembles findings of other studies, such as the one carried out by Jeldtoft (2010) which emphasizes that religious practices are not the main marker of strong religiosity, as well as the other study on Muslim youth migrants, suggesting that Muslim youth show lower level of religious practices but, in parallel, express a higher level of religious identity (Lewis and Kashyap 2013: 2-3).

## **B. The general reinforcement of religiosity among migrants**

Building on what has been outlined in Chapters Three and Four, by drawing on the theory of religiosity as a social identity (Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010; Maliepaard and Phalet 2012; Karlsen and Nazroo 2013), the theory of religious reliance (Hagan and Ebaugh 2003; Hirschmann 2004), as

well as the theory of integration context (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006; Crul and Schneider 2010), my empirical findings show the circumstances in which religiosity is generally reinforced and revived among informants in the three countries under study. In this chapter, this reinforcement is portrayed to demonstrate how a traditionally pre-existing (or embedded) religiosity, adopted in the country of origin, can witness a substantial change in its perceptions, significance, and implementation when encounters certain conditions in the country of destination (or in the context of reception). This change, I argue, reflects an overall increase in informants' religiosity.

Religiosity is understood in my thesis as the role of religion in migrants' life, conscious awareness about religion, self-identification with religion, and the scope of emotional reliance on religion. With these elements playing a central role, my research finds a considerable reinforcement of informants' religiosity. At the same time, this stronger sense of religiosity is also marked by a clear distinction from informants' religiosity in the country of origin. My findings, thus, support Roald's assertion that religion 'nurtured' in one culture and 'transplanted' into another witnesses different forms of expression in the new environment (Roald 2004; Duderija 2008: 147).

It is important noting that the term 'reinforced' here meant to be both perceived by informants and relative to their religiosity in the country of origin. In this research, examining the change (or lack thereof) in informants' religiosity depends on both their own perceptions (or evaluations) of their religious feelings and attitudes compared to the country of origin, as well as inferences derived from interviews regarding the role of religion in shaping informants' lives.

Indeed, my findings build on previous research demonstrating that migrants' religiosity increases in the country of destination (Smith 1993; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Ammerman 2003; Levitt 2003; Hirschman 2004; Duderija 2008; Bruce 2011), and that religion and religious attachments are firmly invigorated in the wake of migration (Hirschman 2004: 1212), where religiosity is likely

to change in degree as well as expression (Vaos and Fleishman 2012). Individuals in countries of origin make sense of their lives through religion without being aware of doing so, but after migration, in the country of destination, with the existence of a distinct cultural context of reception (i.e. a secular context of reception), they become more conscious about religion (Voas and Fleischmann 2012: 531).

The empirical aspect of this research further contributes to the literature in that it presents a nuanced picture of how this added significance of religiosity takes place. In this respect, the scope of interest is not about the increase in religiosity, in and of itself, but most importantly in how this increase is manifested. As Cesari argued, while migrants' religiosity appears to increase in their country of destination, it does not translate automatically into more religious practices (2013).

This has been clearly voiced in my research. Based on the empirical findings, and drawing on the above mentioned definition of religiosity, I argue that reinforced religiosity is not actually manifested in increase of specific rituals or practices, it is rather a state of being that reflects a significant rise in the magnitude and/or role of religion in informants' daily lives, accompanied by a growing consciousness and awareness of one's own religion.

Numerous informants in the UK, France, and Belgium emphasized such general reinforcement of religiosity in their respective countries of destination. They expressed this reinforcement of religiosity explicitly while addressing their migratory experience. For example, in France, Ismaeel started evaluating his religiosity in France by saying: "for sure it increased here, all rituals are accessible here, and you won't find anyone who tells you not to pray... here my belief of Islam increased...its values and principles...and that it is the right religion...and that your relationship with God is the basis of everything...and this was clear in France". Amgad, as well, in the UK stressed this revival in religiosity: "my religious convictions did not really change, but they were

highly instilled...here a person is on his own, he gets to know God more closely in diaspora<sup>4</sup> ...and people are two kinds in diaspora, either those who forget about God or those who get to know God more”. Similarly, Mohanad noted: “not only that I managed to maintain my religious obligations in diaspora, but also I feel that my religious commitment has increased here...[ ]... religion drives my actions much more than in Egypt...because here you face more situations where you would need religion”.

In this sense, Bruce argues that ‘if everyone shares the same beliefs, they are not beliefs, they are just how the world is’ (2011: 37). My research echoes this argument, as it finds that when informants mentioned this perceived reinforcement in religiosity, many of them also drew a line of comparison to the country of origin. They underlined the changes in conditions between Egypt and the countries of destinations while explaining what this reinforcement meant to them. Comparison to the country of origin was introduced not only as an explanation of what reinforced religiosity means, but also as a validation of this reinforcement.

Ayman, in France, stressed this comparison by noting: “I feel it more here, because in Egypt you live in a place where everybody prays and fasts, everyone is used to this, but here you got the bar and the mosque in front of you, and you have to choose”. And as Nahla, in the UK , put it: “it is easy to preserve religion here, easier than in Egypt...not in terms of quantity but mostly quality”, or as Ibrahim in Birmingham mentioned: “in Egypt we were socially programed...whereas here with no support system what you do stems from your own free-will and decision”.

Hence, reinforced religiosity is, I argue, a combination of salient religious affiliation and feelings, leading to a number of perceptions and attitudes which are dictated by religion. While rituals and

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<sup>4</sup> The term ‘in diaspora’ is expressed in most interviews by the word ‘ghorba’ in Egyptian Arabic, which means the state of being settled or living abroad away from the country of origin for long/extended periods.

practices have been reported in this research to be declining, or not increasing to the least, findings show that in parallel the role of religion appears to be magnified in self-identification and in the scope of emotional reliance on religion.

### **C. Overall reasons for the rise in religiosity**

This overall increase in religiosity was reflected in a number of general reasons that emerged from interviews. In Chapter Three, I underlined what has been emphasized in a large volume of literature that religion in the country of origin deviates from how it is in the country of destination for a number of reasons including: different atmosphere and significance of congregation (Ebaugh 2003); larger role of religious institutions (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000); the role of religion in the adaptation of migrants (Cesari 2013); different meanings of being religious between countries of origin and destination (Bruce 2011; Voas and Fleischmann 2012: 531); and consequently, the development of new forms of religion in the country of destination, between what migrants bring and what they encounter (Levitt 2003: 849 ).

Empirically, in the UK, France, and Belgium, these reasons reflect a hybrid of both disruptive and supportive elements among informants, which can be summarized in the following: the fear of losing religion and/or religious identity, and the sense of striving to maintain it in a secular unfamiliar context of reception; the responsibility of raising children as Muslims in a secular society; the existence of numerous religious facilities within the institutional context of reception (the system); the emotional and psychological support religion provides; and finally, the suitable/satisfactory atmosphere in the country of destination, which is seen to comprise better chances for reflection, freedom of choice in carrying out religious obligations, with the absence of tight-knit peer pressure (as opposed to the situation in the country of origin).

The strongest theme emerging from my empirical data that has been manifested as an important reason for increased religiosity was the fear of losing religion in a secular context. In previous literature, this factor was also highlighted. To face this fear in the country of destination, certainty of religious norms and rules provides an anchor in the adaptation process of migrants' lives and traditions (Hirschman 2004). It has been argued that propensity of religiosity in the country of destination might be linked to the perceived lack of control of migrants (Kay *et al.* 2008). In addition, other empirical studies show that migrants connect their migratory narratives of transition from up-rootedness to progress with narratives of religious engagements of devotion and purification (Vasquez and Dewind 2014).

In my study, this was a key factor in invigorating informants' religiosity. In exploring the main reasons behind the increase in religiosity, this fear appears to strongly stimulate religiosity. For example, in Belgium, Samer briefly asserts this by noting: "in Egypt, it is considered normal to pray, but here it's not...life style in the country of destination along with the loneliness that comes with it, forces you to resort to someone, and most people resort to God". In referring to the impact of the existence of a combination of factors (fear of losing religion, atmosphere, facilities, etc.) in reinforcing his religiosity in the UK, Ayman asserted: "I'm more committed here than in Egypt, because here everything stimulates you to perform your religious obligations". Also, in France, Ashraf noted, in explaining why his religiosity has revived: "...because when a person is alone in diaspora without the support of family and friends [ ]...all aspects of religion increase here....if someone is alone God helps him to survive by being close to him...may be rituals and practices

have not increased...but for sure other aspects such as do'aa<sup>5</sup>, and communicating with God have significantly increased, especially when you come here with a one-way ticket”.

Smith (1993) echoes this view by drawing on the general impact of relocation in developing this fear among migrants of losing their religion, emphasizing that ‘the process of uprooting, migration and resettlement produces intensification of religious commitment on the part of immigrants’ (Smith 1993, qtd in Duderija 2008: 143). Also, Ammermann, for example, substantiate this by arguing that ‘circumstances and demands in a new culture inevitably reshape the beliefs and practices that were taken for granted in a home country’ (2003: 208).

Therefore, based on such fear and the subsequent developed willingness to preserve religion, religion is seen to be persistent in its centrality in the lives of migrants based on the set of benefits and resources it can offer including: means to cope with the challenges of relocation; a way to reproduce and pass on culture; consolidation of ethnic/religious community; and, an opportunity to provide assistance in the settlement process (Ebaugh 2003: 228).

Nadia, in the UK, explicitly emphasized these elements in speaking about her religion by saying: “it increased significantly, because I think it is the thing that we have to hold on to...it is what gives you the sense of security and safety...it is the basis that distinguishes you from the society here...in Egypt we take it [religion] for granted, we don’t even think about it...whereas here the situation is different...you have to exert more effort in your religion”.

A second key theme, was among the reasons informants gave for an increase in religiosity, namely the atmosphere in the country of destination. Informants in the three countries emphasized what

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<sup>5</sup> Do'aa is known as an act of appeal in Islamic traditions, which means asking God for help and support, it takes place both inside and outside prayers.

they see as a suitable environment away from tight-knit social circles and obligations, which is perceived as being less socially stressful. This environment is seen, as a common factor in stimulating religiosity for having less influential levels of peer pressure (as opposed to the country of origin), and for being generally equipped with many religious facilities. Findings show that the existence of a relatively relaxed and a more organized environment creates an atmosphere that encourages informants to think and reflect more about the essence of their religion and rituals.

In this regard, in the UK, Alaa noted: “when I pray here, I pray because I really decided to and wanted to...no one is monitoring me or judging me”. Also, Eman attributed her rise in religiosity to this suitable setting and the availability of religious facilities by saying: “it is much easier than in Egypt....Islam is tolerated in the UK...every place has a praying corner where you can freely practice your religion.... here it is easier because in Egypt we have preconceived judgments, but here everyone minds his own business....also it is easier because here it is your own decision, and you enjoy the worshipping you carry out...you do it because you want to, not that someone pushes you”.

### **III. The Demarcation of Halal and Haram**

A decisive marker of Muslims’ religiosity in general appears in their interpretation of daily life experiences within the framework of *halal and haram*. Since religiosity is theoretically approached as a social identity in this thesis (Torrekens and Jacob 2016; Maliepaard and Phalet 2012; Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010; Karlsen and Nazroo 2013), the issue of *halal* and *haram* is one of the main empirical facets of religiosity that substantiates its theoretical understanding as a social identity, particularly in relation to the context of reception.

My findings signal that a major determinant and/or marker of this general reinforced religiosity among informants appears in the existence of a salient demarcation of *halal* and *haram* in informants' daily inner lives. The distinction between *halal* and *haram* has always been a significant marker of Muslims' religiosity in the country of origin. In social and public discourses of most - if not all – Muslim majority societies, *halal* and *haram* narratives reflect a Muslim's degree of religiosity (precisely one's moral and value system). As such, it captures the strength of religion's moral authority on people's lives, and most importantly, the impact of this moral authority on individuals' attitude and behavior towards the outside world.

Nevertheless, in the context of Muslim migrants in Europe, through *halal* and *haram*, a significant aspect of Muslim migrants' social lives is guided, if not dictated, by their religiosity. This applies to migrants' perception of what should be done, what should not be done, with whom do they mingle (or not), etc. *Halal* and *haram* demarcation, as such, is another way of capturing the role of religion in Muslims' lives, by setting the rules needed to manage group interactions, and refines norms and behaviors in terms of what is acceptable and what is not (Dudejira 2008: 384). *Halal* and *haram* for Muslim migrants embodies how religion, as Balandier (1988) and others explained, is considered the major provider of moral and social order (qtd in Kastoryano 2004).

Accordingly, in a western secular context of reception, where the growing significance of religion is mostly a result of cultural distinctiveness (Smith 1978, qtd in Voas and Flieschmann 2012: 528), my empirical findings in the three countries of destination under study show that the conceptualization of *halal* and *haram* takes on an added significance, and emerges as a major determinant of informants' perceptions, attitudes, and most importantly value system. It becomes much more influential than what it was set out to do in the country of origin. This is mainly attributed to an emerging sense of responsibility encountered by informants in solidifying what is

*halal* and *haram*, while exploring their new lives in a secular societal context in their country of destination.

In France, Ismaeel summarizes the scope of *halal* and *haram* by saying: “I am a Muslim and I know religion...and I know that abiding by *halal* and *haram* produces an ideal society....if you followed the *halal* and *haram* you will find yourself following ethics ...whereas the opposite isn’t true...if you followed only ethics you won’t reach religion”. Similarly in Belgium, Mansour noted, in laying out his advice to a potential migrant: “never leave yourself to your *haram* thoughts....they are so strong and you have always to resist such thoughts”. And in the UK, as Tarek firmly asserted: “I’m only convinced and believing in religion...in what is *halal* and *haram*...the arbitrator between me and you is religion, and nothing else”.

The increase in religious responsibility, in terms of how an individual constructs his/her life in a secular society, subsequently generates an increase in religious conscious awareness. As will be shown in the following chapters, being exposed to certain situations in the country of destination, mainly on a sociocultural level, challenges informants’ religiosity. Such situations and circumstances evoke people’s religiosity in identifying and abiding by what is *halal* or *haram*. As such, this process shapes informants’ interpretations of these situations and subsequently drives their attitude in this context. For example, in speaking about the pillars of his value system, Galal noted: “...of course it stems from *halal* and *haram*...you have to fill the gap between what’s ethical and what’s religious, because for example if you drink little alcohol it could be ethical but it’s *haram*, thus you should not do it, this is what I meant by filling the gap between the religious and the ethical.”

Moreover, as outlined above, *halal* and *haram* demarcation emerges clearly in informants’ religiosity towards issues related directly to the context of reception. The issue of *halal* and *haram*

demarcation in the country of destination, I posit, is closely linked with the characteristics of the context of reception.

Most importantly, regardless of the level of informants' commitment towards their own demarcation of *halal* and *haram*, the existence of this demarcation, in and of itself, stimulates a high propensity for a religiously-driven daily routine and life style. For example, Samer acknowledged the significance of *halal* and *haram* demarcation in his professional life despite not complying with it: "I believe that my current job in this café is completely *haram*...though my only excuse would be that it is the only available job I can get...I pray every day asking God to save me from this job, because I believe the money I earn from this job is for sure *haram*".

As will be shown in Chapter Eight, it is crucial, herein, to point out that *haram* and *halal* represent a strong example in which the core impact of religiosity on informants' sociocultural integration can be clearly seen. Such impact primarily lies in issues entailing what 'should not be done' (the *haram* acts), as opposed to what 'can be done' (the *halal* acts) based on Islamic beliefs, traditions, and provisions. As such, on the one hand, issues like the rejection of drinking alcohol, position towards premarital sexual relationships, and public display of affection, are all, to a great extent, signifying markers of the relationship between informants' religiosity and the context of reception, which are dictated/shaped by what is *halal* and what is *haram*. But, on the other hand, issues such as praying, fasting, and paying zakat have much less influence on the role of religiosity in affecting informants' sociocultural integration, as it is not primarily linked to the context of reception. A similar understanding has been voiced previously by Ammerman in defining 'everyday religion', through emphasizing that the concept is better understood by what it excludes, rather than what it includes (2016: 83).

In this sense, the significance of *halal* and *haram* in the interviews appeared in the very introductory sentences used in the self-evaluation of informants' religiosity: "...I managed to preserve my traditions, for example, I pray the daily prayers, I fast Ramadan...I don't drink, I always avoided any physical intimacy...I only eat halal", said Eman in the UK in emphasizing the preservation of her religiosity. Similarly, Haytham, in France outlined the effect of *halal* and *haram* while speaking about raising his children: "I wanted them to grow as others in the French society, but within our own limitations and traditions....I was concerned that they might behave outside the limitations of our religion...mainly with regard to *halal* and *haram*."

On that basis, having explored important differences between the institutional and the societal context of reception in Chapter Four, especially with regard to the profound role of the host society in integration process, it is important to link this with my empirical findings regarding the issue of *halal* and *haram*. In that sense, findings show that many of the issues that are seen as *halal* , or religiously permitted/allowed are primarily related to what the institutional context of reception (or the system) allows, in terms of religious resources and facilities (i.e. Mosques, praying rooms, halal food, Quraa'n lessons, etc.). Whereas most of the issues that are known as *haram*, pertaining to what should not be done based on religious provisions, are clearly associated with the distinctive culture of the secular host society.

Having empirically demonstrated the general reinforcement of informants' religiosity, along with highlighting the invigoration of the issue of *halal* and *haram* in this regard, it is, then, important to move the discussion towards the main other aspects of religiosity manifestation among Muslim migrants in their countries of destination. These are religious identity and religious emotions.

## IV. Reinforced Religious Identity: Contextual/Thematic Approach

It has been argued that religious identity of certain groups of Muslims in Europe represents a salient marker of difference in social interactions, and that Muslims in Europe generally develop strong religious identities (Phalet *et al.* 2018: 36). This section demonstrates empirically what has been outlined theoretically in Chapter Three regarding Muslim migrants' religious identity, and how it is approached in this thesis from a multilevel perspective as a major component of the overall religiosity. Following the emphasis of delineating religious identity from religiosity (Voas and Fleischmann 2012; Güngör *et al.* 2011), this section presents a number of empirical themes which serve to substantiate such delineation. It argues that Muslim migrants' religious identity is best seen, understood, and examined in specific contextual situations.

Since religion is an important cultural source of the formation of identity among migrants (Kaya 2012: 185), in a growing body of academic literature, the different ways by which such religious identity has been approached led to a sort of ambiguity (and/or complexity) in distinguishing it from the overall concept of religiosity. In certain cases, religious identity has been assessed in terms of practices such as Mosque attendance, *halal* eating, fasting Ramadan, and the issue of the hijab (Laurence and Vaisse 2007: 77). In others, it has been examined based on feelings of identity threat when religion is questioned (Velasco-González *et al.* 2008).

However, in this section, looking at religiosity as a state of being, and building on the concept of 'everyday religiosity' (Jeldtoft 2011), I discuss the issue of religious identity from a contextual thematic perspective. I demonstrate informants' religious identity by presenting the contexts/themes where this identity appears most. By doing so, I seek to present a better understanding for what religious identity practically means based on my empirical findings.

Accordingly, I posit that in qualitative empirical studies, examining the religious identity of Muslim migrants by looking primarily at the contexts where it appears most in migrants' daily experiences can provide a persuasive understanding for what Muslim migrants religious identity practically refers to in a secular country of destination (especially in the eyes of those migrants), and that such approach presents a more accurate picture for how identity is perceived, than only relying on structured questions and measurable variables in making the analysis. In this section I demonstrate a number of these contexts and/or themes as follows:

#### **A. Religious identity surpasses national identity of the country of origin**

In the UK, France, and Belgium, the significance of religious identity for informants, or the self-identification with religion, clearly surpasses (and/or outstrips) the national identity of their country of origin (or what could be referred to as ethnonational identity; the Egyptian identity). In characterizing or referring to the Egyptian identity in the country of destination, in comparison to the host society's identity, there was only the very rare reference in interviews to non-religious, national, or social characteristics linked to Egyptian culture. Such characteristics were, in fact, downplayed (and/or dismissed) by informants under the brunt of the overwhelming attachment to religion in the country of destination. For example, issues such as Egyptian history and art, social features including generosity, warmth, emotionality, sense of humor, or even food, all did not emerge to represent, in any context, the core elements of the Egyptian culture. Instead, in response to a general question about pursuing aspects of the Egyptian culture in the country of destination, religion was almost inevitably the response, seems to epitomize the essence of the Egyptian culture in the eyes of informants.

In this regard, it is important noting that in Egypt, religion forms a core element of the Egyptian identity itself, and that both religious and national components are highly intertwined in defining or interpreting the overall Egyptian culture and identity. Nevertheless, in the country of destination, the combination of an unfamiliar atmosphere in a secular context of reception, as well as the particularity of the benefits and resources offered by religion, underpins the religious component in informants' identity at the expense of other national components.

For Egyptian Muslim migrants, countries such as the UK, France, and Belgium offer institutional resources, and introduce societal challenges (including perceived cultural threat), which nurture and provoke informants' religious identity. Numerous Islamic facilities, wide range of Muslim communities, access to regular celebration of Islamic traditions, and most importantly a secular distinct society (seen as devoid of religion), all of which are factors that, to some extent, nurture and provoke the self-identification with one's own religion (or the religious identity) in a way that outstrip the national one.

In France, for example, while outlining his identificational priorities in the country of destination, Abdel Rahman connoted how religion dominated the characterization of his Egyptian identity: "I'm Egyptian and will remain Egyptian, and I'm only here for the children...I forced my son to speak Arabic at home...and I was always telling my son that you are a Muslim...I was teaching him how to pray, and also language to be able to read Quraan". Despite his clear self-identification as Egyptian, this informant named only religious features as he sought to show his intention to raise his child as an Egyptian. Almost the same was expressed by Ragy (a second generation informant): "I would like to focus on giving my children more culture and traditions of Islam and Egypt than what I got...I want them to go to Egypt more...I want them to be more Muslims than

me”. Nothing in this statement can discern a non-religious component in this informant’s emphasis of preserving his Egyptian identity.

In Belgium, the data reflected similar findings. In implicitly laying out the extent to which religion represents the culture of the Egyptian Muslim migrants, Samer noted: “we are lucky with our religion, culture and tradition...the optimal solution is to be able to acquire the good things from both sides...religion and traditions from our side.... and discipline, modernity and respect from the European side”. Similar perceptions appeared in the UK as well. From another angle, Mamdouh, a second generation Egyptian who was explaining his cultural preference in marriage with regard to the identity of his potential wife, noted: “the ideal scenario is to marry an Egyptian Muslim girl, who has similar background...like she grew up in the UK and understands the society where I was raised...however, the realistic scenario would be to marry just a Muslim girl...regardless of her nationality”.

In general, the research findings echoes what has been outlined in Chapter Three, mainly in asserting that a better way of understanding religious identity is by looking at it in comparison to other forms of identities. Due to the particularity of religion and its unique characteristics (including compelling affective experiences and moral authority), religious identity gains its salience among migrants, mainly, because it is argued to be the kind of identity that could be claimed in the most authentic (or clear) way, unlike other forms of identities such as national, racial, and ethnic identities (Chen 2008; Voas and Fleischmann 2012: 534). As pointed out in Chapter Three and as demonstrated empirically in this chapter and the following one, in the countries of destination, it is hard to signal a clear way by which migrants’ national or ethnic identity, for example, could be claimed, retained, or preserved. Whereas religious identity possesses intrinsic features that renders its retention achievable within a concrete course of actions.

My research findings substantiate an important argument laid out in literature, which asserts that migration creates new conditions of identification where personal attachment to a given religion can prevail over national attachment (Wellman and Tokuno 2004; Cesari 2013; Peek 2015). Attachment to religion, thus, can take precedence over the feeling of national belonging (Cesari 2013: 3). Hence, by asserting the primacy of their religious identity over other forms of social or national identity, religion then becomes a powerful base of personal identification for Muslim migrants (Peek 2005: 215).

## **B. Norms and traditions signify religious identity**

In the three countries under study, norms and traditions<sup>6</sup> emerged as another major thematic signifier of religious identity, strongly present in certain contexts. More specifically, given that the fear of losing one's religion has been outlined earlier in this chapter as a significant stimulator of migrants' overall religiosity, this fear, thus, plays the same role with regard to religious identity (as a component of religiosity), but through the emphasis of norms and traditions.

Informants repeatedly emphasized the issue of norms and traditions in contexts implying fears of losing their religious identity, or, in other words, while expressing their threat on losing their identity in the country of destination. Fewer informants referred to the term as a synonym for religion, yet this did emerge. Norms and traditions, seen as the prime elements representing culture (Deihl *et al.* 2009; Tonkens *et al.* 2008), have been interpreted in this study as religion and/or components of religious identity.

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<sup>6</sup> Norms and traditions were referred to throughout the interviews using the exact Arabic translation of both terms. Norms means 'adaat' in Arabic, while traditions means 'takaleed', and they are normally mentioned together.

In Belgium, for example, Abdel Aziz explicitly clarified this interpretation while drawing a line of comparison with the host society's culture: "their norms and traditions are so different than ours...ours are better...they are much better when it comes to interactions, discipline and honesty...though we are better with our norms and traditions", when I asked him what did he mean exactly by norms and traditions, he directly noted: "I mean by norms and traditions those related to religion...to identity...traditions for me is not that we eat dinner early or late...it is for example that I saw my father going to the mosque for 'fajr' (the dawn) prayer...this is what I understand as a norm for me, not the ones that aren't related to religion". In the same line, Khamees simply explained it by saying: "our norms and traditions stem from our religion....and since it might be hard to find these norms and traditions here...then you try to maintain them by hanging on to religion so that you don't lose your identity here".

The fear of losing norms and traditions, in essence, has strongly implied the fear of losing one's religious identity. The interest in preserving norms and traditions has also been portrayed to elucidate one's determination of holding on to his/her religious identity. This interpretation of norms and traditions supports what Balandier has argued, that within religion tradition finds its solid anchor, as it responds to the loss of past common references and establishes social bonds (Balandier 1988; Kastoryano 2004: 1237).

In the UK, France, and Belgium, almost every time I raised a question comprising norms and traditions in the country of destination, answers explicitly addressed issues pertaining to (or connoting) religious identity. In public, political, and academic debates, since religion has been portrayed as the primary representative of culture, vital components of culture such as norms and traditions have been subsequently interpreted as religion. This also clarifies, as mentioned above,

how non-religious components of culture (i.e. art, music, social traits, history, etc.) are almost absent when referring to norms and traditions in the country of destination.

For example, in France, Munir referred to norms and traditions while being remorseful for certain situations where he could not maintain his religious identity: “I felt so lonely living like a French person without praying or fasting or maintaining my norms and traditions...I hope God will forgive me for the life I use to live”. This quote shows that the context of fear of losing religion is a strong example of how religious identity could be interpreted through the sense of preserving norms and traditions.

Such interpretation of norms and traditions also explain how religion acts as a consolidating force of culture and values, as it is highly connected with cultural practices. And given that identity preservation entails maintaining culture and values, therefore religion becomes a way of reproducing many aspects of migrants’ cultures, by stressing the identificational component of that culture (Cook 2000; Hervieu-L’eger 2000).

In the UK, informants used norms and traditions in the same connotations, mainly in situations (contexts) related to loss of identity. In expressing his disappointment and sorrow for how his children’s identity evolved in the country of destination, Kamel emphasized: “I wish they were raised more Egyptians in terms of norms and traditions and mentality...they have no links with Egypt and its events...they just don’t care...they are more attached to the UK than to Egypt... [ ]...since they weren’t raised with this sense of belonging to their religion, we shouldn’t expect them to grow embracing it”. Here, it is possible to discern how norms and traditions in such situation, for example, is closely linked to identity narratives, including what Peek described as individual’s sense of self, group affiliation, and ascribed statuses (2005: 217).

As a whole, these findings reflect not only that norms and traditions are generally perceived as religion, but also that these terms are precisely used or referred to as the identity dimension of religiosity.

### **C. The impact of relocation on religious identity**

The issue of relocation and resettlement in the country of destination emerged as a clear theme to which religious identity is linked. The act of migration, or relocation, has been underlined in Chapter Three, and earlier in this chapter, as one of the main reasons for the general reinforcement (and/or centrality) of Muslim migrants' religiosity. Subsequently, it plays an important role in the reinforcement of their religious identity.

In the three countries under study, my empirical findings show that the religious component of informants' identity takes on an added significance when uprooted from its original environment, because religion, at its origin, acts as an anchor to identity maintenance and consolidation in the wake of relocation. As such, relocation and living in a secular context of reception in the UK, France and Belgium, with more social and cultural liberties, exposes informants' identity to serious challenges, one of which is developing a fear of losing this identity. Thus, on the one hand, religion is invoked here as a protector of that identity, and on the other, religion becomes the locus where this identity is reconstructed in the country of destination. In the context of concerns or fears, informants used identity in referring to religion, and used religion in referring to identity.

Nesma in France, in her advice to a potential migrant, emphasized this by saying: "I would tell him...do not be ashamed of your religion...keep it in your heart and stay connected to it...it's not only about maintaining prayers...but also it's about sticking to who you really are". Similarly, Nermeen in the UK underscored how living in the UK magnified the role of religion as an identity

anchor: “here even I maintained it more...because there are no halfway solutions...it is either being driven away and distant from religion...or holding on to it and preserving it more and more...there are no grey areas”. Also, Engy in France noted: “I preserved my Islamic identity here... [ ]... I did not slough off my skin and origins”. In the same line, Ehab stressed this by saying: “the person who comes without values and principles...can be sloughed off his culture and religion... to integrate...to be like them exactly, and it has a very strong impact”.

These findings highlight how the effect of the migratory event to a western secular context of reception plays a major role in generating a need for identity protection and preservation. The change in sociocultural context accompanied by the absence of support system in the country of destination develops more reliance on religion as an anchor of identity.

Theoretically, this link between relocation and religious identity has been voiced in a considerable body of literature. It has been argued that upon migration, self-awareness of one’s identity increases, and identity, itself, becomes a subject of a process of re-evaluation by being located in a strange environment and surrounded by different religions and traditions (Hashmi 2000). Migrants, then, could find meaning and identity by reaffirming traditional beliefs including the structure and interpretations of their religion (Herberg 1960, qtd in Duderija 2008: 142). Accordingly, amidst experiencing this process of seeking stability through religion in a new setting, the conditions of this new environment imply an increase in religious identity (Voas and Fleischmann 2012: 528). In other words, a shift to a more ethno-culturally diverse western host society is argued to stimulate migrants’ awareness of their religious cultural tradition, and subsequently contributes to shaping their identity formation (Roald 2004; Duderija 2008; Warner 1998; Wardana 2013). Gravitating to the familiar, as a result of uprootedness and resettlement, has a considerable impact on migrants’ identity (Hirschman 2004).

#### **D. The sense of difficulty in maintaining religion stimulates religious identity**

Despite attributing the general increase in religiosity to the existence of a suitable environment away from tight-knit social circles and obligations in the countries of destination (as outlined earlier), in parallel, a contrasting element emerged strongly in my data. Informants, in the three countries of destination, repeatedly emphasized that a culturally different context of reception (which is seen as devoid of religion, or secular) makes it difficult from them to maintain their religious identity, in which an additional effort is required to preserve it.

Analysis of the empirical data show that the concerns of losing religion and/or religious identity generated a feeling among informants that an extra effort is needed to preserve their identity. The taken-for-granted religious identity in the country of origin can no longer survive in the country of destination without being supported by an additional effort to further preserve it. This perceived difficulty in maintaining identity, which requires an additional effort, leads, then, to more consciousness and awareness about one's religion, and underpins religion's value in informants' lives. Instilled religious identity, thus, is highly expected.

Most importantly, this 'effort' eventually appears to be a connotation of a psychological burden in overcoming barriers and resisting temptations, much more than it is a reflection of a physical effort or extra measures. It refers mainly to a sense of psychological resistance to being driven away from what is seen as one's own religious identity.

In the UK Mohamed puts it as follows: "in Egypt we got used to certain norms and traditions which we take for granted...such as prayers and Eid and outfits...but when you live here you start facing troubles in maintaining them...they are not the normality anymore...you have to exert extra effort in keeping up with your cultural traditions". Similarly, Amgad explicitly attributed this

difficulty to the secular host society: “living in a secular society is very hard for someone who wants to preserve his religion, and very easy for someone who doesn’t want to”. Also, in Belgium Abdel Aziz noted: “I believe that a person is keener to maintain his religion when the circumstances aren’t helping...because I think the harder it is to pray, the more you will do in order to maintain your prayers”. Also Nadeen in the UK noted: “Everything here you need to strive in order to maintain...including your effort in projecting a good image of a Muslim...hard to pray in Mosques or Taraweeh<sup>7</sup> ...fasting is so difficult...and the joy of Eid no longer exists as in Egypt”.

This issue of extra effort has been highlighted previously in literature while referring to the social environment in the west, where religiosity is much lower among the host society, thus, being religious requires more effort from Muslim migrants (Voas and Fleischman 2012: 534).

Although it appears as a clear contrast, emphasizing the suitability of the environment while stressing the difficulty in maintaining religious identity in the countries of destination can be nuanced. It appears that the suitability and/or favorability of the environment is generally associated with the existence of religious facilities in the system, as well as the overall minimal social obligations in the country of destination. Whereas the issue of difficulty connotes, in the most part, the sort of temptations or distractions that are seen to drive someone away from his/her religion (i.e. cultural liberties, general western life style including media materials, working hours, weekly holidays, etc.).

## **E. Identity ascription strengthens religious identity**

In Chapter three I argued that Muslim migrants’ religious identity can be looked at as a feature and/or an attribute that can be both chosen by migrants, and in parallel ascribed to them by

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<sup>7</sup> Taraweeh in Islam refers to additional prayers performed every evening only during the holy month of Ramadan.

members of the host society. And that identity ascription, in particular, is the way in which outsiders define groups' identity, which subsequently instills or reinforces a certain value within the identity of this group (Van Heelsum and Koomen 2016). In addition, it has been outlined that religious identity can essentialize ethnicity by representing an important symbolic marker for attachment and belonging to a particular culture.

In line with that, analysis of interviews in the three countries of destination reflect a general belief among informants that the societal context of reception (the host society) perceives migrants originating from Muslim majority countries primarily as Muslims rather than looking at their nationalities for example. And that this perception of being ascribed as Muslims plays a key role in reinforcing informants' religious identity.

In short, this belief is ultimately what might be called perception of the perception. Findings here strongly suggest that informants have the impression that, in most cases, they are regarded generally as Muslims, irrespective of their level of religiosity or the strength of their belief. These classifications play a major role in reinforcing their sense of self-identification with religion (or with being Muslims). This comes in line with what has been argued previously that ascription is strongly related to identification, and that the ways by which Muslims are being defined by others as primarily Muslims instill the value of their religious identity in different forms (van Heelsum and Koomen 2016).

Analysis of data collected from the UK, France, and Belgium show that this sort of religious identity ascription is not, for the most part, perceived negatively by informants. On the contrary, informants being perceived and/or identified by the host society as primarily Muslims nurtures their religious self-identification process. For example, in the UK, Galal clarified this by saying: "when I first arrived I started learning Quraa'n and became very religiously committed...because

I had the feeling that I'm monitored here by the society... and in all cases they would perceive me as a Muslim...but in Egypt I was one of many”.

Many other quotes from various informants in the three countries reiterated this issue implicitly and explicitly. The strong belief of being perceived primarily as a Muslim emerged in different contexts of interviews. In some cases it was outlined by informants while speaking about the host society, in others it came out in expressing preservation of religiosity in the country of destination. Also, some informants underlined the issue as an aspect of their reactive religiosity behaviors, reflected clearly in situations where they intend to project a good image of being a Muslim, by expressing their interest to carry out or to avoid certain behaviors. These findings are similar to what has been observed by Van Heelsum and Koomen, that identity ascription is not only an important element in the process of identity formation of Muslim migrants, but also, instead of generating a negative reaction, it has an invigorating effect on religious identity (2015: 11).

Despite the strong role of the ascribed identity, there is also a strong aspect of choice, as will be discussed in the next chapters. This comes in line with what has been argued theoretically in Chapter Three, that although religious identity can be actively chosen by migrants, it is in parallel ‘defined, challenged, accepted, or rejected by other people, communities, and institutions’ (Peek 2005: 236; Ammerman 2003; Akerlof and Kranton 2000).

## **V. Reinforced Religious Emotions**

### **A. What is meant by religious emotions?**

Religious emotions in this thesis refers to the emotional attachment to religion. Similar to religious identity, religious emotions have been reported in this research to be reinforced and revived in the countries of destination. Drawing on the theory of the religious dimension of coping (Radzi *et al.*

2014), which demonstrates how the centrality of religion among migrants is not only limited to sociocultural and economic benefits, but also strongly associated with emotional/spiritual benefits as well, the core elements emerging from the thematic analysis of the interviews in the UK, France, and Belgium discern a clear rise in informants' emotional attachment to religion, or what is theoretically known to be the emotional dimension of religiosity (Glock 1962; Stark and Glock 1965; Guveli 2015). These religious emotions form a pivotal part of the overall reinforced religiosity argued in this research. They reflect how religious involvement is associated with better levels of emotional well-being (Handlin 1973, qtd in Connor 2012).

When we look more closely at my research findings showing that the consequences of relocation and living in a secular context of reception generally valorize informants' religion, we find that one aspect of this valorization is reflected in an emerging feeling of an increased value, depth, and significance of religion in informants' daily life. In interviews, informants expressed this emotional dimension in different ways. Some referred to it as spirituality, others defined it in terms of depth and quality, but it is clear that either way they meant the conscious and/or cognitive significance of the emotional attachment to (and/or reliance on) religion.

More specifically, religious emotions could be defined as a salient emotional attachment to one's religion and God, accompanied by a strong belief in the spiritual benefits that religion can offer. This attachment is widely nurtured in the secular atmosphere of the destination country, where migrants feel more vulnerable and weak. Accordingly, emotional attachment deepens the degree of reliance on one's own religion in the country of destination. It is generally epitomized in both migrant's inner feelings towards religion, and the impact of these inner feelings on his/her attitude with the outside world, including the interpretation of certain experiences and situations.

In the UK, for example, Magdi summarized it as follows: “what increased is the conscious feeling of the importance of religion, its value and its degree... [ ]....what increased here is your belonging to religion as well as your emotions about it”. Also, in Belgium, Abaza explicitly mentioned: “for me what increased here clearly is not the degree or level of my worshipping...it is rather the feeling of religion...because of the numerous temptations here, you should constantly try to repent and ask God to forgive you”. In this context, informants try to express how such emotional reliance or attachment to religion is reinforced and invigorated. A clear comparison to practices and rituals is used here repeatedly in order to elucidate what these religious emotions actually refer to, by delineating them from other aspects of religiosity.

In other interviews, the issue of spiritualities were explicitly emphasized to clarify the issue of religious emotions. Positioning these spiritualities, throughout the interviews, in comparison to western secular societies is meant to highlight the symbolic significance of religious emotions in Islam as opposed to the host society. For example, Azza in the UK emphasized her religious emotions by noting: “western societies miss the kind of spiritualities we have in our religion...I met so many people who converted to Islam and they all told me about the pleasure they felt with this fortune of our religion’s spiritualities....it nurtures the soul”. Munir in France, while speaking about the French society, noted: “they are lost, because they have no religion...religion is like a mobile charger, when the phone runs out of battery it needs its charger...my spiritualities are extremely high... and I always charge myself with religion”. In clarifying the reasons behind his emerging strong belief in Islam, Ragy asserted: “what really made me more convinced in Islam here is the spiritual effect and the psychological relief of Islam....everything that I’m living now verifies to me that what I believe in is true, and Islam is true”.

In my research, one point which emerged was that the disruption which resulted from relocation - including issues such as loneliness, homesickness for being away from familiarity and support system, along with the existence of a suitable environment away from tight-knit social circles and obligations - creates a wider psychological space for more emotional attachment to religion. It also corresponds to what has been argued in literature that migrants may resort to religion in a particular life moment to address 'profound life concerns, obtain psychological comfort, or mitigate loneliness' (Aleksynska and Chiswick 2012: 567).

Indeed, my research, overall, shows that additional religious emotions stand out as an important factor in reinforcing the overall magnitude of religion in informants' lives. Most importantly, such emotional attachment is also crucial in explaining how the overall reinforced religiosity is identified in this research as a state of being rather than being regarded as a rise of specific rituals or behaviors. Religious emotions, in this context, takes place in various situations for Muslim migrants, and are not necessarily accompanied by any specific (codified or structured) religious traditions. This form of emotional reliance on religion can rather take place anywhere in migrants' daily lives.

## **B. Aspects of religious emotions in the countries of destination**

These religious emotions were, as emerged in my research, manifested across three main aspects: robust linkage of religiosity to the success of one's life in the country of destination (especially one's professional life); using religion as a means of coping with harsh times and calamities; and, finally, experiencing enhanced emotions in carrying out certain rituals, such as praying or fasting.

## i. Linking religiosity to the success of the migratory experience

In moving forward exploring the impact of religious emotions in informants' daily experiences in their countries of destination, numerous themes emerging from fieldwork signal an explicit linkage between commitment to religiosity and success in professional life, as well as success in the migratory journey in general. A strong belief in God's blessing<sup>8</sup> emerges to reflect this linkage. Again, the demarcation of *haram* and *halal* appears clearly in this context.

Briefly, informants believe that by adhering to religion, through preserving their religiosity and successfully meeting their religious obligation, which practically features in their daily lives by abandoning the *haram* acts, they will then be rewarded by God in what is referred to as more blessing (or God's favor and protection) embracing many aspects of their lives, especially those linked to sources of earnings and professional success<sup>9</sup>. This belief appears to play a key role in their emotional well-being throughout their migratory experience.

In context, blessing, herein, is referred to by narratives indicating rewards such as making more benefits from limited income, increases in earnings, expanding businesses, promotion at work, and maintaining good health. Based on the special features of religion in migration, these examples show a robust belief of religiosity's emotional impact on people's lives in the country of destination, much more than what these religious emotions represented in the country of origin.

Across the UK, France, and Belgium, informants highlighted numerous situations/concerns in the country of destination that stimulate these religiously-driven emotions, including issues such as working in places serving alcohol and experiencing premarital relationships, all of which are seen

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<sup>8</sup> Blessing is referred to here by the Arabic term 'baraka'

<sup>9</sup> Source of earning or source of income here is mostly referred to in interviews by the Arabic term 'Al- Rizk'

as *haram* acts, that if carried out will preclude God's blessing, and subsequently lead to different forms of failure in people's lives.

Khamees in Belgium, was one such person who emphasized this belief while expressing his advice to a potential Egyptian migrant: "I will tell him that you have to learn an important lesson here...when you take the right path, God makes your life easier here and opens up for you many windows... [ ]...most importantly to shun completely from *haram* at work...whoever abandons the *haram*, God always take good care of him". Similarly, Mansour noted: "I feel that if I did something wrong the punishment is due to come quickly in my lifetime...any mess I have been through in diaspora before happened because of something wrong I committed". In the UK, for example, Mohanad elaborated on this, while speaking about changes in his religious convictions: "...I witnessed a significant change in my religious convictions...most importantly the lesson I learned about the source of income [al-risk] here, which totally depends on God... the concept of al-risk relies completely on God's blessing".

In line with that, Ahmad explains it by saying: "I also feel how important I should be close to God when it comes to incomes and earnings...when I commit some *haram* acts, I pay for it immediately...this shows in the extent of blessing I would get in my earnings". Also, as Fareed in Belgium put it while analyzing the behavior of other Muslim migrants: "People would try *haram* means of income depending on the nature of their jobs or their needs...some people tried it and continued until they lost everything...*haram* income can never last, God will never bless it".

Moreover, the belief that *haram* acts would hinder such blessing has been explicitly linked to the secular culture of the host society, characterized by issues such as alcohol and premarital relationships (which will be further addressed in Chapter Six). As such, the demarcation of *halal* and *haram* is not only important in preserving one's religious identity (as mentioned earlier), but

is also regarded to be crucial in developing emotions related to the general success of one's life in the country of destination. The reaction towards certain cultural aspects of the host society (i.e. acts of cultural liberties) is another aspect that explains how the societal context of reception can feed off religiosity in the country of destination. Chapter Eight of this thesis focuses on these impacts in details.

## **ii. Religion as a means of coping with harsh times or calamities**

Another important aspect of emotional religiosity that came out in interviews in the three countries under study was the way in which informants relied on their religiosity as a vital mean of coping with harsh times, tough situations, and calamities.

As highlighted in chapter three, this aspect of religiosity draws strongly on the theory of the emotional dimension of coping (Reitz *et al.* 2014). This theory emphasizes that the use of spiritual aspect of religiosity in the form of an adaptive manner can be an efficient mean of coping with disruption (2014: 316). And as some (Pargament *et al.* 1992) have argued, religious coping efforts in specific situations are considered critical mediators in the relationship between 'specific life events, generalized resources, and event outcomes' (504-505).

Empirically, this emotional reliance on religiosity takes place among informants by developing a high level of religious spirituality displayed as a coping mechanism in such situations. More specifically, it reflects how religion is used by informants in dealing with personal experiences of harsh times such as losing someone close, losing a job, health problems, the feeling of being ostracized, as well as homesickness and extreme loneliness. Different aspects of such harsh times and/or calamities also stimulate a strong sense of submission to God's will. As a way of enduring

the toughness of such crises, these situations are mostly perceived as tests from God that are experienced by informants in their migratory journey.

In other words, the role of religion in informants' psychological well-being emerges clearly in various experiences and/or narratives outlined in the interviews in terms of facing harsh times. It epitomizes how migration (including dislocation and resettlement) is often interpreted in religious terms, and that the accompanied aspects of disruptions such as loneliness and alienation creates a 'psychological need for the consolidation provided by religion' (Voas and Flieschmann 2012: 529).

In the three countries under study, such emotional reliance was expressed extensively in different ways. In Belgium, Sayed summarized it by noting: "the more you get closer to God, the more he will provide you with a breakthrough in your problems...I have seen this vividly in Belgium in my experiences here with many Muslims". And as Amgad in the UK eloquently put it: "here, a person faces a lot of difficulties and tough times, thus he seeks God's support and help...there is also something called faith by verification, which means that when you resort to God, God shows you how close he is to you through showing you concrete rewards..[ ]...the only way we feel God is by communicating with God....this is called the circle of mercy...it is that God keeps placing you in situations where you thank him for his help". Similarly, Ehab in France noted: "I experienced a period where I was very depressed, and the only way in overcoming this is by having faith in God...and God never left me...every harsh situation I've been through in diaspora it was because God has saved something better for me".

In further elaborating this within other contexts, Zaki described enduring these harsh times in migration as a test from God by noting: "the depth of religion here increased 100%... in Egypt we used to rely on the fact that we are all Muslims and we will all go to heaven...whereas here you

are exposed to real tests and more vulnerable...and you need to resort to God...in my own opinion, I believe we are exposed to more tests in diaspora than in Egypt”. Also Sobhy laid it out while expressing his solace when he lost his father: “after my father passed away, I got much closer to God, I was always praying at the mosque, always practicing, reading Quraan and talking to God. [ ]...at that time I quit working in restaurants and started working in *halal* butchery...I was so relieved by resorting to God...it helped me to overcome the harshness of losing my father and the tough times I’ve been through in diaspora”.

Overall, and based on the research findings, it comes out clearly that these personal calamities in the countries of destination generate intense spiritual/emotional attachment to one’s religion and faith, which I interpret it here as reinforced form of religiosity, arousing to endure the brunt of the severity of such situations. Manifestation of such religious emotions takes place in different forms including more prayers, doa’a (talking to God seeking help and support), reading or listening to Quraan, and a stronger desire in accepting and enduring with patience the harshness of those situations as God’s will. They all have been emphasized as influential means in coping and overcoming harsh times in the countries of destination.

### **iii. Enhanced emotions in practices and rituals**

Building on the two previous sections (with regard to linking religiosity to success in professional life and relying on it as a means of coping with harsh times), the third and final contextual aspect of religious emotions which emerged in my empirical data lies in what is seen as enhanced emotions characterizing informants’ practices and rituals in the three countries of destination. In that respect, despite signaling a general decline (less significance) in practices, the research findings reflect that these practices and rituals have been perceived to be more meaningful in the

country of destination, entailing considerable depth and value, different than how they were conducted (and perceived) in the country of origin. Informants emphasized that in Egypt they use to carry out practices and rituals in a routine manner without much focus on their essence and psychological benefits.

However, in the country of destination, findings signal that practices such as praying and fasting are no longer carried out as a sort of routine, they are rather conducted with the acknowledgment of religiosity as an anchor and a fundamental tool/resource in overcoming disorder and disruption in the migratory experience. Informants emphasized that while in Egypt, being part of the majority religion, along with societal peer pressure, there was then little personal emotional impact from practicing. On the other hand, with the expectation to practice is almost absent in the countries of destination, rituals started gaining an additional emotional dimension, which subsequently contributed in reinforcing informants' religiosity.

On that basis, rituals and practices, including praying, fasting, reading Qur'aan, and paying zakat appear to have gained added emotional and/or spiritual significance in helping informants to cope with disruption in the country of destination.

In the UK, Magdi explained this issue in details by noting: "living in diaspora made me think about the essence of many religious rituals, of which we used to take for granted in Egypt....such as praying and fasting....but here where the society is open, and you can practice freely, you start rethinking about the essence of those rituals and their significance". Also, Azza explained these enhanced emotions in practicing religion by saying: "....this feeling had opened me a window of happiness...happiness of the joy of worshipping and talking to God and mentioning him...the process should not be routine, as it is in Egypt...it should be deeper than that...we should learn how to feel the pleasure in our religion".

In addition, Nashwa noted: “I didn’t feel the value of Do’aa, praying and reading Quraan until I moved here...because here I have no one else to seek his help except God....I am alone completely”. In the same sense, Fatma asserted: “Do’aa for me is extremely important...when I feel down late at night I wake up and pray and talk to god while praying asking his help and support....the most important aspect of religion for me in diaspora is the spiritual one”.

## VI. Conclusion

This chapter and the following one complete each other in addressing the issue of Muslim migrants’ religiosity. They draw on my empirical data to examine the question of the Egyptian Muslim migrants’ religiosity in the three countries under study, whether or not it is reinforced, and how it is most significantly manifested. In further substantiating the dissertation’s overall argument, it is crucial to highlight how religiosity is lived among Muslim migrants in the countries of destination, and if reinforced, then how this reinforcement takes place.

In this regard, Chapters Five and Six argue that: first, religiosity is generally reinforced and revived among Muslim migrants in their European countries of destination; second, that this reinforcement in religiosity is not manifested in mere increase of practices/rituals or a salience of specific religious activities, it is rather, conceived as a state of being; third, that this religiosity -as a state of being- is manifested through five major aspects, the first three are addressed in this chapter, while the other two will be discussed in Chapter Six. These aspects include: 1) the demarcation of *halal* and *haram*; 2) reinforced religious identity; 3) reinforced religious emotions; 4) the impact of what I refer to as acts of cultural liberties on religiosity; and 5) the role of religiosity in raising children.

On that basis, and drawing on my theoretical approach to religiosity in this research, as a notion that captures the essence of everyday religiosity or lived religiosity (Jeldtoft 2011; Salvatore 2004), Muslim migrants' religiosity in this thesis is defined not as a purpose or a measurable scale, but rather as a state of being (or conditions of existence) which refers to an attribute or a phenomenon of a present life experience, that captures the impact of the migrant's daily life. This interpretation informs how religiosity can be addressed in a more nuanced manner within a framework of a lived religion over three main themes: identification (and belonging); emotional reliance on religion (religious emotions); and, acts/behaviors/attitudes in different situations and circumstances that are dictated by religion.

Building on these three themes, first, my findings signal that a major determinant and/or marker of this general reinforced religiosity among informants appears in the existence of a salient demarcation of *halal* and *haram* in informants' daily lives. As such, the conceptualization of *halal* and *haram* takes on an added significance. Most importantly, regardless of the level of informants' commitment towards their own demarcation of *halal* and *haram*, the existence of this demarcation, in and of itself, stimulates a high propensity for a religiously-driven daily routine and life style.

Second, I explore informants' religious identity in this thesis by presenting the contexts/themes where this identity appears most. This comprises issues such as: how religious identity outstrips national identity of the country of origin; the role of norms and traditions narrative in signifying religious identity; the impact of relocation on religious identity; how the sense of difficulty in maintaining religiosity stimulates religious identity; the impact of being ascribed primarily as a Muslim by the host society.

Third, similar to religious identity, religious emotions have been reported in this research to be reinforced and revived in the three countries of destination. The core elements emerging from the

thematic analysis of the interviews in the UK, France, and Belgium discern a clear rise in informants' emotional attachment to religion. In that respect, religious emotions could be defined as a salient emotional attachment to one's religion and God, accompanied by a strong belief in the spiritual benefits that religion provides. It is generally epitomized in both one's inner feelings towards religion, and the impact of these inner feelings on one's attitude with the outside world, including the interpretation of certain experiences and situations. Religious emotions appeared to be manifested across three main aspects: robust linkage of religiosity to the success of one's life in the country of destination; using religion as a means of coping with harsh times and calamities; and, finally, experiencing enhanced emotions in carrying out certain rituals.

Finally, having approached Muslim migrants' religiosity as a multifaceted phenomenon, where this chapter demonstrates its first three aspects (*halal* and *haram*, religious identity, and religious emotions), it is crucial in the following chapter to complete the discussion by exploring the remaining two aspects: the upbringing of children; and positions towards acts of cultural liberties.

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## Chapter Six

### Religiosity through the Upbringing of Children And the Acts of Cultural Liberties

#### I. Introduction

This chapter completes the previous one, as it sets out to empirically demonstrate the two remaining aspects of religiosity outlined in this thesis; these are religiosity through the upbringing of children (or parental religiosity), and the positions towards what I refer to here as acts of cultural liberties. These points emerged strongly through thematic analysis of empirical data.

Previously in Chapter Five, I argued that religiosity of Muslim migrants is better understood as a state of being than as a manifestation of specific rituals, practices, or behaviors. In clarifying that, the previous chapter explored three of five aspects of religiosity which emerged from my empirical data; the demarcation of *halal* and *haram*, religious identity, and religious emotion. In moving forward, this chapter continues that discussion by demonstrating the two other key themes which were identified in my empirical findings as having a strong influence on migrants' religiosity. The first is the upbringing of children, and the second is the position towards what I call here acts of cultural liberties (as shown below, these acts refer mainly to issues related to sexual liberties and alcohol).

Drawing on the theory of religiosity as a social identity (Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010; Maliepaard and Phalet 2012; Karlsen and Nazroo 2013), and furthering the conception of everyday religiosity in this thesis (Jeldtoft 2010; Dessing *et al.* 2016; Ammerman 2016; Edgell 2012), this chapter argues that the positions towards specific acts of cultural liberties, along with the process of bringing up children in a western secular society: 1) are major contexts of displaying religiosity in the three

countries of destination; 2) play a key role in reinforcing the magnitude of religiosity in informants' lives; and finally, 3) affect how informants socialize and situate themselves (and their children) towards the host society.

In that sense, based on the special focus of this research on the role of the host society as a key factor in migrant integration, and building on the thesis's conception of sociocultural integration as a notion that involves elements of social contacts and cultural maintenance (Alba and Nee 2003; Damstra and Tillie 2016), the upbringing of children and the acts of cultural liberties leap out from my empirical data as two central factors in understanding the dynamics of interaction between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception, through the impact of the host society's culture on the issues of social contacts and cultural maintenance (as the two identified criteria of sociocultural integration in this thesis).

Building on Berry's acculturation theory (1997) and Granovetter's (1974) concepts of strong and weak ties, my thesis finds that religiosity in the upbringing of children and migrants' positions towards sexual liberties and alcohol influence the way by which migrants situate themselves towards the host society, which subsequently influences their integration.

As outlined in Chapter Four, that secularism is primarily seen from the standpoint of the role of religion in the secular western society (Birt *et al.* 2016; Calhoun 2008), where such role is perceived to be almost absent. This chapter, then, strongly suggests that this absence is much more about moral issues, related to sexual liberties and alcohol, than it is about the philosophical understanding of secularism in the system. This concern was clearly common in the three countries of destination.

Most importantly, on the basis of the two main criteria employed in this thesis in looking at sociocultural integration, represented by cultural maintenance and social contacts, and drawing on the research theoretical pillars in approaching sociocultural integration, the research findings strongly suggest that religiosity through the upbringing of children and positions towards sexual liberties and alcohol plays a key in role in increasing cultural maintenance, while minimizing social contacts between migrants and members of the host society. This chapter, also, shows that the impact of religiosity in raising children and the positions towards acts of cultural liberties are actually important elements in better understanding religiosity as a state of being, since both aspects represent lived examples, showing that religiosity is much more than being constrained in religious practices or specific rituals.

In clarifying the two elements, *first*, religiosity through the upbringing of children (or parental religiosity) refers, here, to how religiosity is displayed in raising children, mainly as a result of a concern manifested in how children's religiosity can be challenged by growing up in the West, and, most importantly, the impact of such concern on parents' religiosity (first generation migrants). Parental religiosity has been defined as parental activities seeking to stress children's conformity to religious rules (Myers 1996; Spiegler *et al.* 2016), it is also argued to involve purposeful socialization efforts including storytelling, religious instructions, and religious lessons (Güngör *et al.* 2012; Spiegler *et al.* 2016: 1161).

*Second*, what I refer to here as acts of cultural liberties is actually a term that I developed in this thesis by drawing on a variety of descriptions and perceptions that were introduced/emphasized by informants in referring to certain behaviors (and/or norms) of members of the host society. These descriptions rotate primarily around informants' positions towards what they see as norms

of exaggerated liberties related to the host society's culture, which are specified in behaviors associated with sexual liberties and alcohol (and/or drinking alcohol) in a western culture.

In other words, positions towards acts of cultural liberties in my thesis are taken on two main overarching elements: sexual liberties and the social dimension of alcohol-related issues. Sexual liberties, in this context, comprise premarital relationships/sex, public display of affection, and homosexuality. Alcohol is a challenge which is not only circumscribed in the issue of consumption or drinking, but also extends to involve other matters including jobs/workplaces, leisure activities and venues, as well as norms of socialization, etc.

Therefore, the rejection of alcohol here cannot be seen as a simple stance taken by just refraining from alcohol consumption. The real picture is actually more complex. This is because alcohol is linked to many aspects of social and professional activities in the context of reception, constitutes a pivotal cultural element in the host society, and involves numerous circumstances, events, situations where informants must decide on the way they are able to express their positions.

These positions, thus, are manifested in various forms, whether avoiding certain places, venues or even groups of people, or by abstaining from specific activities, and mingling with people from similar backgrounds. Hence, religion-based restrictions concerning alcohol requires more than simply deciding on the appropriate activities, it actually involves, as previously outlined, 'constant evaluation of the content and the context' in which such activities take place (Stodolska and Livengood 2006: 305), which leads to the reinforcement of the role and magnitude of religiosity in people's daily lives.

## **The significance of the upbringing of children and the acts of cultural liberties**

It became clear in the analysis of the empirical data that issues such as sexual liberties, the social dimension of alcohol, and the upbringing of children are major contexts where religiosity of informants is not only highly evoked but also reinforced and validated. Most importantly, building on how cultural integration is approached in this thesis as the extent of migrants' adoption/acquisition of values, customs, norms, and traditions of the receiving host society, including secular norms and traditions vs the retention of the values and norms of the country of origin, mainly religion (Alba and Nee 2003; Van Tubergen *et al.* 2004; Martinovic *et al.* 2009), the upbringing of children and the acts of cultural liberties represent settings where the interpretation and manifestation of religion is likely to draw a fault line between informants' culture and the host society's culture in the three countries under study.

In accordance with that, if we consider a list of specific contexts in the countries of destination where religiosity exhibits its strongest influence on Muslim migrants' sociocultural daily interaction, the raising of children and acts of cultural liberties come at the top of that list. My data analysis suggests that very few elements in the migratory experience are capable of stirring Muslim migrants' religiosity vis-à-vis the host society more than these two specific elements.

Moreover, having discussed, theoretically and empirically in Chapters three and Five, how Muslim migrants' religiosity takes on an added significance upon migration to Europe, and how it morphs to take different forms and functions in the new context, looking at migrants' religiosity through the upbringing of children and the acts of cultural liberties shows how religiosity is rather used as a frame that makes sense of migrants' social experiences in the host society, it also substantiates

how religion in the country of destination loses its taken-for-granted character that it used to have in the country of origin.

Furthermore, the upbringing of children and the acts of cultural liberties are key elements in linking migrants' religiosity with the context of reception, thus, embodying a practical setting of the dynamics of interaction between both. In this regard, having theorized secularism in chapter four as a foundational feature of the host society and a way of interpreting it, and argued that irrespective of the different interpretations of secularism in the UK, France, and Belgium on the institutional level, they all share very similar secular positions on the societal level, in that sense, aspects such as acts of cultural liberties (including sexual liberties) exhibit how certain secular norms can come face to face with migrants' religiosity in their everyday lives in the three countries of destination.

Another important significance in looking at raising children and the acts of cultural liberties in a migrant integration context appears in what has been argued in one of the central schools of thought addressing Muslim migrant integration (see Chapter Three), where Islamic traditions are argued to be seen as the prime challenge of integration (Kaltenbach and Tribalat 2002; Phalet *et al.* 2013; Bloemraad *et al.* 2008; Kastoryano 2004; Klausen 2008; Alba and Foner 2016). Although few scholars in this school of thought questioned the compatibility of Islamic values with western values (or at least focused on how the country of destination's system and society questioned these values), they did not sufficiently specify what these Islamic values/traditions are, or what western norms exactly represent. By focusing on the upbringing of children and acts of cultural liberties, I try to fill this gap by informing empirically about what exactly among Islamic traditions in the country of destination that might be seen running against the ethos of a secular western society.

Therefore, demonstrating these aspects implies the extent to which religiosity can be used in a secular context of reception as a frame of interpretive repertoires, which are mobilized by Muslim migrants while facing the complexities (and/or contradictions) accompanying their lived experiences in their country of destination (Ryan and Vacchelli 2013: 95-96), where many situations are evaluated against religious standards.

In so doing, I divide the chapter into two main organizing themes: first, the upbringing of children, or what was called ‘parental religiosity’ in previous studies (van de Pol and van Tubergen 2014), forms the first section of the chapter. In this section, I discuss what appears to be a self-perpetuating effect between the upbringing of children and religiosity, in which both influence each other in a way that exhibits a clear reinforcement of migrants’ religiosity in the country of destination, and shapes how migrants situate themselves in the host society; second, what I refer to as the acts of cultural liberties, including sexual liberties and alcohol, is explored in the second section of this chapter. In short, this section demonstrates in which way sexual liberties and alcohol-related issues intertwine with (and affect) informants’ religiosity in the country of destination. Similar to what has been outlined previously in Chapter Five, it is important to reiterate that the empirical demonstration of the upbringing of children and position towards acts of cultural liberties are not organized on a country level basis.

Finally, a third section is introduced in this chapter as a final section on religiosity -that has been discussed over the previous chapter and this one- in order to set out the main different trajectory of findings that emerged from the interviews as a secondary phenomenon or a minority perspective (as opposed to the primary phenomenon of the general reinforcement of religiosity).

## II. The Upbringing of Children

### A. Introduction

Through exploring the intertwining aspects between religiosity and the upbringing of children, this section sheds light on one major dimension of interaction between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception. Empirical data reveal a wide range of overlap and interaction between religiosity and the upbringing of children. This interaction, on one hand, plays a key role in shaping informants' religiosity in the country of destination, and on the other, it influences how informants situate/position themselves and their children vis-à-vis the host country and society.

The research findings emphasize what has been concluded by van de Pol and van Tubergen that the influence of religiosity in the upbringing of children cannot be ignored in the study of Muslim migrants' religiosity (2014: 87). The upbringing of children emerged in my analysis as forming a pivotal context for the manifestation of informants' religiosity in the country of destination. It represents one of the social modes where religiosity is clearly manifested and experienced. This manifestation takes place in a way that strongly substantiates the understanding of religiosity as a state of being, which is related to a life experience, that captures the impact of religion on Muslim migrants' daily lives, by providing codes of norms, values and behaviors used in interpreting and perceiving daily life situations.

As a definition, in general, it has been argued in literature that religiosity through raising children, refers to parental activities seeking to stress children's conformity to religious rules (Myers 1996; Spiegler *et al.* 2016). Previous research outlined that migrants' religion in the upbringing context entails distinctive prescriptions governing the family as well as the behavior of parents towards their children and towards the host society (Zolberg and Woon 1999). Nevertheless, the focus in

this research does not lie in parental religiosity of migrants *per se*, but rather in its impact on first generation migrants' religiosity, and how this can influence their sociocultural integration.

On that basis, I argue, in this section, for the presence of a self-perpetuating interaction between religiosity and the upbringing of children. In line with the overall dissertation argument which explores the dynamics of interaction between religiosity and the context of reception, this section substantiates one dimension of that argument by underlining an interplay between one aspect of religiosity (parental religiosity) and an existing setting of the context of reception, involving specific societal norms that widely take place in a secular western country (regardless of whether these norms are theorized as secular norms or not). This interplay, though, takes place through a self-perpetuating dynamic in which religiosity and the upbringing of children mutually influence each other.

Based on what I outlined in Chapter Four, namely that the context of reception refers to the combination of the state's general approach of migrant integration, its institutional framework organizing this approach, and, most importantly, its host society, this thesis finds that religiosity through the upbringing of children propels migrants' everyday religiosity towards a close interaction with certain elements of the context of reception. It represents one of the immediate ways in which migrants come face to face with the host society.

Moreover, it is relevant to point out that my research signals a gap in literature addressing the issue of the upbringing of children among Muslim migrants. This is related to how such upbringing, at its origin, influences first generation migrants' religiosity. Mainstream literature studying the issue of religiosity through the upbringing of children among Muslim migrants in the west mostly approached the topic from angles irrelevant to first generation's religiosity, such as: intergenerational change in religiosity (Maliepaard *et al.* 2010; Phalet *et al.* 2008); parents-children

relationships (Baker- Sperry 2001; Clark and Worthington 1990); the inheritance and/or transmission of religion to subsequent generations (Güngör *et al.* 2011; Maliepaard and Lubbers 2013); and, whether religiosity in the upbringing acts as a bridge or a barrier to the integration of migrants' children (Spiegler *et al.* 2016). For example, scholars such as Bader and Desmond argued that the stronger the religiosity of parents, the higher the transmission of this religiosity to their children (2006: 326), however, they did not address how this transmission, in and of itself, can influence parents religiosity.

My research, thus, fills in this gap by focusing on the impact of the upbringing of children on the religiosity of first generation Muslim migrants. In so doing, and within the overall theoretical approach of the research, particularly the theory of religiosity as a social identity, this section draws briefly on the socialization theory (Glass *et al.* 1986; Cornwell *et al.* 2008; Bao *et al.* 1999) and the social representation theory (Moscovici 1988), to demonstrate the interplay between the upbringing of children and informants' religiosity in the UK, France, and Belgium.

In this regard, the discussion is structured as follows: first, the section explores the general aspects of overlapping between religiosity and the upbringing of children in the three countries of destination; second, the section demonstrates one dimension of this interplay, which appears in the impact of the upbringing of children on informants' religiosity. This is by looking at how raising children increases people's consciousness about their own religion, and reinforces the magnitude of religion in their daily lives, in order to be able to pass it on successfully to their children.

Third, the section, in parallel, addresses the other dimension of the interplay, which is the impact of religiosity on the upbringing of children, and how religiosity acts as an important resource that can be activated by informants in supporting their parenting (Ryan and Vacchelli 2013: 101). This is a kind of resource that corresponds to the theory of religious reliance used in this thesis

(Hirschman 2004). This section also analyzes how the role of religiosity in raising children situates Egyptian Muslim migrants in relation to the host society, by stressing the representation of religion to explain their behavior (Amer *et al.* 2015). This last part is addressed through demonstrating the social implications of raising children in the three countries of destination, including the extent to which parental religiosity can function as a manifestation of cultural divergence towards the host society.

## **B. The general overlapping**

By drawing on my empirical analysis, this section demonstrates the general overlapping and/or interdependence between religiosity and the upbringing of children in a western secular context of reception. It also outlines the main reasons for such overlapping.

In the UK, France, and Belgium, analysis of empirical data shows that the process of the upbringing of children functions as a medium where religiosity is highly manifested and reinforced. Throughout the interviews the issue of raising children was one of the most encouraging topics for discussing religiosity, even among those who were reserved in discussing religion. In other words, children and religion emerge in my findings as two of the most overlapping themes. Once the issue of religion was raised by my informants, the upbringing of children naturally followed. In parallel, in addressing anything relevant to the upbringing of children in the three countries of destination, religion was the very first topic to be thrust to the fore in most replies.

This profound significance of religion in the upbringing of children seems to stem from a belief among informants that the process of upbringing in the country of destination is crucial for shaping and designing their children's identity and culture in a secular distinct context of reception.

Therefore, and on the basis of what has been outlined previously (in Chapters Three and Five) regarding the unique characteristics of religion in migration, and the multiple functions it offers for Muslim migrants, empirical findings identify a number of reasons that substantiate this strong overlapping or interdependence between the upbringing of children and religiosity. This includes: the high priority that the issue of passing on culture and religion represents among Muslim migrants in a western secular country of destination; the fear of children embracing the host society's culture at the expense of their culture of origin; the role of religion in facing what is seen as a cultural threat posed by certain norms of the host society (i.e. acts of cultural liberties); the role that raising children plays in evoking religiosity among parents, even among those who have not given religion much priority in their lives before parenting; and finally, the general belief in religion as a clear and efficient tool in preserving culture among children, in comparison to other parenting tools.

Theoretically, such overlapping between religiosity and the upbringing of children is better understood within the socialization theory, where Muslim parents are held primarily responsible for what is known as religious socialization of their children (Spiegler *et al.* 2016: 1161). In other words, parents -through the upbringing of children- are considered the primary socialization agents of religiosity, as they model and reinforce children's values and attitudes (Glass *et al.* 1986; Cornwell *et al.* 2008; and Bao *et al.* 1999). These values, then, are argued to be transmitted from parents to children through active teaching by parents and observation by children (Bandura 1986; Maliepaard and Lubbers 2013). The same was outlined by Thornton who argued that parents influence their children's religiosity through socializing them to believe and practice in ways similar to their own (2007: 1228).

To complete this picture, in this research, I argue that while parents are playing this role of setting their children's religiosity, their own religiosity is changed and fostered by the effect of this upbringing process itself. As such, this reflects how the upbringing of children is indeed an important aspect where religiosity is manifested, reinforced, and validated among Muslim migrants.

Nevertheless, before discussing the dynamics in which informants' religiosity can be instilled through the upbringing of their children, it is important to outline first a number of common ways that strongly emerged from interviews through which the upbringing process is generally materialized. This involved: informing children in details about Islam; teaching children practices, rituals and Quraa'n; educating them about the major *haram* acts; sending them to an Arabic/Islamic school; implementing a hybrid approach of open conversations and strict rules in enforcing Islamic provisions on children; spending more time with children at home; and most importantly, situating children among other families/children from similar religious/cultural background (mostly Egyptian Muslims).

These ways clarify how religiosity through the upbringing of children can involve purposeful socialization efforts including storytelling, religious instructions, and religious lessons (Güngör *et al.* 2012; Spiegler *et al.* 2016: 1161). All of these ways of upbringing reflect the desire to keep children on what is regarded by parents as the right path, by instilling religious values among children (Ryan and Vacchelli 2013).

A number of quotes emerged from the interviews and emphasized such overlapping in the three countries under study. In France, for example, in clarifying the way he raises his son in France, Akram noted: "I want him to be a good Muslim....to adopt a complete Muslim life style from the morning till the evening...and to be a knowledgeable Muslim as well...[ ] ...and for this I have to

lead by example... also through religion classes....sending them to an Arabic school on Saturday to learn Arabic and religion....[ ]....also teaching him do'aa in whatever problems we face...their attachment to religion increases by this...the five daily prayers are very important..”. In the same sense, Hussein commented: “I taught my children religion and fasting and praying...I sent them to Egypt when they were young in order to get the basis of our culture and traditions and language”. Similarly, in the UK, Farouk stated: “I try to teach them religion by sending them to an Arabic school...and to focus with them more at home, as we only speak Arabic at home...we go to Egypt every year and spend the entire summer there...I also encourage them to pray and to learn Quraa’n....when my son asks about anything regarding religion, I speak with him openly, I try to explain to him that we are Muslims and Egyptians and that our religion says so and so”.

In this sense, my thesis findings echo a number of important points that have been raised in literature about the upbringing of children among Muslim migrants (Bao *et al.* 1999; Regnerus *et al.* 2004; Ruiter and Van Tubergen 2009; Berry and Georgas 2009; Gongur *et al.* 2011). My research strongly emphasizes that: first, parents provide their children with foundational components of religiosity, including a religious worldview, set example of religious behavior and decide on religious education; second, enforcing religiosity during childhood is seen as the prime means of maintaining religion and culture among Muslim migrants in the west; and third, religious transmission from one generation to another takes place through both explicit ways of learning at home, and other implicit ways through daily activities and social interactions.

Having discussed the general interdependence between religiosity and the upbringing of children, it is important to take a closer look at the dynamics of this interdependence, where a self-perpetuating interplay appears to be taking place, in which both elements reinforce each other. As will be discussed in details in Chapter Eight, this minor interplay sets out to substantiate the overall

thesis argument about the bigger cyclic effect between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception.

### **C. The upbringing of children impacts religiosity: a stimulating effect**

Based on the thematic analysis of my data, this section serves to demonstrate one part of the self-perpetuating interplay between religiosity and the upbringing of children, which is the impact of the upbringing of children on informants' religiosity.

In the three countries under study, and based on data analysis, the research argues that no matter what religious norms, behaviors, or practices that can be enforced or transmitted during the upbringing of children in the country of destination, whether it is instructions about abstaining alcohol and sexual liberties, or wearing hijabs, or visiting mosques (Pinquart and Silbereisen 2004; Rohan and Zanna 1996), the process of the upbringing, in and of itself, situates informants into a state of being that is strongly dictated/influenced by religion. Thus, it contributes to the invigoration of informants' general religiosity.

Moreover, most importantly, such reinforcement of religiosity, that is triggered by the upbringing of children, and manifested primarily in a rise of the conscious awareness of one's religion, is mainly associated with certain conditions of the secular context of reception. This profound interest by informants in engaging with religion stems, it emerges, not only from the importance of passing it on to their children, but also from the belief that such a process requires developing solid arguments and convincing techniques to be able to balance what they see as contradicting secular realities within the context of reception, especially among the host society. Maliepaard and Lubbers referred to such status by attributing the increase in Muslim migrants' religiosity to the rise of more complicated relations between them and the host countries during the upbringing,

where parents become more conscious about their religion and their role in keeping it alive by instilling religiosity in the upbringing process (2013: 438).

In this sense, my empirical data show that the amount of effort and information that informants feel they need to mobilize in order to pass on religion to their children, plays, in fact, a key role in taking their religiosity a step further. This effect of the upbringing on religiosity ranges from having more awareness about religion, to developing an urge to lead by example, to learning more about religious provisions, up to trying different approaches in teaching children various aspects of religiosity; all of which are elements that have a strong impact in morphing informants' religiosity (or even interest in religiosity) from how it was before having to deal with children.

For instance, in order to lead by example in raising their children, informants in the UK, France, and Belgium share a belief that they have to be more informed about Islam, more disciplined when it comes to its provisions and behaviors, and overall more religious, to be able to display the skills and knowledge needed to pass it on successfully to their children in a secular context of reception. Accordingly, they start engaging more with religion, for example, by practicing or by being more disciplined in their religious observance.

This is reflected in different comments across the three countries. In the UK, for example, as Magdi eloquently put it: “in Egypt we learned that the strength of your religion is created from the fact of how it protects rights and justice...however when we came here we found out that justice and rights are more protected here without religion than in Egypt...this forces you to think more, and to adjust your strategies with your children...in convincing them of the principles and values of our religion”. The same was emphasized by Neveen: “I should be always prepared for any question asked by the children about any topic such as halal meat, hijab, sex, etc. ...but no matter how the

question is embarrassing, I try to answer openly”. It is clear from these quotes that the challenge of preserving children’s religion lies in issues related to the norms of the host secular society.

#### **D. Religiosity impacts the upbringing of children: positionality towards the host society**

Having discussed the impact of the upbringing of children on religiosity as a stimulating factor of that religiosity in the previous section, in this section, I focus on the other side of the interplay, which lies in the impact of religiosity on the upbringing of children. In this context, analysis of my data implies that inasmuch as the upbringing of children affects informants’ religiosity, Muslim migrants’ religiosity, in parallel, plays a key role in shaping the process of bringing up children through setting various rules, values, and traditions of this process.

In this section, I discuss the magnitude of religiosity in the upbringing of children across one major organizing theme, which is strongly associated with the context of reception. This is the extent to which the issue of raising children can act as an element of cultural divergence between migrants and the host society. It indicates how the impact of religiosity on the upbringing of children can influence the ways by which migrants situate themselves towards the host society.

In addition, while addressing the impact of religiosity on the upbringing of children by focusing on the issue of cultural divergence (or cultural distinction) including the scope of concerns about children, this section emphasizes a number of functions of religiosity in the upbringing process such as: a framework for teaching children right and wrong; a means of protecting children from certain secular norms (i.e. acts of cultural liberties); what is referred to as an authoritative voice (Ryan and Vacchelli 2013: 90) that reinforces parents’ control in the upbringing; and, most importantly, a means of distinguishing between migrants’ culture and that of the host society’.

In further elaborating that, my thesis shows that issues such as what should be taught to children, what should not be done by children, the groups of people they are allowed to mingle with, the groups they need to avoid, and the venues where they can socialize, all of which are upbringing issues that are highly dictated by informants' religiosity. So, since religiosity in the upbringing of children does not take place independently from the social context (Sherkat 2003; Vermeer *et al.* 2012, qtd in van de Pol and van Tubergen 2014: 88), it is important, then, to emphasize that this role of religiosity in the upbringing process is closely linked to the role of religiosity in perceiving the host society (this will be further discussed in Chapter Seven).

Such effect of religiosity on the upbringing process epitomizes the theoretical approach to religiosity in this thesis, which builds on the theory of religiosity as a social identity (Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010; Postmes *et al.* 2006; Maliepaard and Phalet 2012), and on the conception of everyday religiosity (Jeldtoft 2010), and its understanding as a state of being. More specifically, religiosity here is seen/used as a source of social validation which results in an in-group (i.e. Egyptian Muslims) bias among informants, based on the benefits provided by co-religious group in preserving one's own culture and identity.

One of religiosity's functions in the upbringing of children is to shape migrants' social process and its associated practices in their countries of destination. This, in fact, comes in line with the main functions of religiosity that have been voiced in literature in clarifying its role as a social identity (Ysseldyk *et al.* 2010; Torrekens and Jacob 2016; Karlsen and Nazroo 2013).

Accordingly, and as will be shown in Chapter Eight, such impact of religiosity on the upbringing of children can directly influence migrants' sociocultural integration, whether through channeling children and their parents into peer religious community (Martin *et al.* 2003; Spiegler *et al.* 2016),

or by increasing their religiosity (Verkuyten *et al.* 2012), or even by dictating their choice on children's friends.

For Egyptian Muslim migrants in the UK, France, and Belgium, upbringing rules, norms, and traditions are mostly dictated by religion in one way or another. The ways of enforcing religiosity in the upbringing of children, as shown in this research, correspond to what has been noted by Ryan and Vacchelli, that Islam can be used as a frame that provides a set of interpretative repertoire, which is mobilized by Muslim migrants while addressing the upbringing of their children (2013: 95). In other words, Islamic traditions in the upbringing of children are used as a lens to interpret different situations and/or social contexts, so that informants are able to decide on how to deal with such contexts.

Overall, in line with the understanding of religiosity as a state of being, my research findings support what has been highlighted in previous studies that religiosity (or religion) in the upbringing of children is used as a frame to make sense and give meaning to Muslim migrants' experiences and encounters (Ryan and Vacchelli 2013). However, my thesis advances this by demonstrating in which way this parental religiosity makes sense and give meaning to Muslim migrants' experiences. This appears in how religiosity functions as one of the most explicit and persuasive means in shaping the upbringing process, by providing what I refer to as a clear recipe in passing on culture through transmitting religion. As outlined above, my empirical findings organize this key role of religiosity in the upbringing in one overarching theme, which is the issue of cultural divergence.

## **The issue of cultural divergence through the upbringing of children**

One important aspect of the impact of religiosity on the upbringing of children is how it emerges as a clear context of cultural divergence (or fault line) between informants and the host society. In other words, religiosity in the upbringing is identified here as a major factor in encouraging Egyptian Muslim migrants to mix and mingle mostly with their co-ethnoreligious peers.

Spiegler *et al.* (2016) suggested that while parental religiosity is important in nurturing religiosity among children, it provides a significant resource for parents to consolidate children's identification with the culture of origin at the expense of identifying with the host society's culture, concluding that parental religiosity negatively affects children's identification with the host society, and subsequently challenges their integration (this will be further elaborated in Chapter Eight). Similarly, other research suggests that while religiosity in the upbringing of children for Muslim migrants reinforces ethnic ties (Güngör *et al.* 2011; Maliepaard and Lubbers 2012), it weakens the ties with the host society's culture (Güngör *et al.* 2012; Verkuyten *et al.* 2012). Hence, by looking at children, it has been argued that parental religiosity contributes in widening cultural distance between Muslim migrants and the host society through situating children into peer religious/ethnic groups (Martin *et al.* 2003), and/or increasing the levels of children's religiosity (Verkuyten *et al.* 2012).

My research echoes these findings, and finds that such divergence outstrips the range of children, which has been proposed in literature, to strongly involve their parents as well (first generation migrants). In addition, this section specifies how this process takes place, particularly how religiosity in the upbringing of children can act as an underlying basis of a state of cultural distance between Muslim migrants (parents) and members of the host society. Of all the contexts where

indications of cultural distinctions could be seen (such as workplaces, schools, certain social activities, etc.), the upbringing of children presents a pivotal context where religiosity illuminates, and to some extent nurtures, cultural distinctions between informants and the host society. As such, this thesis strongly suggests that the upbringing process comprises numerous narratives, attitudes and instructions that primarily draw on the perceived differences -and not similarities- between informants and the host society's cultural characteristics.

For example, parents of young children told me of their search for a religious-based rationale to support their emphasis on cultural distinctions; this constitutes a major part of the upbringing process itself. Arguments such as 'it doesn't suit us as Muslims', 'our culture is different', 'our religion forbids us from doing so', 'they have no religion but we are Muslims', etc. all of which are narratives that repeatedly emerged in the interviews to reflect how religiosity represents a strong anchor in developing this rationale, and ultimately used to justify the criticism of existing cultural traits among the host society. It is clear, then, that this cultural delineation within the upbringing of children emerges clearly in issues related to socialization, and how informants situate themselves and their children within the host society.

As such, this effect of religiosity in the upbringing of children on sociocultural integration can be summarized in four points that emerged strongly through thematic analysis of my empirical data: 1) the choice of communities/groups eligible to mingle with; 2) children's friends; 3) the set of arguments used in justifying the rejection of the host society's cultural traits; and 4) consolidating parental authority over children. Although it has been noted that religiosity in the upbringing of children emphasizes migrants' sense of distinctiveness and distance from the mainstream host society culture (Güngör *et al.* 2011: 1360), by drawing on these four themes, my research advances

this argument by substantiating how this cultural distinctiveness practically takes place. This is explained as follows:

#### **i. Emphasis on mingling with co-religious community (in-group ties)**

In the limited literature on migrants' children, it has been argued that the transmission of religion from parents to children is fostered when migrants are closely integrated into communities of similar religious and cultural background (van de Pol and van Tubergen 2014). My findings in the three countries under study signal that, and, in addition, assert that a major reason behind the development of cultural and social distance between informants and the host society during the upbringing of children is associated with informants' assertiveness on mingling with communities of similar cultural and religious background, mainly Egyptian Muslims. Thus, expanding the range of the strong ties (Granovetter 1973) linking them with their co-ethnoreligious peers. The importance of mingling with children/families from similar backgrounds was repeatedly emphasized in this research as one way of validating and reinforcing religiosity among children.

In this regard, my research also emphasizes that inasmuch as in-group mingling between Muslim migrants with the purpose of retaining religiosity among their children is argued to increase the control of parents over children (Maliepaard and Lubbers 2013), to facilitate religious transmission, or to prevent children from being exposed to what is regarded as contradicting norms about the role of religion in life (Myers 1996), my empirical findings emphasize that what is actually more important here is the impact of this process on the religiosity of parents, and how they position themselves towards the country of destination's system and society.

My research finds that during this process of socializing children among their peer Egyptian Muslim community, not only do informants pass on religion successfully to their children, but

also, on one hand, their own religiosity is nurtured and reinforced, and on the other, the distance between them and members of the host society seems to widen in terms of social behavior and cultural characteristics, mainly by the effect of the environment created in upbringing their children.

As will be outlined in Chapter Eight, if we consider sociocultural integration as the process by which differences between migrants and the host society narrow over time, with regard to aspects of social behavior and cultural characteristics (Alba and Nee 2003; Bennett 2011), then the effect of religiosity in the upbringing of children strengthens these differences instead of bridging them, and consequently minimizes the chances of social and cultural integration. As Hussein in the UK emphasized: “I want my children to be like us...but the most thing I’m worried about is their religion...[ ]...we try to mingle and to get closer to the Arab and Muslim community...and to get away from the British society”.

Accordingly, on the basis of the two main criteria employed in this thesis in looking at sociocultural integration (see Chapter Three), represented by cultural maintenance and social contacts, and drawing on the research theoretical pillars in approaching sociocultural integration (i.e. weak and strong ties approach), the thesis strongly suggests that religiosity in the upbringing of children plays a key role in increasing cultural maintenance, while minimizing social contacts between migrants and members of the host society.

Many informants in the UK, France, and Belgium stressed the importance of situating their children, and subsequently themselves, among culturally similar communities (either Egyptian Muslims or Arab Muslims), as a means of maintaining religion and culture by validating and reinforcing Islamic traditions (or restrictions) that are displayed in the upbringing process. In the UK, for example, in her advice to a potential Egyptian Muslim migrant, Nahed commented: “the

most important thing is to situate the children in a Muslim community...[ ]...I would tell her/ him you should look for a suitable community for us as Arabs and Muslims to mingle with, and to raise your children around...so that your children could be their children's friends...and that children won't feel they are alone". Similarly, Nadia mentioned: "the most important thing with raising children, is to try to give them the feeling that they are not alone...not alone with a certain life style or restrictions...but rather show them that there are plenty of other children do live similarly". Also in emphasizing the extent to which the upbringing process influenced his socialization in the UK, Hassan noted: "Now I might hang out with certain people only because I have children...whereas in different situation I wouldn't have noticed them at the first place".

The research findings substantiate empirically what has been argued theoretically in previous studies that the socialization and/or transmission of norms and values to children is more effective if such values are reinforced by other people in the children's social environment (van de Pol and van Tubergen 2014: 91), and that strong ethnic ties can facilitate religious socialization (Martin *et al.* 2003; Güngör *et al.* 2011).

As such, although religiosity in upbringing has been argued to be channeling children into peer groups and activities within the faith community (Martin *et al.* 2003), and increasing their identification with the culture of origin (Spiegler *et al.* 2016: 1161-1162), my data show that this effect goes beyond children to strongly involve parents' patterns of socialization as well.

## **ii. Children's native friends**

In previous studies, the influence of children's friends is argued to play a major role in either hindering or encouraging the enforcement and transmission of religiosity to children (Maliepaard and Lubbers 2013). In this sense, it has also been outlined that having many native friends is linked to lower levels of religiosity (Phalet *et al.* 2008). In my research, I look at it more from the

perspective of concerns about children, and how such concerns shape Muslim migrants' (or parents') patterns of socialization. Thus, my research emphasizes this point, by focusing on how parents in the country of destination react towards the issue of their children socializing with natives.

In the three countries under study, my data show that another aspect that reflects the impact of religiosity on the upbringing of children - from the perspective of cultural divergence- appears in informants' restrictions on and/or objections about their children mixing/socializing with native friends. The interest in raising children among culturally similar families/ communities is coupled with restrictions/objections about mixing with native friends. In the UK, France, and Belgium, informants shared clear reservations in allowing their children to mix with native children, attributing this to the fear that their children might adhere to certain cultural traits of the host society at their childhood, mainly issues related to sexual liberties, or general detachment from religion, where both are seen as a major cultural threat.

For example, in highlighting her major concerns about her children, Nermeen mentioned: "it is friends...I tried hard to make them have Arab and Egyptian friends when they were children...but it was hard...because the area [a small village in the UK] where we used to live in their childhood was full of English people with few Arabs and Muslims... I was afraid from the impact of their English friends with regard to certain things such as drinking and relationships". Similarly, Neveen stressed the link of her concerns regarding sexual liberties with the existence of native friends of her daughter: "my daughter once told me that her British friend at school...a seven year old...explained to her in details the full sexual process between a man and a woman...and I believe this is completely inappropriate for a child to hear...what struck me most was that this girl got to know such information from her mom". The same was implicitly outlined by Tarek: "my concerns

lie in the society where the children are raised...which is not a religious society or a believing one...and when the children go to school they encounter very different culture”.

It is quite clear how the secular host society, in this context, features in the overall relationship between the upbringing of children and religiosity, and subsequently in positioning informants towards the host society.

These findings are crucial in substantiating what has been laid out in Chapter Four in conceptualizing secularism in this thesis, and how it can be approached within the frame of what I refer to as everyday secularism (in the same sense to the research’s understanding of everyday religiosity). Such concerns about sexual liberties and alcohol, for example, elucidate how informants regard secularism in a practical way on the society level.

Overall, these findings regarding socializing with native friends correspond to what has been concluded in previous studies that the enforcement and/or transmission of religiosity is stronger among Muslim migrants who are more integrated into their co-religious community than for those who are more integrated into the secular native society.

### **iii. Narratives/rationales justifying the objection of the host society’s culture**

Finally, another aspect that seems to solidify the issue of cultural divergence during the upbringing of children appears strongly in the rationales and/or narratives used by informants in explaining to their children the underlying basis of their rejection/objection to certain cultural traits of the host society. These rationales/narratives are key in situating informants towards the host society.

The overarching argument in these narratives rotates around the idea of ‘it does not suit us as Muslims’, which primarily rests on the concept of ‘us vs them’. As outlined in Chapter Three, these narratives are grounded in how religious identity is understood in this thesis through a) involving a strong element of self-identification, not only as Muslims, but also that being a Muslim

represents the most important identity element that defines their sense of self (Verkuyten and Yildiz 2010; Dudejira 2010); b) emphasizing that religious identification implies, in parallel, dis-identification from the host society (Güngör *et al.* 2011); and c) showing how religious identity refers to ethnicity, by representing an important symbolic marker for attachment and belonging to a particular culture (Peek 2005).

On that basis, one point that emerged strongly from interviews is how religiosity was evoked in the upbringing process as a persuasive argument to justify cultural distance, while consolidating religious identification. Wael, in this regard, commented: “I try to explain to them [his children] that there are limits, and there many things in this society we can’t do and shouldn’t be doing as Muslims”. Also, Ali asserted: “we raise our children to be aware that there are things that don’t suit us as Egyptians and Muslims...such as pork and drinking and these things...including pre-marital relationships”. In addition, with a firm tone, Tarek commented: “my children don’t celebrate Christmas...I asked the school not to include them in such events...though I teach them how to respect others...they have to be open to the community...they know for example the gay community...but you have to convince them that these things are not suitable for our culture...you have to guide them to find an answer”.

This illustrates what has been outlined that some Muslim parents think of schools as places where children are likely to be led astray (Halstead 2007: 292). It also comes in line with what has been argued in previous studies that what are known as disagreements between western and Islamic values come to the fore in the upbringing of Muslim children in western countries due to what is regarded as discrepancy between the moral education children are receiving at home with their parents, and what they are exposed to in the host country outside home (Halstead 2007).

#### **iv. Religiosity as a means of consolidating parental authority**

Finally, another important impact of religiosity in the upbringing of children that has been signaled in the UK, France, and Belgium is associated with the role of religion in instilling parents' authority on their children. Such claimed authority is, also, closely linked to how informants want to situate themselves distant from the host society, through ensuring control over their children.

In academic literature, it has been found that religiosity in the upbringing helps Muslim migrants to maintain a firmer grip on their children (Maliepaard and Lubbers 2013: 428), where the knowledge of Islam can be used to reinforce parents' authority in the country of destination (Jouili and Moazami 2006). My research, while emphasizing this finding, finds that the main reason behind informants having such a strong urge to consolidate their authority over their children lies in their ultimate objective of instilling religiosity among children, by focusing on means of actions that maintain the children's cultural and social distance from the host society.

Informants repeatedly drew attention to the significance of authority consolidation over children throughout interviews by referring to comparisons with the country of origin. They sought to show the difference in strength of parental authority between the two contexts, with stronger authority in a secular country of destination. Numerous comments were made which underlined that the upbringing of children in the country of destination is for many Egyptian Muslim migrants in the west perceived as an easier and less challenging mission compared to the situation in Egypt. For example, a number of informants who expressed their preference of raising their children in the country of destination rather than in Egypt ascribed it to the strong authority they already have over their children in the UK, France, and Belgium. This is a kind of authority that is justified by arguments related to what is seen as the incompatible secular and distinct host society, compared to the much less control they can have over their children in Egypt.

In this sense, Azza, in expressing her disappointment of the upbringing process in Egypt said: “here in the UK I have a suitable context to tell my son don’t do this because it doesn’t suit our religion, norms and traditions as Muslims...because we are Muslims and they are not....whereas in Egypt I cannot tell him this because everybody there is a Muslim with the same traditions and customs...thus I have more control over my children here than I would have in Egypt”. Nahed also explained: “here my children know that we have a different culture and not everything here could be applied for us...whereas in Egypt I cannot tell them this or that issue doesn’t suit us...there is no comparison...of course it is easier here... here I can tell them some traditions don’t suit us...but what am I supposed to tell them in Egypt”.

Similarly, Mamdouh (a second generation man) elaborated on this point by saying: “you know, every time we go to Egypt my mom is shocked to see that things aren’t done in Egypt the way she thought... like it’s more relaxed there...and she always expresses this with her relatives back home...she criticizes their life styles by telling them that this is not the way we do things in the UK...she realizes how the Egyptian society surpassed what she still thinks as basic traditions...[ ]...every time I go to Egypt I found my cousins and relatives more open....I can say that I’m more similar to them than to my parents”.

As such, the research findings elucidate that such claimed parental authority among informants in the countries of destination is primarily linked to maintaining children’s religiosity, mainly through setting and shaping their positionality towards the host society. As a whole, having explored the impact of religiosity on the upbringing of children - from angles related to the interest of socializing with similar communities, the clear concerns about children mixing with native friends, and consolidating parental authority - implies the extent to which religiosity in such context is vital in situating Muslim migrants and their children towards the host country and society.

### III. Acts of Cultural Liberties

#### A. Introduction

Another vital aspect of religiosity that emerged as a core element in my data analysis is the positions towards what I call here acts of cultural liberties. On that point, my research presents a more nuanced picture to what has been voiced by Norris and Inglehart that the most salient fault line between Islam and western traditions does not involve democracy as much as it involves issues of gender equality and sexual liberties (2002: 16; 2012). It also presents insights to what has been concluded by Stodolska and Livengood, underlining that the effect of Islam on Muslim migrants manifests itself through the emphasis on restrictions regarding certain behaviors including mix-gender interaction, dating, and alcohol (2006: 293).

These previous studies touched on the issues of sexual liberties and alcohol broadly while looking at the general effect of religion on leisure behavior of Muslim migrants in the west, and also in analyzing the clash of civilization thesis. However, scholars have not examined closely the issues of sexual liberties and alcohol in particular in a detailed manner in terms of their implications on other aspects of migrants' daily lives, in the context of migrant integration.

My research builds on these studies, and adds nuances by highlighting the domains where sexual liberties and alcohol appear to be most present, with a special focus on how these issues emerged naturally in my qualitative study as core elements while looking at migrant integration. My thesis shows that the significance of these acts appears in how they are strongly linked to other important aspects of religiosity outlined in this thesis. They are guided by *halal and haram*, highly intertwined with religious identity, and largely overlapping with the upbringing of children. They not only touch on the core pillars of religiosity in this thesis, but also are closely associated with

the components of the context of reception, particularly the understanding of secularism within the societal context of reception. Thus, they are key in Muslim migrant integration.

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, acts of cultural liberties refer to two main overarching elements: sexual liberties, and alcohol-related issues. More specifically, they epitomize the social dimension of sexual liberties and alcohol, mainly with regard to Muslim migrants' positions towards behaviors related to these two aspects. Sexual liberties, in this context, refer to premarital relationships/sex, public display of affection, and homosexuality. While alcohol is an issue which is not only constrained in positions towards alcohol consumption, but also extended to comprise other related issues including jobs/workplaces, leisure activities, and norms of socialization, etc.

In this regard, it is worth noting that despite what has been argued extensively in a growing body of literature about the extent of differences between secular western societies and Muslim migrants (Alba and Foner 2016; Joppke 2009), or what has been mentioned about western values vs Islamic values (Bergeaud-Blackler 2007; Cesari 2006; Bowen 2007), my research suggests that sexual liberties and alcohol represent two of the most profound elements that exemplify the thesis of cultural differences between Muslim migrants and the west.

Accordingly, based on the findings of this research, I argue that the actual challenge for Muslim migrants is not primarily represented by just living in a non-religious (or a secular) society or country *per se*, with a general limited role of religion. In everyday experiences, the real challenge that the secular society represents for Muslim migrants is rather seen in these two forms of acts of cultural liberties, most strongly represented by sex and alcohol.

This thesis fills a gap in literature by looking at these acts of cultural liberties not only from an integration perspective, but also in demystifying the interaction between migrants' religiosity and

the context of reception. Existing literature addressing issues related to acts of cultural liberties with regard to Muslim migrants, especially in the context of sociocultural integration, is quite scant. And even within this limited body of literature, when issues related to these acts of cultural liberties are mentioned they do not receive the attention that is proportionate to their actual impact on migrants' lives in the west. For example, the majority of existing research touching on issues related to sex (or sexuality) and alcohol for Muslim migrants have mostly approached these issues from angles pertinent to gender equality, sexual education, identity formation (Abu-Laban and Qureshi 1991), or even more specific issues such as 'virginity' for Muslim women (Abboud *et al.* 2015; Amer *et al.* 2015), or female covering including the hijab (Omair 2009; Ryan and Vacchelli 2013).

This thesis explicitly addresses these acts of cultural liberties not only as a profound component of a lived religiosity of my informants but also as a foundational element in setting the tone of the trajectories of sociocultural integration, or, in other words, in shaping informants' perceptions and interactions with the host native society. In the three countries under study, my research finds that the issues of sexual liberties and drinking alcohol, especially migrants' positions towards them, take on an added significance, and are thrust to the fore of migrants' social and cultural lives in a western secular country of destination. The focus, thus, on issues related to sex and alcohol clarifies the narratives used in previous studies referring to Muslim migrants' activities carried out within Islamic limits (Tirone 1999; Carrington *et al.* 1987).

Furthermore, my research approach to acts of cultural liberties is theoretically guided by the theory of religiosity as a social identity (Postmes *et al.* 2006; Maliepaard and Phalet 2012), social representation theory (Moscovici 1988), and by the conception of everyday religiosity (Jeldtoft 2011). As such, religiosity, through shaping informants' positions towards acts of cultural liberties,

is used as a source of social validation which, also, results in an in-group (i.e. Egyptian Muslims) bias, based on the familiarity of values and the cultural protection provided by developing strong ties with co-religious groups, through preserving one's own religiosity by shunning behaviors related to acts of cultural liberties.

In short, this research analyzes how Egyptian Muslims in the UK, France, and Belgium use their position towards acts of cultural liberties to situate themselves in relation to the host society, by drawing on the functions of religiosity as a social identity and on the representation of religion to explain their behavior. It shows how informants hold strong religious representation by deciding on their position towards drinking alcohol and different norms of sexual liberties.

Moreover, the understanding of secularism, as the role of religion in the society (Jaworsky *et al.* 2012), features strongly in looking at the social dimension of the acts of cultural liberties in this regard. First, since sexual liberties and alcohol are linked -in the eyes of Muslim migrants- to the limited role (or absence) of religion in the society (as they come on top of the *haram* or forbidden acts), thus, they are implicitly regarded by informants as secular norms, based on this specific interpretation of secularism. Second, considering these acts as parables of secular behavior in the three countries of destination substantiates how the interpretation of secularism influences the positionality of informants towards the host society. In other words, looking at the acts of cultural liberties shows how secularism, in this thesis, is used as an important lens in interpreting the host society.

Therefore, building on the above mentioned theoretical approach, and similar to the previous section on the upbringing of children, this section emphasizes, on one hand, how religiosity dictates informants' positions and attitudes towards the acts of cultural liberties, and subsequently towards the host society. And on the other hand, how the wide existence of these acts of cultural

liberties in the countries of destination -within the secular host societies- creates an environment that contributes in evoking, and to some extent reinforcing, the role and magnitude of religiosity in informants' daily lives.

In so doing, the section addresses the acts of cultural liberties over two main points: first, an empirical overview on the social dimension of migrants' positions towards the interaction between religiosity and acts of cultural liberties; second, a discussion on the main differences distinguishing the implications of sexual liberties from that of alcohol-related issues.

## **B. The social dimension of the interplay between religiosity and the acts of cultural liberties**

In the UK, France, Belgium, my data analysis emphasizes that acts related to sexual liberties and alcohol are not only considered *haram* by informants, but also account, as described previously in literature, among the biggest sins in Islam (Amer *et al.* 2015, and Abboud *et al.* 2015). And indeed, the vast majority of informants in the three countries under study expressed their concern about the wide presence of these acts, especially as being a common cultural feature within the host society, and how such norms disrupt their lives in the country of destination. Acts of cultural liberties, thus, represent a strong point of critique to the host society's culture and lifestyle, on issues such as premarital sex and alcohol drinking, which are known to run against major Islamic traditions.

Previous research underlined that for Muslims, faith and moral behavior are two sides of the same coin (Halstead 2007: 283), where moral behavior 'presupposes faith and that faith is genuine only if it results in moral behavior', which is why among Muslims it is expected to see such a close link between the concepts of moral duty and religious duty (Halstead 2007: 283-284). My thesis

elucidates this link in the context of migrant integration in the west. It advances this argument by arguing that being exposed to a secular society in the country of destination stirs the significance of moral and religious overlapping among Muslim migrants.

A number of conclusions can be drawn in my analysis to such profound rejection to sexual liberties and alcohol. First, there is a robust impact of these acts on informants' social and cultural lives in the country of destination, and how each pattern of behavior linked to these acts is interpreted and evaluated against religious standards. Second, such acts trigger what I refer to as a moral panic towards what is seen by informants as signs of moral degeneracy<sup>10</sup> in the host society, which ultimately rests on the issue of cultural threat. And, third, the wide existence of these acts encourage informants to strongly resort to religiosity as a sort of cultural protection.

In more specific terms, the wide acceptance and prevalence of sexual liberties and alcohol in the three countries under study make them embedded cultural norms in the eyes of informants. My research signals that such norms contribute in shaking informants' long standing moral system to its core, leading to what can be referred to as a moral panic, which highly destabilizes their social lives in migration (at least at the outset of their arrival), forcing them to make decisions on everyday life situations, including issues which they did not expect to be problematic, such as choices on venues of socialization, jobs eligible to apply for, people to mingle with, etc. As such, in order for Muslim migrants to preserve their religion in these circumstances, it has been argued that they need to manage their social expectation in parallel with some conflicting religious (and/or cultural) norms regarding appropriate behavior (Amer *et al.* 2015: 6), including the ways of shunning premarital sex and alcohol.

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<sup>10</sup> The term 'moral degeneracy' is translated from the Arabic term 'inhilal akhlaky' that was used by informants in interviews

In practice, cultural destabilization resulting from such norms, in this sense, understood to be exposing informants to a plethora of situations and circumstances where they have to decide (or position themselves) on how to deal with sexual liberties and alcohol-based issues on daily basis. Religiosity, herein, based on its understanding as a state of being, appears to represent an optimal anchor for protection, by providing clear guidance, which is thought to protect informants from getting confused by these situations.

The social representation of religion emerges here as an interpretative repertoire (Amer *et al.* 2015; Wetherell *et al.* 2001) in explaining informants' behaviors. In other words, religiosity is used in this context as a means of interpreting situations involving alcohol and sexual liberties, and a source of guidance in acting accordingly. It also functions, in this respect, as a way of assertiveness in refraining from sexual liberties and alcohol-related activities, which, again, substantiates religiosity's role as a social identity.

In laying out their initial views about their experiences in the UK, France, and Belgium, many informants repeatedly highlighted that facing various acts of cultural liberties in the country of destination is a primary concern, by emphasizing how such acts can be a disruptive element to their lives. In the UK, for example, Ahmad started speaking about his major concerns in the country of destination by saying: "...it's the known issues such as drinking and eating pork...in addition, of course I would be afraid from other disasters like free relationships, sex and homosexuality". Also, Ali, while laying out his positive and negative views about his experience in the UK, commented: "...on the negative side, it's about the bad social life...drinking and sex". In France, Hoda stated, in elaborating on the traits she refuses to adhere to: "the very liberal clothes...full relationships...drinking...all these things I shied away from since the very beginning of my arrival". Similarly in Belgium, Darweesh emphasized in his advice to a potential migrant:

“I don’t need to warn him about big *haram* sins such as not committing adultery or drinking alcohol...because if he doesn’t know how *haram* these things are, he then can’t be a Muslim”.

As shown here, the challenge that these acts of cultural liberties represent captures the essence of informants’ concerns in the country of destination. Such concerns are closely linked to the secular character of the context of reception. On that basis, these acts of cultural liberties exemplify the cultural traits that shape informants’ views about the negative issues (and/or challenges) experienced in the context of reception (Chapter Seven elaborates on this matter).

Having emphasized that Muslim migrants’ positions towards the acts of cultural liberties rest on the fact that they are among the most *haram* acts in Islam, and on the strong overlap between faith and moral behavior for Muslims, it is important to shed some light on specific perspectives where these acts of cultural liberties are most linked to Muslim migrants’ religiosity.

## **Perspectives of the positions towards acts of cultural liberties**

Moving forward in exploring the social dimension of the acts of cultural liberties in this thesis, this section explores two perspectives that substantiate informants’ positions towards the acts of cultural liberties; these are the identity element of the acts of cultural liberties, and the fear of losing one’s religion. These points, as well, emerged strongly through thematic analysis of empirical data in this research.

### **i. Identity and acts of cultural liberties**

Religious identity was empirically discussed on a thematic basis in Chapter Five, though, the link between religious identity and the acts of cultural liberties is laid out in this chapter, while discussing how positions towards acts of cultural liberties form an important aspect of religiosity.

Being self-identified as a Muslim, in this thesis, does not involve practices and rituals as much as it involves objection/rejection to behaviors related to sex and alcohol. On the basis of the theory of religiosity as a social identity, where religious identity functions as a marker of the self-identification with a religious group, and is seen as the role of religion in maintaining group identity (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000), and building on the strong element of self-identification in the understanding of religious identity of Muslim migrants in this thesis (see Chapter Three), where being a Muslim represents the most important identity element that defines their sense of self (Maliepaard and Phalet 2012), my thesis finds a strong identity element in informants' positions towards behaviors related to sexual liberties and alcohol.

These positions are mostly characterized by emphasis of cultural distinctiveness from the secular host society, who is seen to be adhering to certain behaviors that contradicts Islam (as mentioned above in the previous section). More specifically, issues such as alcohol drinking, public display of affection, and premarital sex/relationships instill informants' sense of self-identification and cultural distinctiveness, in order to consolidate their religious identity.

In the three countries under study, the symbolic value of abstaining from behaviors related to sex and alcohol appears strongly in the identity element it signifies. This corresponds to what has been briefly hinted in previous research, that the decision to engage in, or to abstain from, sexual liberties and alcohol is seen by Muslim migrants as an indication of which side a Muslim migrant is on (Eid 2007, qtd in Amer *et al.* 2015: 6). It actually comes in line with what Amer *et al.* have argued about how certain aspects of sexual liberties are important in the identification of Muslim women (2015: 3), also it supports what Abboud *et al.* (2015) have noted about how the rejection of premarital sex is essential for maintaining the sense of ethnic identity.

In further clarifying that, my findings show that different acts of cultural liberties are described and/or seen by informants as moral degeneracy. To protect themselves from such degeneracy, informants develop an urge of being more assertive in maintaining their religious identity. In this sense, acts of cultural liberties trigger not only an additional sense of awareness of religious identity, but also the urge of preserving it in the face of a secular western culture.

In numerous interviews, informants emphasized their positions towards acts of cultural liberties as a means of self-identification. In the UK, Shehab (a second generation man), in explaining his upbringing noted: “you know I grew up here as a Muslim...I don’t drink, I didn’t have relationships, no sleeping over at friends’ places”. Mahy also asserted the same in responding to a general question about her preservation of norms and traditions: “...and of course, I don’t drink, I’ve never had a boyfriend”.

In addition, the issue was flagged among many informants from the perspective of increased sense of religiosity due to the existence of these acts. In France, for example, Hussein directly attributed his urge toward preserving his religiosity to the existence of such acts: “what made me preserve my religion more is the moral degeneracy I saw here...and if I was living in Egypt I wouldn’t have preserved my religion to that extent”. The same was pointed out by Marawan: “the existence of degeneracy in the society forced me to preserve my religion and hold on to it strongly”. In Belgium, Khamees asserted: “I am more religiously committed here than I was in Egypt...the more liberties and openness in the society...the more religious a person can get”. Similarly in the UK Eman described how such liberties consolidated her religious identity by saying: “I became more convinced that our religion is right and all what it says is right...all what it prohibits was for a strong reason...such as adultery or alcohol and free sexual relationships”.

In certain cases, this identity element in positions towards sex and alcohol involved not only Muslim migrants who shun such acts, but also those who have embraced them. They are seen herein, following Naber (2006) and Amer *et al.* (2015) for example, as the ‘bad’ Muslims who adhere to sexual liberties vs the ‘good’ Muslims who maintained their religious identity by abstaining from such acts. For example, in identifying the most negative issues in the country of destination, Tarek commented: “it’s migrants who lost their identity...they are trying to be westernized but they just can’t...this is shown in things such as alcohol and adultery.” Similar comments were repeatedly emphasized in different contexts. They strongly reflect the identity element associated with the acts of cultural liberties, and how adhering to acts of sexual liberties and alcohol drinking is an indicator (and/or an example), in the eyes of informants, of a Muslim migrant losing his identity in the west.

## **ii. Fear of religion loss**

As outlined previously in Chapter Five in discussing the stimulating factors of religiosity among Muslim migrants, the fear of losing one’s religion emerged as a major factor for religiosity reinforcement. My research finds that this fear is, also, closely linked to the acts of cultural liberties in the three countries under study.

This fear of losing one’s own religion is manifested in what is regarded by informants as an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that behaviors related to sexual liberties and drinking alcohol are cultural traits that pose a profound threat to informants’ religion. Therefore, an urge for clinging to one’s religiosity is seen as the optimal way of protection from what is perceived here as a looming cultural threat.

A key finding thus is that the fear of losing one's own religion forms an instrumental factor in shaping informants' positions towards the acts of cultural liberties which form a key component of the western secular context of reception. This fear emerged in different connotations throughout the interviews. Informants explained the issue either implicitly by stressing the general fear of getting lost in the country of destination while speaking about these acts of cultural liberties, or they explicitly highlight the matter by describing these acts as moral degeneracy. Others interpreted the issue as temptations to be avoided within the context of reception, for the compromise such acts require on one's religious commitment.

For example, in Belgium, Samer summarized it by saying: "there are many people who took the path of drinking and roistering and getting lost...they became senseless by time...and they won't have any guilt...all these examples should help us to hang on to our religion and traditions...[ ]...I made plenty of concessions after migration including abandoning praying for some periods...agreeing to have a full haram relationship...working in cafes that serve alcohol".

In the UK, the same was highlighted by Amgad: "sometimes I have done concessions when I had to accept my colleagues' invitation for an after work outing, which probably takes place in a pub...and this is considered a concession for me". In France, Naser commented: "my life was full of affairs and women and drinking...so I resorted to God and asked him to save me from this life...that's how I opted for marriage". Similarly Munir added: "at some point I stopped...and evaluated myself, and regretted this...asking myself what am I doing?...and that I should stop drinking and having *haram* relationships...and I started thinking of going for pilgrimage".

### C. Sexual liberties vs alcohol-related issues: a comparative perspective

Although acts of cultural liberties have been outlined in this thesis in referring to behaviors associated with both sexual liberties and alcohol-related issues, it is crucial to distinguish between the implications and features of each of these acts in informants' daily lives. Despite that informants have combined the two sets of acts together, each has its own distinct features and range of implications.

While both sexual liberties and alcohol-related issues are known to be among the big sins in Islam, each holds different characteristics in terms of perceptions, social repercussions, and the scope of rejection exhibited towards each of them among informants. The purpose of drawing this line of comparison between sexual liberties and alcohol-related issues, based on my empirical data, is to further demystify their exact impact on informants' everyday religiosity, and most importantly on shaping the perception of the host society (which will be discussed in Chapter Seven). Such comparison presents a clear example for how the interaction between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception can influence migrants' lives in the countries of destination.

On that basis, the analysis of my empirical findings signals three main distinctions in the social implications between alcohol-related issues and behaviors of sexual liberties. This includes:

*First*, the social dimension of alcohol appears to be more associated with work and professional lives of informants compared to sexual liberties. Alcohol is regarded to involve certain professions, most often, those related to restaurant business and the service industry. It intertwines with various sources of earnings, unlike sexual liberties which do not have a direct link to informants' professional lives. Thus, the involvement of alcohol in the professional sphere is a clear example of how positions towards acts of cultural liberties are dictated by religion.

In line with what has been outlined in Chapter Five, regarding the link between religiosity and success in the migratory journey, informants who were exposed to situations related to alcohol at work have expressed deep concern in relying on what they see as a *haram* source of income such as alcohol-related jobs, since it runs against their beliefs and can be seen as an impediment to their general success in the country of destination, especially with the belief that this will lead to the absence of God's blessing if they continue carrying out such job.

This link, for example, is summarized by Anwar in Belgium by noting: "here, at the beginning, I had to work in places which serve alcohol and pork, I didn't have any other option...but once I owned my own restaurant I stopped dealing with those issues completely...[ ]...I asked some imams about this issue...and after investigating the matter, I came up with the conclusion that it's *haram* for sure".

Also, Samer commented: "In the previous café where I used to work, I had to deal with alcohol...mainly serving it...but shortly I asked the owner to exempt me from doing so...and he agreed...also I believe that my current job in this café is completely *haram*....but my only excuse would be that this is the only available job I can get...I pray every day asking God to save me from this job...because I believe the money I earn from it is for sure *haram*".

*Second*, since Muslims are strongly prohibited from frequenting establishments that serve alcohol, and that alcohol plays a key role in shaping leisure activities for Muslim migrants (Stodolska and Livengood 2006: 304), then my empirical findings not only support that, but also emphasize that alcohol have more influence on social activities and socialization than behaviors related to sexual liberties.

As will be further discussed in Chapter Eight, the strong social role of alcohol on migrants' daily lives appears in its significant impact on their paths of integration. My research, in this regard,

supports what Maxwell (2012) argued that the prohibition of alcohol among Muslims can generally restrict social interactions with the host society, as it reduces the opportunities for socializing in drinking establishments and places that are often the center of natives' social life. In the same line, my research echoes what Hiro and Maxwell have argued about Muslims' segregation, emphasizing that it is issues related to alcohol prohibition that led -among other reasons- to the establishment of certain social venues that created segregated spaces for Muslim migrants, which then reduced the likelihood of social interactions with the host society (Hiro 1991; Maxwell 2012).

My research findings in the three countries substantiate that, and demonstrate how different aspects of social activities are chosen and set out on the basis of the presence or absence of alcohol. This involves venues/places, cultural standards in selecting friends and acquaintances, and the types of social activities where informants take part (i.e. parties, birthdays, dinners, lunches, etc.).

For example, in the UK, Samir commented in explaining how difficult it is for him to mix with members of the host society because of alcohol: "I just can't deal with them on the social and personal levels...all temptations here means nothing to me...I tried before to go with my English friends to some parties and pubs...without drinking...but I didn't feel myself there...I didn't like it, and I regretted that a lot". The same was emphasized by Khaled while explaining the difficulty of living in a secular society: "...because it is hard to make friends among non-Muslims...we are different in everything...in norms and traditions...I won't drink with them...or go to places which serve alcohol". Also, in Belgium, Mansour noted: "For example I don't sit with anyone who drinks in order to protect myself".

*Third*, with regard to the main features distinguishing sexual liberties in Muslim migrants' daily lives, in the three countries of destination findings indicate that it is actually sexual liberties, more than alcohol, that play the prime role in developing a moral panic among informants. Sexual

liberties is also the primary element of the acts of cultural liberties that denotes what informants see as moral degeneracy among the host society.

It is known that Islamic traditions comprise clear restrictions on issues related to sexual liberties, where ethics and morals controlling intimate relationships specify that these relationships are only honored and recognized within marriage, and that relationships should only exist between a man and woman, and, finally, that all sorts of related physical affection have to be conducted privately and not in public.

Accordingly, such moral panic is triggered because of the wide prevalence of sexual liberties among the secular host society in the three countries under study, which appears to shake the conservative/religious element of informants' characters to its core. This includes issues related to homosexuality, public display of affection, and premarital sex/relationships.

In literature, this status of moral objection to sexual liberties has been attributed to the strong role of religion in shaping the ethics of sexual behavior among Muslims (Ahmadi 2003; Stodolska and Livengood 2006; Norris and Inglehart 2002). It also rests on considering Islam a determinant of the place and significance of sexuality in Muslims' minds, which dictates what is normal or desirable in sexuality and what is not, and decides which forms of sexual expressions are acceptable and under what conditions (Ahmadi 2003: 687). So, since sexualities mainly exist through its social forms (Weeks 1986), then exposing Muslims' traditions to daily challenges within the host society leads to the feeling that the core values of Islam are challenged in the country of destination.

For example, in France, Osama, while laying out his views about the French society, noted: "the biggest challenge is the society here...the disasters we see...the unconditional freedom, mainly in relationships". Also Mohamed in the UK commented: "the most negative differences I see here is

the freedom in sexual relationships...this is the most thing that doesn't suit us as Egyptians". In Belgium, Ragab addressed his major challenge in the country of destination by saying: "it's girls...it's relationships...I was about to fall into this trap of such sins...but every time I was getting a sign from God that pulled me back".

On that basis, my research finds that sexual liberties contribute, more than alcohol, in shaping informants' perceptions about the host society's culture. Empirical data reveal that most narratives of cultural differences between informants and the host society have been revolving around themes related to sexual liberties, much more than alcohol consumption.

As a whole, my thesis elaborates empirically in a more nuanced manner what has been briefly pointed out in academic literature by a number of scholars, such as Joppke, who stressed the profound level of moral conservatism among Muslim migrants in Europe, based on their positions towards sexual liberties (Joppke 2015), along with Norris and Inglehart, who suggested that the most significant 'cultural fault line' between the west and Islam involves issues related mainly to 'sexual liberalization' (2002: 16). This shows that while the impact of religion in the country of origin leaves deep traces in the country of destination on Muslims' views on sexuality (Ahmadi 2003: 687), the existence of sexual liberties in western European countries as a widely accepted cultural norm among the society boosts the impact of religiosity on sexuality.

#### **IV. A Minority Perspective and Variations in Religiosity Outcomes**

Finally, as I mentioned in the outset of Chapter Five that although the empirical data presented in this thesis are not organized on a country-level basis due to the strong similarity of findings in the three countries under study based on the core elements emerging from my data, it is important to highlight minor distinctions in the research between different trajectories of findings that emerged on various levels. This last section in this chapter is set out to include these main distinct

trajectories in informants' religiosity, delineating also the minor differences between the three countries under study. This discussion is organized here on two levels: a minority perspective, and different trajectories of religiosity.

### **A. A minority perspective**

Although this thesis draws on a number of common elements that emerged strongly from the thematic analysis, and represent the primary (or core) trajectory of findings in my sample, it is crucial to lay out another trajectory of findings that was clearly identifiable, but represents a clear minority phenomenon. This minority perspective represents non-religious (and/or an anti-religious) perspective that has emerged in a small number of interviews.

Data analysis signals one general characterization shared in informants who represent the stream of this minority perspective. They all, in the three countries under study, distanced themselves from religion, by identifying themselves as not interested in religion, or agnostic, or non-believers. None of those who exhibited and/or expressed any aspect of religiosity (or affiliation to religion) features in this trajectory of findings.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this non-religious perspective. On one level, it represents informants who either cognitively changed their affiliation and perception about Islam after years of migration, or those who decided to detach themselves and their children completely from the whole setting of pursuing Islamic provisions and traditions in the west. On another level, my research signals a clear tone of objection and frustration in this trajectory towards the religious character of the Egyptian society and its life style, as well as common negative views towards the attitude of the majority of Muslim migrants in Europe.

Having outlined that, it is relevant to briefly explore how this minority perspective emerged within the aspects of religiosity studied in this thesis, comprising: *halal* and *haram*; religious identity, the upbringing of children, and the acts of cultural liberties.

*Halal and haram*: given that that this minority perspective represents a group of informants who are clearly not affiliated to religion, then one key point that emerged strongly from few interviews related to this trajectory was a clear objection of adhering to what is seen as *halal* and *haram* in Islam, especially as an ethical framework of guidance. For example, in the UK, Amr was implicitly critical about *halal* and *haram* by noting: “the problem of religion at our societies is that we take it as an easy way...by doing this and this you can gain a lot and go to heaven...and this approach or concept was never useful for our society in the fields of science, development, or progress...when a person relies on these aspects he detaches himself from reality, much less from progress”.

*Religious identity*: similar to positions towards *halal* and *haram*, and drawing on the multilevel perspective of approaching religious identity in this thesis (see Chapter Three), another key point that emerged clearly in this particular stream of findings is not only the absence of cues of self-identification as Muslims, but also the existence of negative views for being identified or ascribed as a Muslim in the country of destination.

This implies an opposition to the symbolic marker characterizing the religious identity of Muslim migrants. It also entails a strong rejection to the ascribed element associated with Muslims’ religious identity in the west, due to the acts of categorization or labelling that such ascription might indicate. This substantiates what has been echoed in literature about how identity ascription can be associated in certain cases with prejudice, categorization and classification by others (Crul and Mollenkopf 2012; Laurence and Vaisse 2007). It is worth mentioning in this regard, that, in

parallel, the ethno-national identity of the country of origin (the Egyptian national identity) was highlighted and emphasized repeatedly in this trajectory of findings.

Several informants demonstrated this minority perspective about religious identity by laying out their views regarding Muslim migrants in the west. For example, in the UK, Adel (who defined himself as agnostic) noted: “a Muslim migrant here is afraid to get lost in the midst of the big strong secular society in the west... he shelters himself behind his religion because simply he lacks deep intellectual thinking and solid knowledge...if you would have these tools, then why not interacting and mingling in whatever society...but since the majority of Muslim migrants have no cultural and intellectual depth beyond religion...that’s why he hides behind certain rigid aspects of his religion and traditions”. In France, Dina (FR 4), who described herself as not interested in religion, asserted while expressing her pride as an Egyptian woman: “it is really a shame that we are only labeled and categorized by Islam here in France, regardless of our nationalities”.

*Upbringing of children and acts of cultural liberties:* my research identifies another significant theme in this minority perspective, it emerges in the rejection of adhering to any aspect of religiosity in the upbringing of children, along with a general acceptance to norms and behaviors related to sexual liberties and alcohol, noting that both (upbringing of children and acts of cultural liberties) were closely intertwined in this stream of findings.

In the UK and France a few quotes reflected this secondary trajectory of findings concerning the upbringing of children and the acts of cultural liberties. For example, in France, Dina (FR 4), emphasized while talking about her sons: “I wouldn’t mind at all for them to have sex before marriage...I support that, even if I have a daughter...I wish I could have done this when I was young, under the protection of my parents...I wish I was raised like that...I lost important things by missing out to live real relationships when I was young...such as not being able to really know

my husband well before marriage...we have to teach our children how to have sexual relationships...but with being honest”.

Also in the UK, Inas, who described herself as a non-believer, commented: “it doesn’t mean when you drink that you will do bad or wrong things...here it is something cultural and social...[ ]...I see moral degeneracy in Egypt much more than I see it here...relationships here are very healthy...in Egypt people perceive relationships from a lust-based perspective only...but here relationships are upheld and respected...[ ]...there are a lot of things which I realized that doesn’t make sense...for example, our views about homosexuality...I discovered that it is not a sin, it is just sexual orientation”.

Gad in France also commented: “if my daughter would come one day and tells me she got a boyfriend, I would accept that...but under my eyes...it’s better than refusing it and then it happens anyways behind my back...it is not the end of the world if she lives with a boyfriend... although it won’t be acceptable by my family in Egypt”. Similarly, Badr in the UK, another self-described non-believer said: “I have no problems if my children will drink when they grow...and to have full pre-marital relationships...all what I will forbid them from doing are things related to manners and behaviors with others”.

## **B. Variations in religiosity outcomes**

Having explored a minority perspective in this research, that is associated with the non-religious perspective, it is relevant to distinguish a number of minor distinct streams of findings yet within the primary trajectory itself that is associated with reinforced religiosity, under which this thesis is organized. These trajectories can be identified on two levels: countries of destination; and informants’ socioeconomic status.

## **i. Country of destination level: France vs the UK and Belgium**

In terms of the main aspects of religiosity in this thesis, my research signals no major differences in the findings coming out from the UK, France, and Belgium with regard to *halal* and *haram*, religious identity, religious emotions, and the acts of cultural liberties. However, a minor distinction can be identified regarding the upbringing of children. In France, findings reflect an obvious frustration/dissatisfaction triggered by being strictly banned from interfering in children's school activities or educational programs. On the other hand, in the UK, and to some extent in Belgium, my research uncovered a clear appreciation for widely exercising parental rights in certain activities assigned to children by schools.

## **ii. Informants' socioeconomic status level**

Based on what has been outlined in Chapter Two, with regard to the features differentiating the two main groups of informants in this research (lower-skilled and skilled), nothing stands out as different streams of findings on the level of socioeconomic status regarding issues such as *halal* and *haram* and religious identity. Nevertheless, in the upbringing of children and the acts of cultural liberties the research signals minor differences based on informants' socioeconomic status.

As for the acts of cultural liberties, the issue of alcohol, in particular, appears to be more linked to informants of lower-skilled background. This is mainly due to their work nature, which is associated with entities related to service industry and restaurant business. On the other hand, for the upbringing of children, although general concerns about children being exposed to sexual liberties have strongly emerged as a primary trajectory of findings, my analysis signals a higher tone of those concerns among skilled informants, much higher than that of the lower-skilled ones. This could be attributed to elements of social status and social expectations. Skilled informants believe and/or expect that their children are more exposed to the host society's culture, and, thus,

more vulnerable to be influenced by its cultural traits including sexual liberties. Lower-skilled informants did not actually address the issue of children in the same extensive and elaborative manner as the skilled ones did during the interviews.

## V. Conclusion

This chapter argues that the positions towards specific acts of cultural liberties, along with the process of upbringing children in a western secular society: 1) are major contexts of displaying religiosity in the three countries of destination; 2) play a key role in reinforcing the magnitude of religiosity in informants' lives; and finally, 3) affect how informants socialize and situate themselves (and their children) towards the host society.

Since this thesis approaches secularism primarily from the perspective of the role of religion in a secular western society, where such role is seen to be almost absent, this chapter, then, strongly suggests that this absence is much more about moral issues related to sexual liberties and alcohol than it is about the philosophical understanding of secularism in the system. This concern was clearly common in the three countries of destination.

In this context, the upbringing of children and the acts of cultural liberties leap out from my empirical data as central factors in understanding how the dynamics of interaction between religiosity and the context of reception can influence the way by which migrants situate themselves towards the host society, which subsequently influences their integration. The research findings strongly suggest that religiosity through the upbringing of children and the acts of cultural liberties plays a key in role in increasing cultural maintenance, while minimizing social contacts between migrants and members of the host society.

With regard to the upbringing of children, in the three countries under study, the research emphasizes that no matter what religious norms, behaviors, or practices that can be enforced during the upbringing of children in the country of destination, the process of the upbringing, in and of itself, directs informants into a state of being that is strongly dictated/influenced by religion. Thus, it contributes to the invigoration of informants' general religiosity.

As such, this effect of religiosity in the upbringing of children on sociocultural integration could be summarized in four points that emerged strongly through thematic analysis of my empirical data and are closely related to informants' relationships with the host society: 1) the choice of socializing only with co-ethnoreligious groups; 2) parents' reservations about children having native friends; 3) developing a set of arguments in justifying the rejection of the host society's cultural traits; and 4) using religion to consolidate parental authority over children.

As for the positions towards the acts of cultural liberties, the significance of these acts appears in how they are strongly linked to other important aspects of religiosity outlined in this thesis. They are guided by *halal* and *haram*, highly intertwined with religious identity, and largely overlapping with the upbringing of children. They are closely associated with the components of the context of reception, particularly the understanding of secularism within the societal context of reception.

Accordingly, I argue that the actual challenge for Muslim migrants is not primarily represented by just living in a secular society or country *per se*, but is rather seen in these two forms of acts of cultural liberties, most strongly represented by sex and alcohol. Hence, this thesis, though, calls out these acts of cultural liberties, not only as a profound component of a lived religiosity of informants, but also as a foundational element in setting the tone of the trajectories of sociocultural integration.

Finally, after discussing the major components of the context of reception in Chapter Four, and exploring in details the various aspects of religiosity in Chapters Five and Six, it is crucial, then, to move this discussion forward by looking at how both issues, migrants' religiosity and the context of reception, are essential in developing what I refer to here as the perceived context of reception. The following chapter addresses this issue from the perspective of the overall dynamics of interaction between religiosity and the context of reception.

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## Chapter Seven

### The Perceived Context of Reception

#### I. Introduction

In the light of the overall thesis argument about the impact of the dynamics of interaction between the context of reception and migrants' religiosity in shaping migrant integration, this empirical chapter draws on the conclusion of the theoretical discussion about the context of reception in Chapter Four, and builds on the findings concerning religiosity presented in Chapters Five and Six, to argue that although the structural context of reception is important in understanding the conditions (and/or circumstances) of migrant integration, the question of the context of reception is primarily an empirical one.

While it is clear that national models of integration (as demonstrated in Chapter Four) shape policy frameworks and set the level of openness or restrictiveness in each system, it has been shown that they do not, on their own, give us sufficient insights into the system's role in affecting the success or failure of migrant integration. Eventually, one key reason for this is that migrants' own perceptions of such models have not been sufficiently considered.

More clearly, overall, in literature, it has been argued that the context of reception affects migrants' religiosity (Connor 2010; Maliepaard and Schacht 2018), and that both migrants' religiosity and the context of reception affect the integration of migrants (Adida *et al.* 2016; Mooney 2013). My research advances these arguments, and contributes to literature by demonstrating that such influence of the context of reception on religiosity and, subsequently, on integration takes place primarily through a perceived context of reception.

Drawing on the thematic analysis of my empirical data, this chapter is set out to make two main arguments: *first*, that migrants' perception of the context of reception – as distinct from any objective list of policies or structures – is key in the dynamics of interaction between religiosity and the context of reception, and, subsequently, the impact of this interaction on sociocultural integration. Despite the variations in the structural contexts of reception between openness and restrictiveness in the UK, France, and Belgium (see Chapter Four), migrants' overall perceptions of the context of reception in the three countries were similar. *Second*, based on what has been argued in Chapter Six about the impact of certain aspects of religiosity on how migrants situate themselves towards the host society, this chapter argues that the perceived context of reception is a result of (a) migrants' religiosity -and how it evolved after migration- and its role in shaping migrants' views about the host society's cultural norms, and (b) the existence of an overall unwelcoming context of reception, manifested in perceived discrimination and exclusion. The aim here is also to set the scene for this argument to be completed in Chapter Eight by showing that religiosity, in parallel, not only contributes to developing the perceived context of reception, but also is a result of it (within the overall cyclic dynamics of interaction).

Building on Chapters Four, Five and Six, the similarity in perceptions that emerged in the research findings in the three countries of destination can be substantiated by a number of factors including: the similarity in religiosity aspects among informants in the UK, France and Belgium (concluded in Chapters Five and Six); a shared secular character identifying the host societies in the three countries under study (Birt *et al.* 2016; Kaya 2012); the lack of homogeneity in the national models of integration (neither fully multicultural nor fully assimilationist), as each model evolves to embrace few elements of other models (Joppke and Morawska 2002; Koopmans *et al.* 2006); and, finally, the limited impact of the official philosophies of national models on how the host society

practically functions regarding the attitudes towards migrants (Alba and Foner 2016; Bertossi 2011; Kaya 2012).

In Chapter Four, I addressed part of a structural context of reception in the UK, France, and Belgium, in order to lay the basis for the empirical data, with the aim to distinguish between such structural context of reception and an empirically perceived context of reception by migrants (discussed in this chapter). This focus on the perceived context of reception is a response to calls made in literature for more thorough empirical examination of the variation in the context of reception (Connor 2010).

More specifically, my research finds that the actual perception of the context of reception comprises: on the one hand, an overall belief of an unwelcoming societal context of reception (host society), as evidenced through a belief of wide cultural differences, and perceived discrimination and exclusion; and on the other hand, general positive views towards the receiving system, reflected in general favorability to the set of religious/cultural rights included in the institutional arrangements of this receiving system in the country of destination. It is important to note here that the perceived societal context of reception (the perception of the host society), in my thesis, emerged as the primary element in shaping the overall perception towards the context of reception.

Nevertheless, with regard to the overall negative perception of the host society, it is crucial to highlight that the research while emphasizing such perception as a key point that strongly emerged from empirical data in the three countries under study, in parallel, it signals a number of minor, yet important, variations on both informants' socioeconomic level and country-based level. First, skilled informants reported stronger and more detailed critical views about their perception of the unwelcoming host society in comparison to lower-skilled ones. My findings indicate that self-perceived skilled migrants with high potential of sociocultural integration (i.e. fluency of the host

country language, education, residential patterns, etc.) are likely to have high expectations for successful socialization with members of the host native society, and subsequently more likely to develop negative attitudes towards that host country when met by boundaries or barriers, compared to lower-skilled migrants. Second, although themes reflecting unwelcoming behaviors towards Muslim migrants emerged similarly in the three countries under study, the extent to which these elements came out was not the same in these three countries. The tone and intensity of reporting discrimination in France were clearly tougher and more critical than that in the UK and Belgium.

In general, the discussion about the significance of the perceived context of reception in this thesis will be further completed in Chapter Eight, within the bigger picture of the overall thesis argument, by demonstrating that the cyclic dynamics between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception is clearly seen through the perceived context of reception, and that looking only at systemic differences is not enough. On that basis, focusing on the perceived context of reception provides a vital tool in understanding how the role of religiosity in migrants' lives can influence their sociocultural integration and social interaction.

### **What is the perceived context of reception?**

While the structural context of reception refers to the combination of the state's general philosophy/approach of integration (Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Crul and Mollenkopf 2012), its institutional framework organizing this approach (Alba and Foner 2015), and its host/native society (Gordon 1964; Reitz 2002; Karlsen and Nazroo 2013), my research findings emphasize that the perceived context of reception, on the other hand, is based on the ways in which migrants understand the system and the society into which they are received and accommodated (or not). In this research, perceived context of reception refers to informants' practical understanding – their

perception – of the host system and society based on their daily interpretations and experiences, regardless of how these systems or societies are politically or theoretically portrayed/studied.

It is relevant here to underline that the term perceived context of reception has been used previously in quantitative studies, and linked to perceived discrimination (Schwartz *et al.* 2010), to serve as a tool in measuring the extent of negativity or positivity of the receiving state and society, through which migrants' integration can be assessed and evaluated. The perceived context of reception, thus, comprises issues such as degree of welcome, access, and discrimination.

In this regard, Schwartz *et al.* defined the perceived context of reception as informants' own perception of 'welcomeness, opportunity structure, and availability of social support' in the receiving country and society (2014: 3). In addition, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) have approached it more from a societal perspective, identifying it as the individual perception of the overall hybrid of elements that the receiving society directs towards a group of migrants as well as the opportunity structure available to these migrants.

Moreover, although societal and institutional structures are known for being intertwining spheres in the field of migrant integration, literature has not yet clearly specified the components of each, in part because of variation across time and space. In some studies, host society has been approached by the interactive relationship between migrants and their host society, as well as certain institutional frameworks. For example, Fleischman and Phalet (2012) examined the host society from the dimension of the institutional environment and Church-State relationship. In addition, Gordon (1964), in discussing structural assimilation, referred to organizations and institutions of the host society, as did Crul and Mollenkopf (2012). In identifying the host society's features, Reitz (2002) looked at the context of reception from angles relating to governments'

migration policies, labor market institutions, and pre-existing ethnic and race relations within the host society.

In this thesis, and drawing on my fieldwork findings, this chapter identifies the perceived context of reception by delineating the institutional elements from the societal elements of the country of destination. It empirically demonstrates the perceived context of reception in the three countries under study with respect to two key factors: the perceived societal context of reception (perceived host society), and the perceived institutional context of reception (perceived system). The first is reflected primarily in informants' direct views towards the host society (or established residents), by drawing on the issue of cultural differences, as well as the extent of welcomeness within the host society, which is marked by issues such as discrimination, prejudice, and exclusion. It is shaped by the perceptions of the social interactions and relations between migrants and members of the host society in a given societal setting (Crul and Schneider 2010: 1259-1260) as well as the level of migrants' access to the host society. On the other hand, the second component -the perceived system- is comprised of informants' perceptions of the general system in the country of destination, apart from the behaviors of the host society. It includes, for example, their general views about institutional arrangements, rules and/or legislations organizing religious/diversity rights and benefits, as well as other general subjective phenomena, such as the level of fairness and equality ensured by the system.

My research's approach in looking at the system vs the society is another way of demonstrating what has been argued before (Maxwell 2008) in integration literature about political trust vs social trust from the migrant perspective. In this sense, while political trust refers to the extent to which migrants feel that mainstream political institutions (the system) adequately represent their interests, social trust refers to the extent to which migrants feel connected to members of the host

society (Maxwell 2008: 393). In my thesis, I demonstrate how the latter, in practical terms, represents the primary factor in shaping the overall perceived context of reception; its role surpasses the impact of the former (the system) in examining the interaction between Muslim migrants' religiosity and the context of reception.

## **II. Perceived Societal Context of Reception (the perceived host society)**

Scholars such as Van Tubergen (2006) and Gordon (1964) underlined the vitality of the role of the host society in integration, and in Chapter Four of this thesis, I also highlighted the significance of the host society in migrant integration. A gap in literature remains in the empirical substantiation of the way in which the role of the host society can feature in the success or failure of migrant integration, as mediated through migrant perception.

By looking at the perceived societal context of reception, I substantiate the key role of the host society in influencing the integration process, analyzing this role through key themes emerging from my interviews. As such, perceived societal context of reception here is represented by informants' perception of the host/receiving society based on its cultural characteristics and its behaviors towards migrants. It is reflected in informants' views about the host society's culture, degree of welcome, access, and tolerance. It also comprises their perceptions of the extent of meaningful cultural (and/or religious) similarities or differences they might have with the host society.

Despite scant research on Egyptian Muslim migrants, one study (Karmi 1997) did find difficulty in Egyptian migrants' access to the British public, attributing this to cultural differences, discrimination, racism, and prejudice. My findings substantiate this, building further in a number

of ways, mainly by emphasizing that the perceived societal context of reception is a key factor across the UK, France, and Belgium.

Indeed, thematic analysis of key points emerging from my empirical data signals an overall negative perception among informants about the host society's culture and its level of welcomeness in all three countries under study. My research, in this regard, supports previous research which has argued that the extent of openness or restrictiveness in the system (or policy model) is unlikely to change migrants' perception towards the host society (Torrenkens and Jacobs 2015)

Accordingly, this section presents informants' perceptions of the host society structured along two key themes seen in the data: 1) a general belief of the existence of wide cultural differences between informants and the secular host society; and 2) a belief of an overall unwelcoming host society, as evidenced in perceived discrimination and prejudice, as well as different forms of exclusion. In this context, it is important to note that although the belief of the existence of an unwelcoming host society represents a core theme across all three countries under study, there are nonetheless signals of minor variations on this key point. These variations take place on two levels: a country-basis level (France vs the UK and Belgium), and the socioeconomic backgrounds of informants (skilled vs lower-skilled). This is further elaborated below.

Maliepaard and Schacht have argued that, on one hand, Muslim migrants can choose to isolate themselves from the host society, and, on the other hand, the host society (or majority population) can create boundaries by either discriminating against migrants or by avoiding interactions with them (2018: 4). In further elucidating this argument, this section shows how the belief of the existence of wide cultural differences between informants and the host society is a nuanced way in substantiating how migrants, as argued by Maliepaard and Schacht, can choose to isolate

themselves. Thus, I refer to this belief of wide cultural difference as the chosen angle in perceiving the host society. However, in parallel, there is another imposed angle to the equation. Issues such as discrimination and exclusion represent, herein, what I refer to as the imposed angle in perceiving the host society. They are patterns of behaviors that are imposed on migrants, against their will, by members of the host society, which are also strongly involved in shaping migrants' perception of that host society. This will be further elaborated in Chapter Eight.

#### **A. A general belief of wide cultural differences: 'we are different'**

A key finding that emerged strongly from my interviews in the UK, France, and Belgium is informants' belief of the existence of wide cultural differences distinguishing them from the host native society. This belief, I argue, sums up three main points: 1) the general absence of religion among the host society emerging as a key theme; 2) this absence is taken as being indicative of significant cultural differences; and 3) such differences evolved as a major challenge for informants. On that basis, I argue that religiosity is a solid foundation (or reason) of such belief, and that this belief is a major factor in determining the sociocultural distance (or proximity) between informants and the host society. This asserts and clarifies what Torreken and Jacobs have concluded, namely that Muslim migrants can clearly perceive European host societies as culturally different, regardless of the policy model or the extent of openness or restrictiveness in granting cultural and religious rights to Muslims (2015: 8-11).

Previously in Chapter Six, I outlined that the upbringing of children along with concerns about sexual liberties and alcohol act as an underlying basis for a state of cultural distance between informants and members of the host society. I also argued that such cultural distance has been linked -based on what is highlighted in Chapter Four - to the understanding of secularism as the

role of religion in the society (Jaworsky *et al.* 2012), or, more precisely, the elimination of the social influence of religion in the public sphere (Cesari 2004), and how this interpretation of secularism influences the positionality of informants towards the host society. Indeed the cultural characteristics or apparatus of the host society, including its religious characteristics (Jaworsky *et al.* 2012: 85), can shape the context of reception. This research demonstrates how the effect of this religious apparatus can take place primarily through migrants' perceptions.

In further advancing this argument, my research looks at the issue of cultural distance from a wider scope; that is the overall perception of migrants towards the host society, where such perception is primarily manifested in a belief of the existence of wide cultural differences between migrants and the host society. This belief is, also, strongly linked to the interpretation of secularism as the role of religion in the society, and the social implications of living in a secular host society. It asserts what has been argued previously that Muslims' religiosity 'counters their likelihood of holding secular values' (Statham and Tillie 2016: 191).

However, it is important to note that although secularism was not explicitly mentioned by informants in justifying this belief of cultural differences, the issue of the absence of religion in the host society emerged as a key theme in the interviews, with informants drawing on this absence as a fundamental factor both in terms of substantiating these cultural differences and in justifying their positionality towards the host society. Absence of religion was raised as a matter of concern, and was introduced mainly while addressing the main challenges experienced in the country of destination. In short, the key points that emerged from empirical data that are associated with the interpretation of secularism involved: an overall limited value/influence of religion among the host society; the absence of evaluating things based on *halal* and *haram* in the host society; and the prevalence of traditions and behaviors related to sexual liberties and alcohol.

Furthermore, based on what was outlined at the outset of this chapter regarding the similarities of empirical findings in the three countries under study (in terms of the overall perception of the context of reception), and drawing on what I underlined in Chapter Four while addressing the issue of secularism, it is important to note that this particular similarity in informants' perception of the host society reflects a major shared feature characterizing European societies of being highly secular (Maliepaard and Phalet 2012: 135).

Hence, looking at the belief of wide cultural differences substantiates how religiosity contributes to constructing the perceived societal context of reception, in which the interpretation of secularism -as the absence of religion in the society- is closely involved. In this respect, previously in literature, it has been outlined that European host societies are 'historically Christian and highly secularized' (Maliepaard and Phalet 2012: 135), for which a number of scholars have concluded that these societies differ markedly from Muslims in terms of the role of religion in the society, since religion is likely to have a declining role and impact on Europeans' daily life (Maliepaard and Schacht 2018: 5). Accordingly, it has been argued that Muslim migrants in Europe seem to have a cultural objection to secular European societies (Connor 2010: 394), and are seen as refusing to accept the host society's social norms (Endelstein and Ryan 2013: 252).

My research emphasizes that, and adds to it by signaling that these cultural objections surpass what was proposed before regarding Muslim migrants' rejection of the host society's secular norms. A fundamental theme emerging from my interviews stressed that this cultural objection is not only a rejection of secular norms, but also a key factor in developing a general perception about the host societies in the UK, France, and Belgium.

Throughout the interviews in the three countries under study informants repeatedly underlined what they perceive as contradictory traits in the host society's culture in relation to theirs, such

traits indicate a kind of absence (or limited influence) of religion. In the UK, Mahmoud simply put it by saying: “we are different...very different...but as long as we decided to come and live here then we should accept these differences...not necessarily embrace them but at least accept them”. Similarly, Khaled briefly noted: “religion is what distinguishes us from them...they have good behavior but without creed”. The absence of religion in the host society was the main issue that was repeatedly emphasized during the interviews while elaborating on these cultural differences. In the same line, Samir commented, while highlighting his concerns in the UK: “...on the negative side it is the absence of religion here...even if they respect social ethics, but religion is absent in their attitudes and behaviors...they live in a world completely different than ours”. In Belgium, also, Mansour emphasized: “Belgians are very kind people...but their norms and traditions are different...they are mainly known by honesty and trust in interactions...they only lack religion”.

Furthermore, adhering to *halal* and *haram* as an important aspect of religiosity emerges in shaping the general perception of the host society. Based on what has been outlined in Chapter Five regarding the significance of *halal* and *haram* demarcation in migrants’ religiosity, and its direct link to issues related to the context of reception including the understanding of secularism and the secular society, the consolidation of the belief of the existence of wide cultural differences with the host society is, therefore, strongly associated with the issue of *halal* and *haram*, or precisely with the absence of the concept of *halal* and *haram* in the host society.

As will be demonstrated in Chapter Eight, it is crucial, herein, to emphasize that the significance of the belief of wide cultural differences in this research provides sufficient evidence to posit that issues related to *haram* acts (or the religiously forbidden issues) are precisely what push informants away from the host society (i.e. alcohol, premarital relationships, etc.), based on the implications of cultural distinctiveness. While on the other hand, issues related to *halal* acts (the permissible

issues including rituals), especially if visible and displayed in the public sphere, are what push the host society away from informants (headscarf, beard, signals of eating only halal food, calls for praying rooms at work, etc.).

For example, Abdel Aziz highlighted the link between *halal* and *haram* and the belief of cultural differences by saying: “they have no *haram* or *halal* in their culture... [ ]...it only depends on what’s legal or illegal, ethical or unethical...their norms and traditions are so different than ours...ours are better...they are much better when it comes to behaviors, discipline and honesty...though we are better with our norms and traditions”. Abdel Kader, in addition, commented, while explaining the positive and negative traits about the host society: “...though the negative aspects are mainly related to lack of religion and the absence of *haram* and *halal*”.

These core elements emerging from fieldwork substantiate how Muslim migrants can distinguish themselves from the host society primarily in terms of religious norms (or lack thereof) (Adida *et al.* 2016; Alba and Foner 2015), and that many of them are actually aware that members of the host society do not share their views on ‘life, duty, or the world beyond’ and subsequently they have to be conscious in the country of destination about what previously has been taken for granted in the country of origin (Voas and Fleischamnn 2012: 531).

As demonstrated in Chapter Four, although each of the UK, France and Belgium has its own distinctive understanding on the interpretation of secularism (Modood 2012; Torrekens and Jacobs 2015), on the society level such distinction is almost absent. In the UK, the British host society holds a clear secular character (Birt *et al.* 2016), for which some (De Graaf and Need 2000) have defined it as one of the ‘highest’ secular societies in Europe (qtd in Modood *et al.* 2006: 164). The same applies in France, where the French society is known of its profound secular ethos (Adida *et al.* 2016: 15). Similarly, the Belgian society is argued to be strict in defending the secular public

sphere, which is seen as a determinant of this society's perception of Muslim migrants (Fadil 2013; Kaya 2012; Bousetta and Jacobs 2006).

As a whole, I argue -based on my discussion above- that this belief of wide cultural differences in the three countries under study stems mainly from informants' religiosity, and its role in shaping their views about the host societies' cultural norms. Further, we can argue that such norms are perceived empirically as conflicting with religion, while being theorized in literature as aspects of secularism (i.e. Calhoun 2008; Modood and Ahamd 2007; Modood *et al.* 2006; Banfi *et al.* 2016).

## **B. A belief of an overall unwelcoming host society**

In addition to informants' perception that a wide cultural difference with members of the host society exists, a second theme in the perceived societal context of reception, which emerged clearly from the interviews in the UK, France, and Belgium, is the perception of an overall unwelcoming host society. However, the research signals minor variations, in this context, across the three countries of destination, and over different socioeconomic backgrounds of informants (skilled vs lower-skilled), which will be addressed below in this chapter.

This overall perception of the existence of an unwelcoming host society emerged strongly in two key themes which come under the umbrella of discrimination: the first refers to a general reporting on discrimination including overt or explicit acts of discrimination, racism, and prejudice, which are manifested in experienced or observed situations. On the other hand, the second is seen in hidden or passive forms of discrimination, including forms of exclusion and limited access to the host society.

Throughout the interviews, some informants reported this unwelcoming reception explicitly by stressing discrimination, prejudice and inequality of treatment in their daily lives, while others

expressed it implicitly through their critique of the general accessibility into the host society, or their weak chances of penetrating the native population. On that basis, in this section, I show that discrimination forms an important component of the perceived societal context of reception. I also highlight that perceived discrimination and prejudice in general is a result of a hybrid of elements coming together including: negative representation of Islam and Muslims; experienced or observed racism, discrimination or prejudice; and finally, different forms of exclusion and difficult access to the host society. The combination of all such elements strongly contributes in developing an overall negative view about the host society.

Theoretically, perceived discrimination, as part of an unwelcoming context of reception, is defined as specific acts of prejudice, exclusion, denigration or violence (King *et al.* 2011), as well as ‘a generally unwelcoming climate directed towards individuals’ based on racial, religious or ethnic grounds (Pieterse *et al.* 2010; Schwartz *et al.* 2014: 3). In my research, perceived discrimination refers to informants’ general views towards the host society, and assessed based on their perceptions of acts, experiences, and situations indicating discrimination and prejudice.

Over a growing body of literature on religion and migration, a number of scholars have spoken extensively about the consequences of living in a hostile or unwelcoming context of reception, with special attention to its negative effect on integration (Portes and Rumbaut 2006; Phalet *et al.* 2013), and positive effect on migrants’ religiosity (Martinovic and Verkuyten 2012; Ysseldyk, Matheson, and Anisman 2010), highlighting that the existence or absence of discrimination has been seen as a major element in evaluating sociocultural integration (Maxwell 2008).

While my research emphasizes these arguments (as will be shown in Chapter Eight), it also strengthens them by illuminating that the influence of such unwelcoming context of reception is better understood through its practical perception. As such, core elements of my empirical findings

indicate that between personal experiences and general negative representation of Muslim migrants in Europe, a feeling of an unwelcoming societal context of reception appears to rise among informants, forming a kind of perceived discrimination.

In sum, as pointed out above in this section, two main themes -rotating around the issue of discrimination- are key in this research in looking at the unwelcoming societal context of reception: 1) a general perspective of discrimination, including the religious basis for such discrimination, and other overt aspects of the phenomenon involving directly reported discrimination, as well as the issue of the headscarf; and 2) what I refer to as hidden or passive discrimination which emerged from data as forms of social exclusion. As such, we can draw the important conclusion that discrimination does not fall into neat parables of obvious acts and behaviors, it is rather nuanced between explicit and hidden forms, and primarily evidenced by the perception of individuals subjected to it. It is relevant noting here that while discrimination would not be legally defined as such, this interpretation has repercussions on individuals.

## **i. General discrimination**

### **1. Religious grounds as basis for discrimination**

I noted earlier in this chapter that cultural/religious difference is an important element in informants' perception of the host society. However, this perception is not only limited to informants, but also the belief of cultural difference takes place among significant sectors of the host societies, in which Muslim migrants are seen as culturally and religiously different, and this may lead to overt and hidden forms of discrimination (Statham and Tillie 2016).

My research echoes this argument in the three countries of destination, and finds that the unwelcoming environment towards Muslim migrants has resulted in a belief among informants

that any form of discrimination or prejudice they might experience in the country of destination is primarily attributed to their religion as Muslims, and the way they manifest different aspects of their religiosity. In this regard, it is relevant noting that identifying whether religion, in and of itself, is a special reason for discrimination against Muslim migrants carries special significance in my research in exploring the societal context of reception.

In Europe, cultural and religious differences are argued to be common basis for discrimination and prejudice, and when Islam represents the different religion, the issue even takes on an added dimension of tension and sensitivity. Building on what has been argued in previous studies that Muslims are known to represent the prototypical other among many European societies (Allen and Neilson 2002; Foner and Alba 2008; Maliepaard and Phalet 2012), and that religion makes and unmakes prejudice in Europe (Hall *et al.* 2010; Bohman and Hjerem 2014: 937), it is evidenced, then, to suggest that the relationship between religion and anti-migrant attitudes is most likely dependent on the religious context of the country of destination and on the influence of religious differences in the host society.

Furthermore, although an array of factors might play a role in explaining discrimination against Muslims (including ethnicity and socioeconomic status), previous studies extensively argue that there is enough evidence to suggest that Muslims experience and perceive discrimination as associated with their religion (Litchmore and Safdar 2015), and that religion strongly matters for European societies inclination to tolerate Muslim migrants (Doebler 2014). Accordingly, discrimination against Muslims has been attributed primarily to their cultural/religious identity (Ghaffari and Çiftçi 2012). For example, a growing body of research substantiated that, by identifying clear differences in the experiences and treatment of Muslims in comparison to other

migrants (Adida *et al.* 2010; Bisin *et al.* 2008; Strabac and Listhaug 2008; Litchmore and Safdar 2015: 188).

## **2. Reported discrimination**

Having outlined the religious basis for discrimination which was clearly voiced in my research, it is important while demonstrating the role of perceived discrimination in constructing the perceived societal context of reception to look at what I refer to here as overt or directly reported discrimination. Key themes emerging from my data strongly reflect explicit forms of discrimination on the societal level in the UK, France, and Belgium. Such aspects of perceived discrimination constitute a foundational element of the overall perception of the unwelcoming societal context of reception.

On that basis, my research supports what has been argued in a wealth of literature and academic studies that Muslim migrants in different European countries encounter certain stereotypes that are reflected in acts of racism and everyday discrimination (Laurence and Vaisse 2006; Strabac and Listhaug 2008; Allen 2010; Esposito and Kalin 2011; Helbling 2012). Alba and Foner argue that Muslims perceive discrimination in Europe to be ‘common place rather than exceptional’ (2015: 120). In this context, discrimination is not only limited to the negative representation of Muslims and Islam or to the common rhetorical and discourse criticism, but also extended to daily discriminatory situations and incidents (Laurence and Vaisse 2006: 58).

This is clearly signaled in my research, yet limited to the level of the host society, as distinct from other systemic or institutional forms of discrimination. Numerous informants reported different aspects of discrimination to which they were exposed. Even without being personally involved in specific discriminatory situations, many characterized the general environment by rising

discrimination and racism among the host societies. Informants referred to discrimination in different terms throughout the interviews, whether by racism, prejudice or stereotyping. Most importantly, they framed the issue of discrimination in a broader connotation by incorporating it within their general views about the host society, and the general negative climate towards Muslims in Europe.

For example, in France, when asked about the French society, Fady commented that he sees the French society to be: “a very racist and discriminative society...a first tier one...they possess this colonial mentality”. In the same line Mahdi added: “I arrived in 2001, and by then deterioration started kicking off in France on the levels of freedoms, discrimination, and withdrawal of tolerance... [ ]...there is racism, there is discrimination...and the most difficult part in your daily life is to meet a racist civil servant or a racist policeman”.

Also, in explaining why it is hard for her to adapt in France, Hoda mentioned: “because here there is racism...they don’t accept us deeply from inside...neither Arabs managed to claim their rights nor the French are capable of hosting them... [ ]...it is hard to strike this balance between religion and adaptation with the society”. Similarly, Hossam noted while speaking generally about his migratory experience: “it is negative for me...I thought there will be real freedom and democracy...but was shocked to face the reality which was full of hypocrisy and racism...French people are racist people”.

In the UK, findings were the same. Samir, when asked if he considers himself adapted in the UK said “no...because of the level of discrimination I was exposed to...I’m a British citizen but will never be an English man... [ ]... the values of equality they talk about is just a theory, but here, rules are only applied on different degrees based on how you look”. In addition, with regard to specific situations of racism/discrimination, Omar commented: “I’ve witnessed some situations of

discrimination when I was working before at a bar...they [natives] only show it when they are drunk...they called me things like fucken Muslim... and when I tell them the next day about it, they deny it completely”.

An important point to highlight here is that the emphasis on such overt aspects of discrimination emerged throughout the interviews as incorporated with the general discussion about informants' perceptions towards the host society. My informants mentioned discrimination as part of their general responses to questions addressing their migratory experience, or their broad views about the country of destination; it was clearly an important part of their experience.

Moving on, as part of the overt forms of discrimination, the issue of the headscarf, in addition, was repeatedly emphasized and appeared as a key point in my empirical data concerning the perception of the host society.

### **3. The headscarf**

While it is important to note that an in-depth investigation of the issue of the headscarf in Europe is certainly beyond the scope of this research, it did emerge in interviews. Therefore, this section briefly addresses the headscarf as an aspect of the perceived discrimination, as well as a crucial example that demonstrates the implication of visible religiosity on the unwelcoming context of reception, which will be further demonstrated in Chapter Eight.

Although the issue of dealing with the headscarf or visible religiosity in Europe differs on the system level (or political and legal levels), depending on the national context/model in each country (Endelstein and Ryan 2013), between openness in the UK and restrictiveness in France and Belgium (Alba and Foner 2015), on the society level, I argue, the situation does not differ that

much. Key points emerging from my empirical findings emphasize overall unwelcoming attitudes towards the headscarf in all the three countries under study.

The issue of the headscarf in Europe has been a long standing subject of controversial debate which has generated numerous studies and commentaries (Gastaut 2000; Freedman 2004; Laurence and Vaisse 2006). It has been extensively argued that the headscarf epitomizes one of the most problematic issues about Muslims' integration in the continent. A significant part of the controversial public and political discourse about Islam and Muslim migrants in Europe can be easily summarized in the effect and complexity of the issue of the headscarf, when Muslim women are perceived as abnormal, or the 'other' who is holding an extreme belief system (Hopkins and Gale 2009; Endelstein and Ryan 2013: 253). And finally, this issue situates Islam at the forefront of the negotiations challenging the relationship between state and religion (Kastoryano 2002).

While echoing the complexity of the headscarf issue in Europe outlined in previous studies, the important nuanced picture that my research adds to existing literature on the issue of the headscarf in Europe lies, on the one hand, in the impact of the attitudes towards the headscarf on developing the overall perception of migrants towards the host society. Throughout interviews in the three countries of destination, informants used headscarf-based situation (observed or experienced) to justify their general negative views about the host society. And on the other hand, the significance of the headscarf in this research reveals that the issue is more about the attitude of the host society than it is about any structural and/or codified policy.

This comes in line with what I outlined earlier in this chapter and in Chapter Four, about the strong secular character of the host society shared in the UK, France and Belgium, which substantiates the common reaction towards the headscarf in the three countries. In specific terms, in the UK, it is noted that the society emphasizes the exclusion approach of secularism, and increasingly stresses

the elimination of the social influence of religion, or at least the very absence of religion (Birt *et al.* 2016). More obviously, in France the headscarf constituted a fundamental part of the public discourses taking place on the society level, about Muslims' compatibility with what is referred to as French norms (Freedman 2004). Also, the Belgian natives are argued to be not receptive to visible religiosity among Muslim migrants, or the existence of religion in the realm of the public sphere (Phalet and Swyngedouw 2003), which is strongly translated in attitudes towards the headscarf.

Also, in Chapter Four, in discussing secularism, I pointed out that Muslims' public visibility is seen as a critique to the secular understanding of the public sphere (Gole 2002), and thus headscarf debates in particular, as an example of reactive mobilization of secularism, was not only voiced on the system level, but it also constituted an important part of the public discourses on the society level (Freedman 2004; Alba and Foner 2015).

In my thesis, a number of important points emerged from interviews data in this regard: 1) most female informants who wear or used to wear the headscarf have repeatedly complained about the level of prejudice and discrimination they are exposed to because of the headscarf; 2) numerous cases of these women reported removing the headscarf to mitigate the effect of the unwelcoming societal context of reception; and finally, 3) those who removed it emphasized that the daily treatment they get has unequivocally changed for the better after removing the headscarf.

In the UK Nermeen complained about the kind of social dismissal she gets because of the headscarf by saying: "if I'm with my husband and some people want to talk to us...they always talk to him...they never try to talk to me...as if a veiled woman is retarded or so closed to the extent that she can't communicate". This comment in particular substantiates what has been outlined about the headscarf as widely interpreted in stereotyped image 'confirming signal of female submission

to male dominance' (Adida *et al.* 2016: 89), also it reflects the general negative reaction towards visible Muslims in the public sphere.

In addition, one major point that demonstrates the extent of societal discrimination against the headscarf can be seen in the impact of such discrimination/stigmatization in influencing informants' decisions to keep or remove the headscarf. Nahed, in the UK, explicitly explained how she felt her chances were lagging behind at work because of the discrimination she used to get for the headscarf: "I would not get any fair opportunity had I stayed veiled...I felt this problem more at work...where nothing I was doing was ever appreciated no matter how hard I worked", she then added: "it appears in the way people deal with you in the street...you know what, equality here is something theoretical...you would never find it in reality...[ ]...now the situation is different, my identity is concealed after I removed the headscarf...but despite this racism you can still claim your rights and protect them by law here". Also, Fatma outlined her experience of removing the headscarf based on the level of stress she was exposed to by saying: "some didn't want to talk to me...some avoided me...and after I removed it everything changed...I started seeing people who used to avoid me coming and talking...but I got some criticism from Arab colleagues at work...they were so disappointed that I have done this". In France, the same was expressed by Hossam while speaking about the struggle of his wife with the headscarf: "you know, my wife took off her headscarf in France...she was veiled in Egypt...it is because of the pressure she used to face here...and the result of discrimination and stigmatization of veiled women in France".

My research findings here show how public spaces in Europe are shaped by collective narratives which mostly represent Islam in terms of fear and hostility, and that women with headscarf are more likely to experience day-to-day discrimination and stereotyping. It also underlines how visible religiosity stimulates elements of the unwelcoming societal context of reception in Europe,

such as prejudice and discrimination. The thesis also emphasizes a clear change in public reaction towards Muslim women because of wearing the headscarf, concluding that members of the host society can be non-receptive towards a veiled woman and clearly different when she is non-veiled.

In general, my research supports what has been noted in previous studies that the headscarf heightens religious visibility in non-Muslim countries (Endelstein and Ryan 2013: 255), and that such high visibility through religious clothing may exacerbate experiences of stigmatization (Endelstein and Ryan 2013), and encounters resistance from native population (Carol and Koopmans 2013).

Overall, my research advances existing literature on the issue of the headscarf on two points: *first*, and most important, that the society is actually instrumental in examining and identifying the reaction towards the headscarf compared to what the system (legislations, laws or rules) bans or allows in various structured institutions. In other words, the influence of the unwelcoming society is powerful enough to pressure some informants, for example, to remove the headscarf without being legally or institutionally obliged to do so. It should be noted that women felt compelled to remove the headscarf in all three countries – demonstrating the impact of the societal context of reception as a separate phenomenon from the legal or philosophical; *second*, the headscarf in this context manifests the two forms of the unwelcoming societal context of reception outlined in this research, both the overt proactive one and the hidden passive one.

## **ii. Hidden or passive discrimination**

As highlighted earlier in this chapter, the other form of the perceived unwelcoming societal context of reception is represented here by hidden or passive discrimination. This form emerged from the interviews in key points referring to two themes: exclusion, and negative representation.

## 1. Exclusion

Indeed, another form of discrimination that carries strong significance in this thesis appears in attitudes related to the exclusion of migrants by the host society.

My research signals clear evidence of perceived social exclusion in the UK, France, and Belgium. Such exclusion is not reflected in active behaviors of discrimination/racism, but rather manifested in passive attitudes related to avoidance as well as lack of access to the host society, or what I refer to here as inaccessibility to the host society. This represents an important aspect of what is seen as hidden form of discrimination. In this context, discrimination is epitomized in general feelings of inferiority and exclusion resulting from certain passive negative attitudes by members of the host society towards Muslim migrants, such as certain patterns of avoidance.

Based on my empirical findings, different acts of exclusion including avoidance or lack of access to the native population indicate unjust and prejudicial treatment perceived by migrants mainly on religious or racial grounds. This is practically materialized in a number of issues including specific incidents of social avoidance by the host society towards informants, unwillingness of members of the host society to initiate friendships with informants outside workplaces, also avoidance of venues that are mainly occupied by migrants, as well as a desire among members of the host society to keep family interaction with non-natives to the minimal. As a whole, my research finds that in the UK, France, and Belgium, informants believe that they are allowed very limited access to the host society, or that the host society is mostly inaccessible, which is also seen as a sort of hidden discrimination.

The feelings of social exclusion and being blocked from mingling or socializing with the host society has been identified as a means of evaluating the perceived context of reception (Schwartz

*et al.* 2014: 9). Statham and Tillie have argued that such implicit avoidance is actually a manifestation of the lack of acceptance of cultural/religious differences among the host society (2016: 179). Avoidance or inaccessibility of migrants by the host society asserts that the host society is key in setting the tone of perceived societal context of reception. It also demonstrates how social exclusion occurs on a broader societal and intercultural level (Aydin *et al.* 2010: 742).

A number of elements from my data reflect explicit complaints about the unwillingness of the host society to socialize with migrants. In France, as Youssef simply put it: “they don’t want to do their homework...I try to greet them in Christmas and they never do the same in my Eid...they do not bear with you the effort in getting to know you...they don’t meet you half way”. The same was asserted by Shady, while explaining his incapacity to adapt in France: “there are many things that won’t allow you to adapt...there are no French friends...I try but I can’t...there is not even a chance for making French friends”. In the UK, findings emphasized similar exclusion, Zeinab, for example, said: “they always hide their feelings...very few would be friendly with you...they put barriers between themselves and any different person... [ ]... they don’t allow foreigners to their homes”.

Moreover, my empirical data show that such perceived avoidance and inaccessibility emerged under a general theme indicating that informants in the three countries under study clearly believe that no matter what they do, they will never be perceived or considered by most members of the host society as English, French or Belgians. This was expressed in a common phrase stating that ‘no matter what you do, you will not be considered one of them’.

In the UK, Hisham, a second generation Egyptian, expressed this issue while addressing the possibility of his children mingling with natives, by saying: “I was born and raised here and I know this very well...whatever you do or you don’t do you will not be one of them...and I don’t want

my kids to grow having the feeling that they can't be one of the other kids". Also, as Yasmine put it: "they are racists, but it's hidden...they won't express it...that's why I had to provide my sons with the best possible education in order for them to be equipped in facing this racism...because just their names will make life harder for them here". In Belgium the perception was almost the same. For example, Ziad strongly emphasized: "we should not fool ourselves...at the end we are different...and they will never accept us as people who belong to them, this is impossible...thus at the end, we should know where are we heading in diaspora...pretending to be part of them will never last...we are just different, our skin is different, our backgrounds are different".

Most importantly, in explicitly referring to the existing hidden forms of discrimination, Hussein in France elaborated by saying: "in the general outlook you don't get exposed to explicit racism here...however they are internally racists...by your inner feelings you can realize and understand how condescending the looks of the French society towards us...they make you feel that we are a community of terrorists, or retarded people...it is a hidden feeling of racism... [ ]...we can say that the French society applies the theory of equality, justice and freedom in all its behaviors and interactions...but the real description of this society is that it is a racist society in an indirect way...which means internally it's a racist society... [ ]...when the police stops you, he looks at you completely different than how he looks at a white French".

As a whole, a key theme that emerged in the analysis of my interviews data emphasizes that the existence of hidden or passive forms of discrimination and racism seems to be more common in the three countries under study than explicit/overt acts of racism. This implies that other factors than direct discriminatory situations can play a key role in shaping the perceptions and views of Muslim migrants regarding the host society. Witnessed (or observed) instead of experienced discrimination, hidden forms of discrimination such as avoidance and lack of access to the host,

as well as the overwhelming negative representation of Muslims and Islam in the west, all of which are factors that strongly contribute in explaining how migrants can perceive the existence of discrimination in the country of destination without being directly involved in it.

## **2. Negative representation**

Another key point that appeared clearly in my empirical data is the wide negative representation of Islam and Muslims in the UK, France, and Belgium. In this thesis, I consider this negative representation one of the passive forms of discrimination.

Referring to what I underlined in Chapter Four in discussing secularism, particularly the implications of the public-private sphere debates in contributing to the negative image of Muslims in Europe (Kastoryano 2004; Bousetta and Jacobs 2006), it is important to highlight that for an array of religious, socioeconomic, and political reasons, Muslim migrants (and/or minorities) are negatively represented in Europe in political and public debates.

In an extensive body of literature, it has been argued that Muslim migrants are negatively perceived and represented in different European countries. Surveys and studies show that in most European countries the views of Muslims are quite negative (Kaya 2012; Carol and Koopmans 2013; Bohman and Hjerm 2014). In this sense, Muslims epitomize what is known as a stigmatized social group (Kamans *et al.* 2009) that is defined as social categories to which others hold negative attitudes, stereotypes and beliefs (Crocker and Major 1989).

This negative representation is frequently mirrored in public and political discourses across European countries on different stages. Just the debate about the public recognition and accommodation of Islam as well as the issue of Muslim's integration often leads to controversy (Carol and Koopmans 2013; Statham and Tillie 2016), let alone the looming concern in Europe

that Muslims are seeking a bigger role of religion in the society (Torrekens and Jacobs 2015). This is accompanied by another concern that Muslims are transforming the religious landscape of highly secularized European countries, which might trigger tensions over the perception that the core values of European host societies are being undermined (Bohman and Hjerm 2014: 939). Muslims religious-based claims are also something that is argued to challenge the dominant culture of the host society (Carol and Koopmans 2013) or the ethos of the European secular societies.

Furthermore, the issue has even taken a stronger dimension, where Islamic values, traditions, and ways of life have been explicitly singled out as a common subject for heated public and political controversial debate (Carol and Koopmans 2013). In that respect, some questioned the compatibility of these traditions with western rights and liberties (Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007; Gijssberts and Dagevos 2007; Phalet *et al.* 2013), while others see them not only as a challenge to the values of European secular societies (Laurence and Vaisse 2006: 15), but also as ‘antimodernist’ and representing the ‘antithesis’ of European values and norms. (Alba and Foner 2016: 6). As such, it has been concluded that Islamic religious identity and ways of life are devalued by large segments of the host societies (Maliepaard and Phalet 2012).

In my thesis, and on the basis of my empirical data, this negative representation is not only ascribed by members of the host society to Muslim migrants, but most importantly it is strongly felt, perceived, and realized by migrants themselves. The research findings highlighted informants’ reaction to such negative representation by stressing the key role that this stigmatized image of Muslims plays in shaping informants’ overall perception towards the host society. Realizing this sense of negative representation of Islam and Muslims emerged as a strong theme in all three countries under study. Perceived prejudice and stereotyping appears clearly within such negative

representation, with informants strongly believing that they are treated as exemplars of the group to which they belong, which is primarily Muslims.

For example, Nadia in the UK noted in this regard: “the most important thing that worries me about my children is the very bad image stigmatizing Islam and Muslims in the west... especially after the last events...I’m afraid they might suffer from islamophobia or discrimination in the west these days...for me, the bigger problem lies in this level of stigmatization of Islam”. Similarly, Shahd commented: “I’m so emotionally attached to my religion...and I believe it’s true and what it says is true...but it is a struggle...because there is a kind of stigma to be a religious Muslim here”. In France Shaymaa added: “what hurts me most is that our religion has been strongly insulted...and people now point at us as terrorists”. Also, Ragy expressed his frustration for not being able to practice in Mosques because of this negative image: “if I go to the Mosque people here would think that I’m a terrorist... [ ] ...the idea that it is a free society and everyone does what he wants is not true...they want you to do it their way... [ ]...I don’t like how things are changing in France...it makes me scared”.

Therefore, these profound narratives - epitomizing the negative representation of Islam and Muslims in Europe - strongly influence not only Muslim migrants’ negative perception about the host native society, but also their reaction towards such form of stigmatization (i.e. reactive religiosity, oppositional identity, etc.).

Finally, after exploring the two major forms of perceived discrimination - representing the belief of an unwelcoming societal context of reception in this thesis - it is relevant to outline a number of minor variations that have been signaled in this research with regard to the perceptions of the unwelcoming host society.

### C. Minor variations in the perceived societal context of reception

Although in the previous section I demonstrated the overall perception of informants based on the core elements emerging from my empirical data, it is important to outline a number of minor variations -within this stream of findings- on two main levels: country of destination; and informants' socioeconomic status (or backgrounds). The first dichotomizes the differences in the countries of destination between France on the one hand, and the UK and Belgium on the other. The second looks at different elements of findings between skilled informants and lower-skilled ones with regard to their views about the host society.

*France vs the UK and Belgium:* It is important here to briefly outline that although themes reflecting different forms of overt and hidden discrimination and prejudice widely emerged in the three countries under study, the extent by which these elements came out was not the same in the three countries. The tone and intensity of reporting discrimination in France was clearly higher and more critical than that in the UK and Belgium, as it referred mainly to explicit forms of discrimination. On the other hand, in the UK and Belgium the focus was more about avoidance, exclusion, and limited access to the host society, with more elaboration on hidden/implicit discrimination.

This stronger critical views about discrimination and racism in France compared to those in the UK and Belgium can be attributed -as discussed previously in Chapter Four- to informants' reaction to what has been referred to as the consolidation of secularism (Reitz *et al.* 2017), which appears to be more salient in France than it is in the UK and Belgium. This consolidation is known to be a reactive mobilization of secularism in the country of destination (with different variations) materialized in a number of forms including: heated public and political debates on protecting

secularism; restrictive measures on the system level (the institutional level) towards different forms of public display of religion; along with the development of discriminatory attitudes on the society level.

In other words, the strong critique of the host society in France which appeared in my findings is associated with a stronger negative representation of Muslims in France as challenging the basic tenets of the French republican culture. This provoked forms of rejection to both Islam (as a foundational element of a political identity of Muslims in France compared to other European countries), and to Muslims' demands for religious recognition in the public sphere (Laurence and Vaisse 2006: 54). Such rejection by the host society in France also reflects the particularities of the French republican tradition, where secularism forms an official foundational principle in public institutions (Khosrokhavar 1998). In addition, it mirrors the magnitude of sensitivity that the French society holds towards its culture, and the general complexity of the ongoing heated debate about Islam and Muslims in France compared to other European countries.

*Skilled vs lower-skilled:* while the key emerging themes from my data emphasize a general negative perception towards the host society among all groups of informants, my research signals certain variation in the extent of such views between skilled and lower-skilled informants. Briefly, in the UK, France, and Belgium, skilled informants reported stronger and more detailed critical views about their perception of the unwelcoming host society in comparison to lower-skilled ones.

Similar to what has been outlined in Chapter Six, these variations in views between skilled and lower-skilled informants could be attributed to a number of reasons that mainly rotate around the issue of expectations. The expectations between the two groups regarding the host society varies heavily. While skilled informants appear to have high expectations regarding the kind of treatment,

accessibility and opportunities they feel they deserve to get from the host society (irrespective of their desire to mingle), lower-skilled ones exhibited very limited expectations in this regard.

It has been argued that migrants' potential and capacities of cultural and social integration are important for shaping migrants' expectations (Maxwell 2008: 392). My research strongly echoes that, and finds that many of those in my sample across the three countries under study who belong to the skilled group, with the high social status they normally hold, believe that they have the necessary potentials and capabilities to mingle and socialize with members of the host society, and accordingly to be accepted and treated on equal footing, taking into account the relatively privileged treatment they used to receive in their country of origin (Egypt). However, in the country of destination, when daily life experiences evolve in a different way than what they expected, with barriers and boundaries -based on discrimination and prejudice- being set in different spheres as they weave their way into the host society, they start realizing the challenge they face, by being treated as exemplars of the group to which they belong, which is primarily Muslims, who are generally negatively perceived and represented. Skilled informants then, it follows, develop strong feelings of rejection and ostracism, which substantiates the strong tone of criticism coloring their comments when speaking about the unwelcoming attitude and discrimination of members of the host society.

On the other hand, for lower-skilled informants, my research finds that the issue of mingling and socializing with the host society and being equally treated does not appear to have the same significance or priority. Their socioeconomic status (including the kind of jobs they hold), the life style they experience, as well as the neighborhoods where they live and mingle, all play a role in shaping their expectations, and in parallel restricting their opportunities to socialize with members of the host society. As noted in other studies, segregated migrants are less likely to meet members

of the host society (Van Tubergen 2007). Similarly, Karmi, in her study, concluded that Egyptian lower-skilled migrants in the UK, for example, are less exposed to the host society (1997: 13). This strongly resembles my findings with regard to the socialization patterns of lower-skilled informants.

As a whole, on that basis, my thesis finds, following Maxwell (2008), that migrants with high potential of sociocultural integration (i.e. fluency of the host country language, education, residential patterns) are likely to have high expectations for socialization with members of the host native society, and subsequently more likely to develop negative attitudes towards that host country when met by boundaries or barriers. In contrast, migrants with limited potentials of sociocultural integration have lower expectations for incorporation, and therefore, they are less likely to develop negative feelings when met by barriers.

### **III. Perceived Institutional Context of Reception (perceived system)**

In Chapter Four, I discussed theoretically the main elements forming the structural institutional context of reception, or the receiving system, by drawing on national models of integration and secularism. In this chapter I draw on empirical data to discuss the perceived institutional context of reception (or the perceived system) as the second major component that forms the overall perceived context of reception in this research.

As I outlined previously, the institutional context of reception comprises a number of structural factors such as legislations, citizenship policies, and institutional arrangements in education, labor market, religion, and housing. These factors constitute a national model of integration, which manifest the state's philosophy or approach of integration, as well as the institutional arrangements designated to implement these philosophies in accommodating migrants (Crul and Schneider

2010). More specifically, in Western Europe, national models of integration, are broadly characterized by philosophies that range between multiculturalism and assimilation.

In this research, while the three models in the UK, France, and Belgium theoretically represent three distinct approaches of integration – multiculturalism, assimilation, and a hybrid model – on the empirical level they are perceived similarly. This empirical similarity can be substantiated by a number of factors involving the following: that the official institutional arrangements related to migrant integration in the three countries under study are not practically implemented as they are politically or philosophically understood (Favell 2003); and that these three different philosophical understandings of integration underemphasize the role of agency, such as that of the host society, as they are mostly studied in the framework of official institutions and policies, and therefore have limited influence on the practical attitude of the host society towards migrants in the three countries (Bertossi 2011); and finally, the lack of homogeneity in these national models of integration (neither fully multicultural nor fully assimilationist), as each model evolves to embrace few elements of other models (Joppke and Morawska 2002; Koopmans *et al.* 2006);

In this section, I restrict my discussion of the perceived system to issues related to informants' perceptions about religious rights and/or diversity rights and benefits provided in the country of destination. Drawing on core elements of my empirical data in the UK, France, and Belgium, the section demonstrates the perceived system across two main themes: 1) broad positive views towards the system and/or the institutional arrangements in the context of reception; and 2) a general negative interpretation of the notion of integration.

In my thesis, the perceptions of this system is seen in informants' reflection on the religious rights and benefits provided (or not) by the system to Muslim migrants. In other words, it refers to the extent to which migrants feel that mainstream political institutions (the system) adequately

represent their interests. Or, following Carol and Koopmans, it is a general assessment or evaluation to the performance or non-performance of the country of destination's institutions with regard to providing rights and benefits to its religious minorities (2013: 166). In short, perceived system involves the general views about the country of destination apart from the behavior of the host society.

#### **A. General positive views towards the system**

I underlined earlier in this chapter, while addressing the perception of the host society, that the extent of openness or restrictiveness in the system is unlikely to change migrants' perception towards the host society. Based on my empirical data, the same applies to the perception of the system. Despite the variations and differences in the systems with regard to religious and cultural rights for Muslims (Carol and Koopmans 2013), between open European countries such as the UK and Belgium vs restrictive ones such as France (Torrekens and Jacobs 2015), findings of this research emphasize that all these systems are perceived generally positive.

In reiterating the variations in the structural distinctions between the systems of the UK, France, and Belgium, I previously outlined that, in the UK, multiculturalism in theory refers to policies that provide minorities not only with recognition of cultural differences but also with sufficient resources to maintain them (Koopmans 2013). In France, the country is known by its restrictive policies in terms of religious or diversity rights, based on its republican assimilationist model of integration (Hargreaves and Leaman 1995; Freedman 2004), with assimilation being a process that aims for gradual disappearance of cultural (and/religious) traits of the country of origin in favor of the mainstream host culture (Algan *et al.* 2012). Finally, the Belgian model is a hybrid of both multiculturalism and assimilation, under which the scope of religious rights is shaped, with each

of the three federal regions of the country adhering to a different policy (Martiniello 2003; Jacobs 2004, qtd in Statham and Tillie 2016: 180).

Accordingly, the range of cultural and religious rights granted to migrants in each system in the three countries is argued to be shaped by the particularities of each model including issues such as the general inclusive or exclusive approach of secularism, migrants' citizenship rights, as well as church-state ideologies (Carol and Koopmans 2013: 166). For example, in the UK, the long lasting relationship between the church and the state, along with the open multicultural approach of integration, has given Muslims a wider range of benefits compared to other European countries (Wright and Bloemraad 2012; Koomen *et al.* 2013). On the other hand, in France the strict interpretation of secularism (or *laïcité*) restricted Muslim migrants' religious rights (Goodman 2010; Lazear 1999). And in Belgium, although the formal recognition of faiths in the system included numerous religious rights such as financial advantages and offering Islamic religious classes (Martiniello 2003; Bousetta and Jacobs 2006), Belgium resembles the French system when it comes to the toleration of religion in public institutions (Carol and Koopmans 2013).

Having explored these broad distinctions in each of the three structural systems, it is important to distinguish this from the practical perception of these systems that came out in my research. One key point emerging from interviews data is the similar positive views towards the system in the UK, France, and Belgium.

Inasmuch as the overall democratic values and freedoms have been praised throughout the interviews, granted cultural and religious rights, in particular, have been underlined repeatedly as the main scope of interest in showing the extent of satisfaction with the system in the three countries of destination. It appears that the sense of positivity and appreciation that has been categorically emphasized are mostly linked to how the system in the three countries, despite

representing a non-Muslim majority, is seen to be tolerant by allowing different migrants originating from various background to practice, maintain, and celebrate their cultural and religious heritage. The abundance of numerous religious facilities in the countries of destination was an important factor in developing such perception.

It is important, herein, to highlight that my empirical data show that this sense of appreciation and positive views towards the system emerges in parallel with clear negative views about the secular host society (among the same informants).

For example, despite her critical views about the British society, Nadia emphasized clear favorability of the system: “I think that in the UK I can still live practicing my own ideas and ways of living with no influences or pressures...you can live with your different identity, and you can be proud of it...no one is forcing the kids to follow or adhere to certain religions or sects”. Also Eman commented: “here there are a lot of veiled girls...veil is normal here...Islam is tolerated in the UK, every place has a praying corner where you can freely practice your religion...I pray normally at work without that being surprising to anyone”.

Others were more explicit in expressing their support to the freedom of belief and conscience provided and guaranteed by the system. In France, for example, Ismaeel asserted: “all rituals are accessible here...and you won’t find anyone who tells not to pray...today for example we prayed Janaza... [Janaza prayer in Islam is the prayer performed during the funeral when a Muslim passes away]...and no one would tell you not to do that...whoever tells you that you can’t pray here is nonsense...even the guy with a beard no one questions his behavior”. Similarly in Belgium Abdel Kader commented: “what I have seen in Egypt is found here and even more... there is a lot of mosques...facilities for praying is here...Islam exists here”.

Most importantly, these positive views signaled towards the system thrust the discussion on the interpretation of secularism again to the fore. As mentioned earlier, despite that my findings emphasize clear critical views about the perception of the secular host society as being devoid of religion, paradoxically, this coincides with another major stream of findings that accentuates the positive stance towards the system, as evidenced in strong support and appreciation to the institutional (or systematic) secularism and the ideals and principles it represents.

Key points derived from interviews underline the understanding of systemic (or institutional) secularism in the west as a safeguard system that protects religious freedoms and rights. In France, Marawan, for example, noted: “laïcité protects and guards any believer or worshipper in whatever faith...this is laïcité...which means to respect each other and not to assault each other...[ ]...here the person who issues the approval for building a mosque is an atheist, but he respects the law and the constitution and freedoms”. In the same sense, in the UK, Azza emphasized the freedoms granted through secularism by saying: “here it is full of freedom of religion and practicing...there are plenty of veiled women for example...it is a secular country but respects and upholds human rights and freedoms”.

## **B. Negative perception of integration**

One other important aspect of the perceived system in this thesis is how ‘integration’, as a notion, is empirically perceived and represented. The practical understanding of integration appears to form one component of this perceived system. The core elements emerging from my interviews data signal that the concept of integration is negatively perceived in general.

For an array of reasons, it has been argued that many Muslim migrants reject what they see as a western understanding of integration in principle, and that such understanding of integration for

them means distance from one's religion (Laurence and Vaisse 2006). The reasons for such rejection has different facets including: certain academic approaches of integration which argue for the acquisition of values, customs, norms, and traditions of the receiving host society, such as secular norms and traditions, as a successful means of integration (Berry 1997; Alba and Nee 2003; Van Tubergen *et al.* 2004; Martinovic *et al.* 2009); the existing negative representation of Islam and Muslims in Europe (Kaya 2012; Kamans *et al.* 2009); the vigorous heated debates on Muslim migrants' integration (Carol and Koopmans 2013); the public and political discourses on the challenge that Muslim migrants represent to the dominant culture of the host society, including their alleged role in transforming the religious landscape in Europe (Bohman and Hjerme 2014: 939); along with the doubts and questions on the compatibility of Islamic traditions with western values (Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007; Dagevos and Gijsberts 2007).

My research accentuates these reasons as a basis for negative perception of integration, as it signals a clear negative interpretation of the notion of integration. A key point emerging from my data in the UK, France, and Belgium emphasizes that integration is interpreted as a concept that implies abandoning one's own religion, culture, and identity. As such, this negative interpretation of integration here exemplifies clear forms of oppositional identity and/or reactive religiosity exhibited by migrants against what they see as influential attempts by the receiving states for changing certain elements in their culture. In parallel, it is also perceived as failed attempts of integration by few Muslim migrants to adhere to the host society's culture and traditions, which, in turn, generates strong critical views among the majority of migrants against those few for being regarded as abandoning their own culture and religion (adhering to the host culture here connotes, in the most part, embracing some of the host society's acts of cultural liberties).

In the three countries under study, my informants expressed deep concerns while addressing the issue of integration, constructing their views over what is widely discussed in public and political debates about integration. They see it, primarily, as an overly politicized term that has been developed as a result of the current sociocultural and security challenges surging recently in different European countries, which eventually stigmatize and label Muslims across Europe.

In France, while laying out his understanding of integration when I asked him if he has adapted, Ehab clearly asserted: “what the French mean by adaptation is actually integration... which means that you should do exactly what they do.. [ ]...the person who comes without values and principles can be easily sloughed from his culture and integrate...to be like them exactly... and it has a very strong impact”. Also, Hoda asserted the same: “integration is important but you have to be different than them...you just can’t integrate 100% here...because they will never see you as French...never...and whoever does this they see him as someone of weak personality...you can’t just be up-rooted totally”. In the UK, the understanding of integration was not much different. For example, Ayman commented: “we are integrated...but with our conditions not according to the British society’s conditions...and this is how people respect you here”. In this regard, my research findings assert what Laurence and Vaisse have argued that Muslim migrants still do not see why they need to transform themselves in order to live successfully in the society (2006: 30).

Similarly in Belgium Sayed noted, while speaking about other Muslims in Belgium: “what I dislike here is the attitude of some Muslims, particularly from the second generation...in trying to be culturally integrated in a society to which they do not belong...and to adopt certain norms and traditions that utterly contradict with Islamic norms and traditions”. Based on what has been outlined earlier about how people who are seen to be strongly integrated into a social group are expected to comply with the norms and traditions of this group, including religious norms (Ultee

*et al.* 1996; Van Tubergen *et al.* 2004; Van Tubergen 2007: 748), this comment is an example of the manifestation of oppositional identity, where many migrants adopt such stance towards other migrants based on their objection about those who assimilate/integrate, because of what is argued to be complicity of these integrated migrants with the dominant culture (Yann *et al.* 2012: 11).

As a whole, my research finds that the overall perception of integration resembles what Nermeen briefly noted in the interviews: “it is either you fully integrate or you preserve your rituals and worshipping”. As such, integration and preserving one’s religion and culture are positioned in an ‘either-or’ equation, where both are portrayed as two conflicting directions. This has been voiced in certain studies emphasizing that cultural identity formation is seen as a binary choice, where migrants either choose to identify with the host culture/religion (or dominant culture) or to their (e.g. ethnic/religious) culture of origin, with the assumption that a stronger identification to the culture of the host society necessarily implies a weaker identification to their co-ethnoreligious peers (Zein 2001; Yann *et al.* 2012: 12; Litchmore and Safdar 2015).

## IV. Conclusion

In short, the significance of the perceived context of reception is quite crucial in explaining the dynamics of interaction between migrants’ religiosity and the context of reception in this chapter. It is also vital in understanding why different national models of integration (between opened multiculturalism and restrictive assimilation) are not solid predictor for a) a positive or negative context of reception, and b) a higher or lower religiosity among informants.

This chapter shows that looking at the perceived context of reception provides a vital tool in understanding how the role of religiosity in migrants’ lives can influence their sociocultural integration. On the basis of my empirical data, the chapter argues that although the structural

context of reception is important in understanding the conditions (and/or circumstances) of migrant integration, the question of the context of reception is primarily an empirical one. Despite the variations in the structural contexts of reception between openness and restrictiveness in the UK, France, and Belgium (see Chapter Four), migrants' overall perceptions of the context of reception in the three countries appear to be similar. The chapter, in this regard, highlights that the perceived context of reception is a result of (a) migrants' religiosity -and how it evolved in migration- and its role in shaping migrants' views about the host society's cultural norms, and (b) the existence of perceived discrimination and exclusion.

More specifically, my research finds that the actual perception of the context of reception comprises: on the one hand, an overall belief of an unwelcoming societal context of reception (host society), as evidenced through perceived discrimination and exclusion; and on the other hand, general positive views towards the receiving system, reflected in general favorability to the set of religious/cultural rights included in the institutional arrangements of this receiving system in the country of destination.

Such negative perception of the host society is divided into 1) a general belief of the existence of wide cultural differences between informants and the secular host society; and 2) a belief of the existence of different forms of discrimination.

The belief of significant cultural differences between informants and members of the host society indicates that the absence of religion among the host society emerged as a key theme, and that this absence is taken as being indicative of significant cultural differences, where such differences evolved as a major challenge. My data show that these cultural differences are closely linked to the understanding of secularism as the role of religion in the society. It is important to note that

this particular similarity in informants' perception about the host society reflects a major shared feature characterizing European societies of being highly secular.

With regard to the belief of an overall unwelcoming host society, this perception is divided into two main themes: the first refers to a general reporting on discrimination including overt or explicit acts of discrimination, while the second comprises hidden or passive forms of discrimination, including forms of exclusion. On that basis, in this chapter, I argue that discrimination forms an important component of the perceived societal context of reception, and that perceived discrimination and prejudice is a result of a hybrid of elements coming together including negative representation of Islam and Muslims, experienced and observed racism or prejudice, and, finally, different forms of exclusion.

Moreover, as the issue of the headscarf emerged strongly within this trajectory of findings regarding the perceptions about the host society, the research reveals that this issue is more about the attitude of the host society than it is about any structured and/or codified policy, and that the society is actually instrumental in examining and identifying the reaction towards the headscarf compared to what the system bans or allows in various structured institutions.

The other form of the perceived unwelcoming societal context of reception is represented here by hidden or passive forms of discrimination. Such forms are not reflected in active behaviors of discrimination/racism, but rather manifested in passive attitudes related to avoidance as well as lack of access to the host society. Therefore, the research emphasizes that observed instead of experienced discriminatory situations or incidents, and the lack of access to the host society, as well as the overwhelming negative representation of Muslims and Islam, are all factors that strongly contribute in explaining how migrants can perceive the existence of discrimination in the country of destination without being directly involved in it.

Therefore, it is important to emphasize that discrimination does not fall into neat parables of obvious acts or behaviors, it is rather nuanced between explicit and hidden forms, and primarily evidenced by the perception of individuals subjected to it.

On the other hand, the second overarching theme emerging from my empirical data in this regard is the general positive perception of the institutional context of reception (the system) in the three countries under study. In my thesis, the perceptions of this system is actually a reflection on religious rights and benefits offered (or not) to Muslim migrants by institutional arrangements.

These positive views thrust the discussion on the interpretation of secularism, again, to the fore. In my research, despite signaling clear critical views about the secular host society, as being devoid of religion, in parallel, this coincides with another stream of findings representing the positive stances towards the system, as evidenced in strong support and appreciation to European institutional secularism and its ideals.

In this context, the empirical interpretation of secularism in this research corresponds to what has been highlighted theoretically in Chapter Four about the contradicting interpretation of secularism on the system level; namely that governments may interpret secularism in one of two (contradictory) ways: on the one hand, secularism is interpreted to be reflected in a neutral state which recognizes all religions (Kastoryano 2004; Willaime 2015; Dillon 2010; Alba and Foner 2008; Yegenoglu 2012; Joppke 2015). And on the other hand, governments may interpret and apply secularism to mean the exclusion of religion from the public sphere (Cesari 2004; Bruce 2011; Joppke 2015; Alba and Foner 2015).

In the same line, this theoretical duality emerged empirically in informants' interpretations of secularism. In France, the UK and Belgium, there was clear support for institutional secularism as

a safeguard for religious freedoms and rights, but, in parallel, deep concerns emerged about the essence of the secular society as devoid of religion, and the kinds of challenges (or social implications) such secularism pose on informants' daily lives in the country of destination.

Finally, the findings of my research in exploring the perceived context of reception - regarding the existence of similar negative views about the host society and similar positive views about the system in the three countries under study – accentuate, clarify, and advance what Torreken and Jacobs (2015) have argued that the extent of openness or restrictiveness in the system (or policy model) is unlikely to change migrants' perception towards the host society.

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## **Chapter Eight: The Dynamics of Interaction Between Religiosity and the Context of Reception**

### **I. Introduction**

This chapter brings together the findings demonstrated in the three previous chapters to illustrate the existence of a self-perpetuating cyclic dynamics between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception.

In specific terms, the chapter builds on the conclusions of Chapters Five and Six, in which the research signals a clear reinforcement in migrants' religiosity, where these chapters argued that religiosity has a strong influence on migrants' positionality towards the host society. This chapter also strongly builds on the perceived context of reception discussed in Chapter Seven, where empirical evidence shows that the context of reception is largely perceived as unwelcoming, with the host society playing a dominant role in shaping this perception. Further, Chapter Seven demonstrated that religiosity of migrants is important in developing their perceptions about the context of reception, which is mainly reflected in the development of a belief of wide cultural differences. This chapter extends that argument by demonstrating how such perception, in return, impacts migrants' religiosity (and not only resulting from it).

Based on what I outlined in Chapters Four and Seven, it is vital to note that, on the one hand, two major elements are key in developing the perceived context of reception: migrants' religiosity and the existing structural context of reception (i.e. models of integration and institutional secularism). On the other hand, this perceived context of reception, thus, comprises: a negatively perceived host society; a positively perceived institutional system; and, a belief of wide cultural differences

between migrants and the host society. However, empirical data indicate that the perception of the host society is the primary factor in developing the overall perception of the context of reception.

Existing literature argued that unwelcoming context of reception in Europe, which would include a wide range of discriminatory practices, is broadly associated with Muslims' religiosity (Adida *et al.* 2016; Litchmore and Safdar 2015). However, it was not empirically clear how such relationship between religiosity and the context of reception emerges. In previous studies, the relationship between the context of reception and religiosity has been portrayed, one way or another, in a direct form of causality, by which an unwelcoming context of reception, for example, leads directly to the rise of Muslim migrants' religiosity, through responses manifested mainly in reactive religiosity or oppositional identity.

Nevertheless, on the basis of my empirical findings and data analysis, this chapter fills that gap by illuminating how the self-perpetuating dynamics of interaction between religiosity and the unwelcoming context of reception takes place in an iterative process comprising the perceived context of reception, and, most importantly, a state of sociocultural segregation.

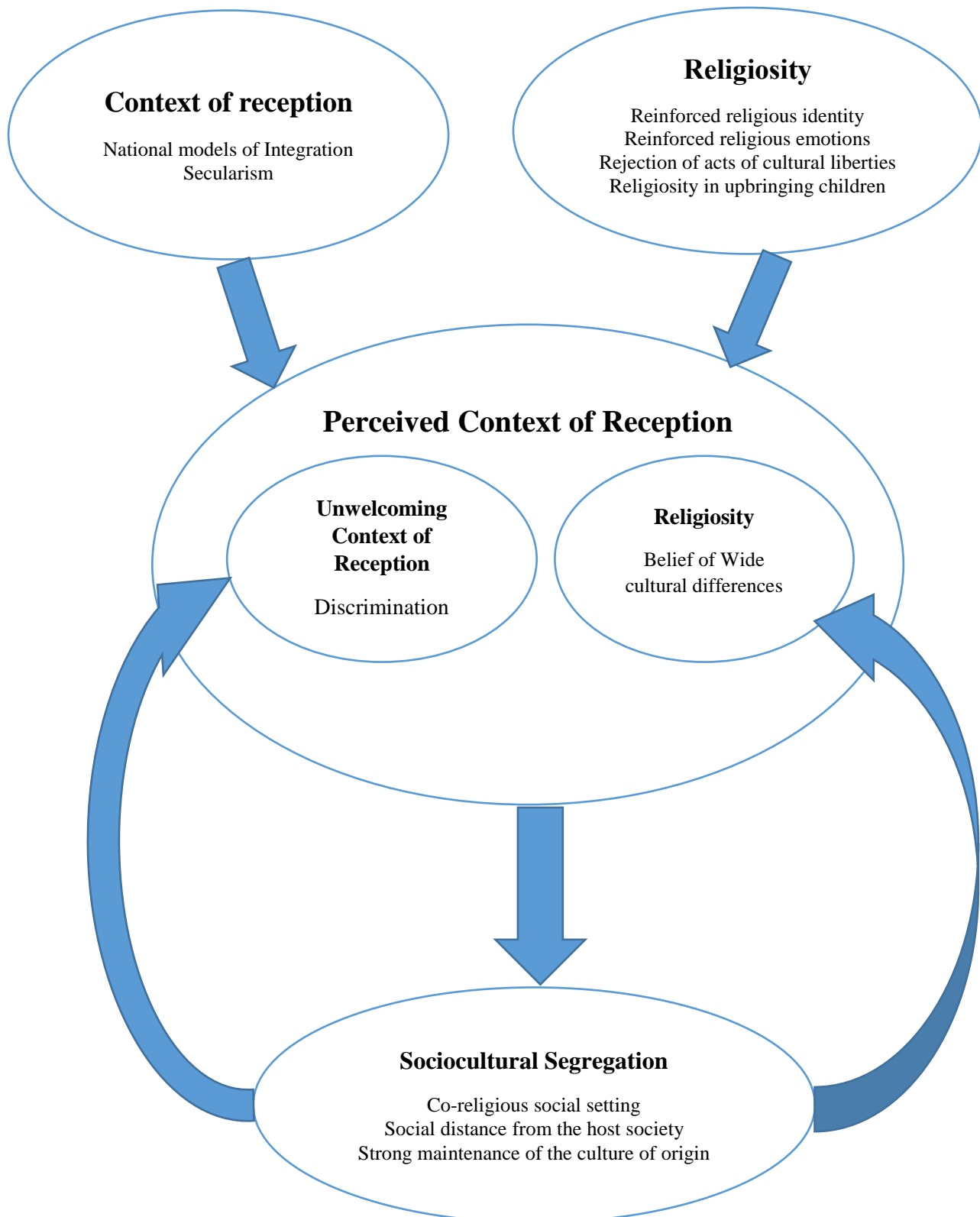
In religion and migration literature, the general link between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception has increasingly gained attention, especially with regard to Muslim migrants. In general terms, it has been argued that the context of reception impacts the outcomes of Muslim migrants' religiosity (Connor 2010; Voas and Fleischman 2012). Two main hypotheses have been introduced in academic literature, in this regard, leading almost to similar results: the first argues that the more welcoming context (receptive society and accommodating system) provides the cultural space and removes barriers to religious practice, which subsequently reinforces migrants' religiosity; whereas the second posits that the less welcoming context (unwelcoming society and restrictive system) triggers oppositional identity among migrants, and stimulates a distinctive

narratives of ‘us vs them’, leading, as well, to a general reinforcement of religiosity (Connor 2010: 381; Voas and Fleischman 2012: 532). Thus, based on this understanding, both the welcoming and the unwelcoming context of reception would lead to an increase in migrants’ religiosity.

Having outlined that, my research adds important nuances to these perspectives by proposing a dynamic interactive model with three main points: (1) that such interplay between religiosity and the context does not take place in a linear process, or a direct form of causality, it rather unfolds in an iterative process through a mediating role played by a state of sociocultural segregation; (2) the research emphasizes that it is not that either the more or the less welcoming context of reception leads to an increase in religiosity, it finds that a combination of both (based on what I argued in Chapter Seven), a perceived unwelcoming society, coupled with a perceived welcoming institutional system that, first, stimulates migrants’ sociocultural segregation, and, second, this segregation consequently interacts with both religiosity and the unwelcoming context of reception (within the cyclic dynamics of interaction); finally (3) my research contributes to literature by looking at both migrants religiosity and the context of reception through migrants’ own perspectives and experiences, rather than examining religiosity through markers and codified rituals, or measuring the context of reception using structured policies and models of integration.

On that basis, this chapter argues that: 1) the context of reception, which is largely perceived as unwelcoming, and religiosity are locked in a self-perpetuating relationship; and 2) this self-perpetuating cyclic dynamics between the unwelcoming context of reception and migrants’ religiosity does not unfold in a linear process (or in a direct form of causality, where one factor leads to the other). Instead, it takes place through a state of sociocultural segregation, which functions here as a mediator that sets the tone of interaction between informants’ religiosity and the context of reception.

Figure 1: Thesis diagram, the overall dynamics of interaction between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception



In other words, as shown in Figure 1 above (the thesis diagram), my research extends the perspectives drawn in literature in this regard, arguing that this self-perpetuating cyclic dynamic is best understood in an iterative two-dimensional process: *first*, a perceived context of reception contributes to developing a status of social and cultural segregation; *second*, once set in place, that status of sociocultural segregation gets locked in two parallel bidirectional dynamics. One takes place with informants' religiosity, whereas the other interacts with the unwelcoming context of reception. More clearly, this interplay operates as follows: sociocultural segregation and religiosity mutually reinforce each other in a bidirectional effect; and in parallel, sociocultural segregation and the unwelcoming context of reception also stimulate and enhance each other in a similar bidirectional dynamic.

I draw from this to conclude that this overall cyclic effect (or the self-perpetuating spiral) between religiosity and the unwelcoming context of reception, as mediated by sociocultural segregation, and a perceived context of reception, has an overall negative impact on migrants' sociocultural integration in the three countries of destination.

In order to demonstrate this dynamic of interaction, the chapter is structured in three major sections: 1) a brief discussion on my empirical findings about informants' sociocultural segregation, based on the research theoretical approach outlined in Chapter Three; 2) an overview of the relationship between religiosity and sociocultural segregation; and finally, 3) an overview of the parallel relationship between the perceived unwelcoming context of reception and sociocultural segregation.

## II. Empirical Findings on Sociocultural Segregation

Before exploring the two bidirectional dynamics linking religiosity with the context of reception in this thesis, and based on the mediating role of segregation in demystifying this link, it is important, first, to highlight my research findings regarding the status of sociocultural segregation.

Drawing on what has been underlined in Chapter Three, regarding how forms of sociocultural segregation symbolize a lack of integration, or signify integration failure (Phillips 2007; Damstra and Tillie 2016), and building on the research theoretical approach and conceptual understanding of sociocultural integration as a phenomenon where cultural integration takes place somewhere between migrants' retention of the culture of origin and their acquisition of the culture of destination (Phinney *et al.* 2001), one core element emerging from my research findings signals the existence of a state of sociocultural segregation between informants and members of the host societies in the UK, France, and Belgium.

It is important to note, here, that since this thesis looks primarily at integration as a process, and not as an end-result featured by specific levels, then focusing empirically on the issue of segregation, and employing it to mediate the relationship between religiosity and the context of reception, serves to substantiate how this research understands integration more from the perspective of prospects and the likelihood of integration, and less from a level-based standpoint.

Furthermore, by drawing on the significance of the concept of weak ties (which refers in this research to the level of informal social interactions that connects my informants to members of the native host society in the UK, France, and Belgium), and on Berry's acculturation theory (1997), as well as on cultural maintenance and social contacts as two main criteria through which sociocultural integration can be analyzed and examined (Damstra and Tillie 2016; Alba and Nee

2003), my research findings primarily disclose a clear social and cultural distance between informants and members of the host society, in which the retention of the culture of origin (epitomized in religion) supersedes the acquisition of the culture of destination in the three countries under study.

Most importantly, identifying a state of sociocultural segregation in this research is, also, concluded from the findings presented in Chapter Seven on the components of the perceived context of reception, especially informants' belief of the existence of wide cultural differences with the host society, along with their belief of an overall unwelcoming context of reception, where the bulk of their critique focused on both certain cultural traits associated with the host society (i.e. the general role of religion in the society, sexual liberties and alcohol, other issues such the absence of family solidarity and parenting traditions), as well as on various forms of discrimination and prejudice.

In this regard, building on what I outlined in Chapter Seven, academic research looking at the reasons and forces of segregation has debated the issue from the perspectives of choice and constraint (Maliepaard and Schaacht 2017; Huttman 1991; van Kempen and Ozuekren 1998; Johnston *et al.* 2005; Phillips 2007), arguing that Muslim migrants can choose to isolate themselves from the host society, and that the host society (or majority population) can create boundaries by discriminating against migrants (Maliepaard and Schaacht 2017). As such, sociocultural segregation can be divided into two main types: the first is driven by a preference/choice of migrants to befriend and mingle only with members of co-ethnic/religious peers, as they represent the in-group that shares similar cultural/religious background; and the second is argued to be imposed on migrants by the context of reception, through different

contextual factors, restricting their interactions and opportunities to meet members of that host society (Mouw and Entwisle 2006, Vermeij *et al.* 2009; Smith *et al.* 2014).

My research builds on this conclusion, and discerns that the belief of the existence of wide cultural differences between informants and members of the host society is a nuanced way in substantiating how migrants can choose to isolate themselves, reflecting a chosen angle of self-segregation. However, in parallel, the unwelcoming context of reception, as shown in discrimination and exclusion, represents what can be called the imposed dimension of segregation in this research. Therefore, my research argues that segregation is, in fact, a result of both a choice of migrants anchored by their religiosity, along with certain constraints in the context of reception, based on an overall perceived unwelcoming context of reception.

On the social level, I draw from this to demonstrate that in the three countries of destination, empirical evidence stresses strong co-ethnic and co-religious social contacts among informants with their Egyptian Muslim friends/peers (and, in certain cases, Arab Muslim peers). This appears to shape their ethnic networks, as they situate themselves primarily among Egyptian/Arab community in the UK, France, and Belgium. In other words, the research finds that informants' circles of friends and acquaintances include either Egyptians only, as in Belgium and France, or Egyptians and Arabs, as in the UK. Accordingly, the main scope of their social activities lies within members of peer community (or the in-group community), involving family gatherings, social events, and other leisure activities. In parallel, this robust ties with co-ethnic and co-religious peers is accompanied by limited or restricted ties with members of the host society. Interview data signal minimal forms of social relations between informants and native populations, where these relations seem unlikely to go beyond the scope of work or business.

This has been echoed in previous studies about other groups of Muslim migrants in Europe, who were found to be at a disadvantage in terms of social relations, even after controlling for individual characteristics (i.e. education, age, etc.) (De Palo *et al.* 2006: 14). Such studies presented plausible evidence in literature to argue that interethnic friendships between Muslims and natives in Europe are relatively rare, and that in most cases, Muslims' scope of friendships does not go beyond their peer community, at the expense of their contacts with members of the host native society (Martinovic *et al.* 2009; Schacht *et al.* 2014).

On the other hand, with regard to the cultural level, and building on the perceived context of reception, my research findings emphasizes strong signals of informants' retention of their culture of origin, manifested in reinforced forms of religiosity, and coupled by a clear objection to the culture of destination (or the culture of the host society), as discussed in details previously in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. A number of key elements emerging from empirical data accentuate this retention of the culture of origin, which are summarized in the following: strong reliance on the demarcation of *halal* and *haram*; reinforced forms of religious identity; invigorated religious emotions; emphasis on parental religiosity; and a clear objection of the secular culture of the host society, particularly sexual liberties and alcohol-related norms.

Having briefly explored the research's results on sociocultural segregation, and based on the mediating role of this segregation in this thesis in demystifying the dynamics of interaction between religiosity and the context of reception, it is relevant then to take a closer look at the nature and directions of this dynamics of interaction, by drawing on the issue of segregation.

### III. The Relationship between Religiosity and Sociocultural Segregation

Drawing on empirical evidence, the first bi-directional interplay in this thesis, which ultimately serves to demystify the overall link between the context of reception and religiosity, is the one that occurs between migrants' religiosity and sociocultural segregation. In short, this section argues that there is a positive bidirectional relation between sociocultural segregation and religiosity, by which both reinforce each other in a sequence of mutual cause and effect.

It is important, in this context, to highlight that this relationship between segregation and religiosity is better understood within the framework of the theory of religiosity as a social identity (Maliepaard and Phalet 2012; Karlsen and Nazroo 2013) and the general tenets of social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Velasco Gonzalez *et al.* 2008) (demonstrated in Chapter Three). The theory asserts that one of the main functions of religiosity is to provide migrants with social identities, in order to facilitate their settlement in the country of destination. And given that social identity is an identity that is socially constructed and validated in the interactions with others (Postmeset *et al.* 2006;), then, in this sense, the social setting created by segregation is a suitable environment (or surroundings) to develop and maintain a positive sense of one's social self, by being in favor of one's group distinctions, which helps to achieve a positive group identity. This is clearly seen in what sociocultural segregation, as a social setting, provides my informants in the forms of identity consolidation, manifested in religiosity maintenance. In other words, the state of social and cultural segregation that informants experience in the country of destination situates them within a similar social group (Egyptian Muslims), which creates a sort of cultural influence that is mostly dictated by religion.

On the other hand, two approaches can be identified while looking at the relationship between religiosity and segregation. The first emphasizes the impact of segregation on religiosity, by arguing that Muslim migrants who interact more with their co-ethnic peers appear to identify more with religion, and that overemphasized co-ethnic and co-religious contacts increases Muslim migrants' religiosity (Maliepaard and Phalet 2012; Maliepaard *et al.* 2015; Voas and Fleischman 2012; Smits *et al.* 2010; Phalet *et al.* 2008; Van Tubergen 2007; Kelly and De Graaf 1997). On the other hand, the second approach (Maliepaard and Schacht 2018; Güngör *et al.* 2011) stresses the parallel influence of religiosity on segregation, arguing that religion enhances stronger co-ethnic and co-religious networks, and that religiosity in general reinforces co-ethnic social settings. My research, based on empirical data, advances these arguments by pulling them together in an interactive perspective, which serves to substantiate the overall link between religiosity and the context of reception. This is shown by underlining a positive bidirectional relation between sociocultural segregation and religiosity, in which both reinforce each other.

This process takes place on two levels: on the first level, the overall perceived context of reception contributes in developing a status of sociocultural segregation. Subsequently, on the second level, this developed sociocultural segregation, once set in place, gets locked in a bidirectional effect with informants' religiosity, by which each reinforces and stimulates the other. This section, then, demonstrates this dynamic across two interactive themes: religiosity reinforces sociocultural segregation; and sociocultural segregation reinforces religiosity.

#### **A. Religiosity reinforces sociocultural segregation**

Drawing on what has been argued in Chapter Seven about the role of religiosity in developing a belief of wide cultural differences between Muslim migrants and members of the host society, and

based on the role of the perceived context of reception in the overall thesis argument, this section further substantiates that by demonstrating how religiosity can stimulate a state of social and cultural segregation. In short, the section argues that this belief of wide cultural differences among informants, anchored by religiosity, contributes in channeling (or directing) them into a state of sociocultural segregation.

Connor (2010), Torrekens and Jacobs (2015), and Endelstein and Ryan (2013) point out that Muslim migrants seem to have a cultural objection to secular European societies and their social norms. In addition, Phillips (2007) outlined that in the absence of social support and extended social and cultural relations, at the early stages of migration, strong ties to a co-ethnic community may enhance the well-being of many migrants, through the set of resources and benefits provided by religion (Hirschman 2004). Also, Maliepaard and Schacht (2018) argue that the greater the role of religion in Muslim migrants' lives the more its impact on the development of new social ties in the country of destination. When co-religious/co-ethnic groups, for example, act as a meeting place for Muslim migrants, then such groups or communities become a refuge from loss and separation, provide routes to respectability, and finally, offer a host of resources (Voas and Fleischman 2012: 529).

My thesis strongly echoes this, and finds that these elements (i.e. cultural objection, resources offered by religion, and benefits provided by co-religious groups) combined together, far outstrip what has been proposed before about their role in the adaptation and resettlement of migrants. My empirical data emphasize that the presence of these elements combined are crucial in substantiating the role of religiosity in developing a state of sociocultural segregation. Religiosity here acts as a compelling motive for informants to socialize and mingle mainly, if not only, with co-ethnic

Egyptian or Arab Muslims, which elucidates how segregation among migrants is developed based on cultural preference (or choice).

As such, I argue that while migrants' religiosity offers important benefits such as collective self-worth, shared values, and social support, which facilitate migrants' adaptation in the country of destination, and while it generates a sense of cultural objection to the host society's secular norms, consequently, religiosity enhances stronger co-ethnic and co-religious social ties and networks, and contributes in positioning Muslim migrants more among their peers in the country of destination, which, in turn, leads to a state of sociocultural segregation.

On the basis of the main themes of my empirical findings, the influence of religiosity on segregation can be manifested in three major aspects: preserving religious identity; maintaining distance from the host society; and, positions towards the issue of intermarriages.

### **i. Preserving religious identity**

One key factor in substantiating the impact of religiosity on sociocultural segregation revolves around the idea of preserving and maintaining one's own religious identity, norms, and traditions in the country of destination. Building on what I outlined in the previous empirical chapters about the strong overlapping of the fear of losing one's religious identity with multiple aspects of religiosity (i.e. the upbringing of children; the rejection of acts of cultural liberties; signifying norms and traditions; and being a stimulating factor of religiosity in general), the priority/need in preserving this religious identity channels informants into their co-ethnic peers, and, simultaneously, away from members of the host society. In contrast to what is argued in the following section (the impact of segregation on religiosity), religiosity here is not a result of sociocultural segregation, it is rather -in parallel- a stimulating factor that leads to such segregation.

A key point emerging from my findings in the UK, France, and Belgium reveals that of all ways used in preserving religiosity in the country of destination, being situated among co-ethnic and co-religious peers (mainly Egyptian Muslims) appears to be one of the most efficient and simple paths for achieving this goal. Accordingly, the significance of mixing with co-ethnic peers (and not with native hosts) stems mainly from religious-driven reasons or concerns. In this regard, religious identity preservation and maintenance emerges as the prime motive.

By doing so, informants place themselves in a setting where the common narrative echoes religious norms and traditions that are similar to the ones they used to have in the country of origin. Besides the perceived safety and security provided by the familiarity of such setting, the main benefit, though, can be seen in the preservation of one's religious identity. This appears to take place, on one hand, by having the suitable environment to practice, nurture, and live one's religiosity among co-ethnic peers, and on the other hand, by being distant from the host society's cultural influence.

In the interviews, while responding to a question about the main advice to a potential Egyptian Muslim migrant who is about to make the same journey, informants emphasized that their main advice would be to seek out the social and cultural proximity to members of similar community, mainly the Egyptian/Arab community, where Egyptian Muslim migrants can be capable of preserving their religious identity and that of their children.

Aisha emphasized: "I would tell him to live next to a Muslim and Arab community...and next to a Mosque". Similarly, Kamal mentioned: "for him to try to mix and mingle with Muslims and Egyptians as much as he can...because if he stayed close to this community he will manage to preserve his norms and traditions easier". Also, Farouk added in this regard: "if he is keen to maintain his identity, I will tell him to try to link himself with an Egyptian community". In the same line, Khaled commented: "...to try to mingle and to know people from similar

backgrounds...it is a necessity that the place where you settle should have Arab and Muslim communities”. These findings demonstrate why informants tend to opt for more in-group social relationships, as a vital way for maintaining their religion, which subsequently leads to sociocultural segregation.

Since the influence of religiosity in shaping informants’ social ties and patterns of socialization is dominated by the desire to preserve one’s religious identity, this thrust the significance of the theory of religiosity as a social identity, again, to the fore of the discussion. On that basis, the interaction with those who share similar social identity (including religiosity) increases the meaning and significance of this identity, as well as the norms and traditions associated with it (Ethier and Deaux 1994; Maliepaard and Phalet 2012), and that, in contrast, socializing more with the host society is argued to decrease the significance of religious identity (Maliepaard and Phalet 2012).

## **ii. Maintaining distance from the host society**

Building on what has been discussed previously in Chapters Six and Seven, regarding the role of religiosity in distancing migrants from members of the host society, for a variety of reasons - summarized in the implications of the belief of wide cultural differences - this role is also seen in the impact of religiosity on segregation. Not only maintaining one’s own religious identity corroborates the influence of religiosity on segregation, but also it is maintaining distance from members of the host society. As such, maintaining distance from the host society, and developing what is seen as a shelter from its cultural influence, is another propelling religiously-driven reason stimulating sociocultural segregation among informants.

Drawing on the *halal* and *haram* demarcation as a fundamental aspect of everyday religiosity in this thesis (see Chapter Five), my research finds that perceiving the host society as significantly different reveals how issues related particularly to the *haram* acts (or the religiously forbidden issues) are precisely what drives informants away from the host society (i.e. alcohol, premarital relationships, etc.), and subsequently reinforces a state of sociocultural segregation.

For example, a number of quotes clearly reflected a protective motive for not mingling with members of the host society. In Belgium, Samer stressed the *haram* act of sexual liberties in justifying his advice to his brother in Belgium to end his relationship with a native woman, and to develop stronger ties with his Egyptian Muslim peers. In this regard he elaborated by saying: “I told him it will be a loss from all aspects... financially he could not afford a relationship-based life style with its associated expenses...[ ]... also on the social level it is isolative...he won’t have enough time to see his Egyptian friends because he will probably spend most of his free time with her...and on top of everything, there is the issue of religion, and the *haram* life he was living, it is something he will pay heavily for sooner or later if he continued like that”. Also, as Ziad clearly put it: “when I stick to foreigners I will lose a lot...I won’t pray...I won’t carry out many of my religious obligations...but if I stick to Egyptians, for example, I will maintain my prayers...religion is the most important thing that I was afraid to lose by sticking around foreigners”. In the UK, for example, and in commenting about maintaining his religious norms and traditions, Hussein noted: “I managed to maintain them because I didn’t mix or mingle with British people...we are very isolated from them completely...because we are different...we want to preserve our traditions and that’s why we don’t mix with them in order not to acquire their norms and traditions”.

Finally, it is also relevant to reiterate here a point made in Chapter Six, namely that the issue of the upbringing of children is not only a context where religiosity is reinforced, but is also a significant motive for cultural distance and divergence, by driving informants towards co-ethnic peers and away from the host society, which subsequently contributes in enhancing sociocultural segregation.

### **iii. The issue of intermarriages**

The issue of intermarriages and/or interethnic relationships appears to be another important element of the role of religiosity in stimulating sociocultural segregation. Intermarriages in this thesis does not represent the degree of intermarriages among my sample, but, qualitatively, refers to informants' views and positions about the issue of intermarriages or interethnic relationships with members of the native host society.

It has been argued that intermarriage represents one of the strongest ties between migrants and the host society on the social and cultural levels. It is seen by many scholars as a significant indicator of successful integration (Kalmijn and van Tubergen 2006; Kulczycki and Lobo 2002; Rosenfeld 2002). Carol, for example, called it one of the strongest measures of social integration, where such integration can be measured through attitudes towards intermarriage 'across Muslim-non-Muslim lines' (Carol 2013: 67). This, in return, implies that its absence can be seen as an indicator of unsuccessful integration. Moreover, it has been argued that Muslim migrants can distance themselves from the host society by banning intermarriages (Maliepaard and Schacht 2018), and, in parallel, enhancing marriages within the same ethno-religious group to maintain religiosity (Phalet *et al.* 2008). This illustrates how the approval (or not) of intermarriages among Muslim migrants is associated with religiosity (Carol 2013).

My thesis accentuates these perspectives, and argues that positions towards intermarriages signify the general impact of religiosity on sociocultural segregation. My empirical data signals that positions/views towards the issue of intermarriages or interethnic relationships are highly dictated by religiosity. Accordingly, the research identifies a clear cultural rejection towards the issue of intermarriages in general. Informants hold strong negative views towards having a partner from the native host society, ascribing this mainly to the fear of losing one's religion/religious identity, especially when having children. Such fear mostly originates from the cultural threat represented by what is regarded as a religiously different or a culturally distinct partner. Consequently, negative views about intermarriages lead to restrictions with regard to social mixing and interactions between Muslim migrants and members of the host society, which subsequently reinforces sociocultural segregation.

The flip side of the coin, with regard to this overall cultural rejection of intermarriages, denotes more closeness towards members of co-ethnic peers, mainly the Egyptian or Arab community. In this regard, the research finds that the commonly accepted position on this issue is to have primarily a religiously similar partner, who resembles community's ethos and religious affiliation, either from the country of origin (Egypt) or among the Muslim community (co-religious peers) in the country of destination. My findings on this illustrate how religious differences in the field of intermarriages can matter more than racial differences.

In the three countries under study, the issue of intermarriages strongly emerged in the interview data. In Belgium, while explaining the reasons behind his failed marriage with a Belgian woman, Abaza commented: "I can attribute my failed experience with a foreigner to the differences we had in terms of religion, traditions and culture...in addition to my irresponsible attitude at the time...I tried to convert her [his ex-wife] to Islam, but she was not convinced", then he added about his

children from that marriage saying: “I just hope that my children, by the time they grow up, could get married to an Egyptian...in order for their religion to remain solid with them...something that might not happen if they got married to westerns”.

In the UK, in speaking about how intermarriage represents a major concern regarding her children, Heba noted: “...another important aspect of concern was the fear of not marrying an Egyptian Muslim girl...for me that was number one priority...I would have never tolerated my children getting married to a non-Egyptian or a non-Muslim...because I’m worried about my grandchildren...the mother is the prime source of upbringing...the children grow up always similar to their mothers...so, I instilled this idea with my sons since they were kids, I kept on telling them that when it comes to marriage it has always to be with an Egyptian or at least a Muslim, and finally they grew up convinced with this idea”. In the same sense, Zeinab flagged her concerns about her son getting married to a non-Muslim or a native: “...the other concern I have towards them [her children] is the issue of marriage...my elder son is married to a Sudanese girl...which is ok...but I’m so afraid that the younger one could get married to a non-Muslim girl...to solve this problem, I agreed with them to move to Egypt for a couple of years after college...but of course this never happened”. Similarly in France, in summarizing the reasons behind his rejection to marrying a French woman, Fady said: “I won’t marry a French woman...I’d rather go for an Egyptian or an Arab...the most important thing is to be a Muslim...and the bad examples we saw here illustrate this idea strongly”. Ghannam also outlined while speaking about raising his two daughters in France: “...but you know, I sent them both to Egypt after their university graduation...I wanted to make sure that they will get married the right way...and I was right...now both are married to good husbands [Egyptians]”.

Besides views and positions, it is worth mentioning that intermarriage cases in my sample were quite rare, and even among these few cases it was unlikely for such marriages to continue, based on religious reasons. In addition, the research signals that cases of intermarriages were only common among what I referred to in Chapter Two as the first wave of Egyptian Muslim migrants, and not among those who recently arrived. This, also, implies the extent and magnitude of the rise in the unwelcoming context of reception in European societies towards Muslim migrants.

Drawing on these findings, my research argues that sociocultural segregation is further strengthened by the negative perceptions about the issue of intermarriages. Maintaining a tradition of having only a religiously similar partner, contributes in further creating a more segregated community of Muslim migrants over generations, featured by invigorated religious traditions, and, in parallel, is expected to be distant from what is seen as unwanted changes by the effect of the cultural influence of the host society.

## **B. Sociocultural segregation reinforces religiosity**

Moving forward in exploring the other bi-directional dynamic between religiosity and segregation, it is important to note that while religiosity can stimulate sociocultural segregation (as shown in the previous section), in parallel, sociocultural segregation can reinforce and nurture religiosity.

My research finds that the status of social and cultural segregation, which emerged as a key element in my empirical data in the three countries under study, plays a major role in reinforcing and nurturing religiosity. Social and cultural segregation - whether it is based on informants' choice or imposed on them by the context of reception - situates informants in a social setting, mainly among their co-ethnoreligious peers, who happens to be in this case Egyptian Muslims and/or Arab Muslims. In such setting, we can see that various factors within the status of

segregation play a role in stimulating informants' religiosity. These factors rotate around the issues of encouragement/motivation, and peer pressure or monitoring. Both contribute in increasing one's awareness about religion, and nurture the sense religiosity.

In other words, the status of sociocultural segregation creates a suitable atmosphere for nurturing and reinforcing religiosity among co-ethnic and co-religious peers, where informants encourage, support, and monitor each other to maintain and preserve their religious norms and traditions, as a prime aspect of retaining their identity in the country of destination.

In the UK, France, and Belgium, two central factors emerge clearly from interviews data to substantiate the reinforcement of religiosity by the effect of sociocultural segregation; these are motivation and peer pressure. On the one hand, motivation/encouragement experienced within co-ethnoreligious community appears as one major reason behind the maintenance and increase of informants' religiosity upon migration, especially in an environment that is socioculturally segregated. As such, informants encourage each other, for example, to pray, fast, and most importantly, to live adhering to the *halal* and *haram* demarcation within Islamic traditions. What makes this stimulating environment more efficient and/or influential is that while segregation creates a kind of co-ethnic social setting, in parallel, it creates a state of isolation (or social distance), and a perceived shelter, from the cultural and social influence of the host society.

On the other hand, such co-ethnoreligious social setting develops a context of peer pressure. In this case, the surroundings of co-Egyptian Muslim (or Arab Muslim) peers generate a feeling among informants that such setting regularly evaluates their behavior against religious norms, mainly in terms of *halal* and *haram*. The existence of a socioculturally segregated community, in and of itself, involves a monitoring element, where members of this community observe closely the behaviors of their peers, which leads to either praising one's strong religiosity or

criticizing/stigmatizing his/her behaviors that are seen devoid of religion (or prone to *haram*). Therefore, as migrants tend to watch and monitor each other's levels of religiosity, sociocultural segregation creates an environment where they find themselves under the brunt of the social and cultural pressure of their co-ethnic peers. Accordingly, this pattern of monitoring curb informants from swaying away from their peers' code of values, which is featured mainly by religion. Social shame and embarrassment, herein, are major impediments from opting to different life style under which religion's role is confined to the minimal.

In the three countries under study, many informants underlined the role of their co-Egyptian and co-Muslim peers in maintaining and nurturing their religiosity. For example, in the UK, Zeinab said: "here we are integrated into the Arab and Muslim community...which helped us having a global vision of religion...more than what we used to have in Egypt...so we started seeing the world with a different lens". Also Yasmine, in outlining the reasons behind her instilled religiosity, noted: "it is the right company...the excellent group of Egyptian and Arab families we got to know here". In the same line, Maged added: "what helped me in preserving Islam is the circle of Egyptian friends we have...we get to know some Egyptian families here...and we have our own social life with them". In France, similarly, Kamal stressed the issue of encouragement by saying: "...it's about the good circle of Egyptian friends and companionship... people around us are very good people...we shared the same values and principles...and we are all encouraging each other". Also in Belgium, Samer emphasized: "it is by being close to the Egyptian community in Belgium...where I can easily maintain my traditions". In addition, in emphasizing the influence of the peer pressure, Galal noted: "...another aspect of pressure here which helped me to hold on to my religion was the Muslim community around me...they know that I'm a Muslim and they focus on my behaviors...and I would feel embarrassed to do something *haram*".

As these quotes imply, Muslim migrants can maintain their religiosity primarily through close ties with other co-ethnic and co-religious migrants. The existence of these ties, in general, is not only seen as a strong stimulator of religiosity, but also an important factor that distance migrants from the host society's cultural influence. Thus, creating an isolated social life in the country of destination, which, by nature, is distant from the host society, creates an environment that nurtures, encourages, and monitors informants' traditions of origins.

#### **IV. The Relationship between an Unwelcoming Context of Reception and Sociocultural Segregation**

Moving forward in substantiating the overall dissertation argument about the self-perpetuating cyclic effect between religiosity and the context of reception, while the previous section demonstrated one side of that cyclic dynamics (between religiosity and sociocultural segregation), this section discusses the other side, which takes place between the context of reception and sociocultural segregation.

Building on what has been previously outlined in Chapter Seven, and earlier in this chapter, that the context of reception is perceived by migrants as broadly unwelcoming, however, involving positive views on the system level, this section argues, on the one hand, that such broadly perceived unwelcoming host society, including the perceived welcoming institutional arrangements, contributes in stimulating and enhancing a state of sociocultural segregation. The section goes on to further argue, on the other hand, that this state of sociocultural segregation, in and of itself, reinforces/increases the unwelcoming context of reception. So that the relationship between both, as well, is set in a mutually reinforcing bidirectional dynamics.

As such, similar to its relationship with religiosity, sociocultural segregation here is both a result of the unwelcoming context of reception, and, in parallel, a trigger to that unwelcoming context.

Moreover, building on the previous section, this section completes the picture to show how sociocultural segregation connects and/or mediates the overall cyclic dynamics between religiosity and the unwelcoming context of reception. It discusses the matter over two main interactive points that reflect the second bidirectional relationship in this thesis: 1) how the unwelcoming context of reception influences sociocultural segregation; and in parallel 2) how sociocultural segregation influences the unwelcoming context of reception.

#### **A. How the unwelcoming context of reception influences sociocultural segregation?**

Building on what has been argued in Chapter Seven that the context of reception is largely perceived as unwelcoming -however involving clear positive views towards the system-, as evidenced in overt and hidden forms of discrimination and prejudice, including exclusion and negative representation of Muslims and Islam, this section demonstrates the impact of such unwelcoming context of reception on the overall interaction between religiosity and the context of reception, through the mediating role of segregation. It argues that the existence of an unwelcoming host society, coupled with the availability of a set of religious and diversity rights, play a major role in stimulating and enhancing sociocultural segregation.

Again, although the UK, France, and Belgium represent three distinct contexts of reception (as noted in Chapter Four), my empirical findings in the three countries identify a significant similar impact of the perceived unwelcoming context of reception in stimulating a state of sociocultural segregation among informants. Previously in this thesis, I summarized the reasons behind such similar findings associated with the perception of the context of reception in the following: the

similarity in religiosity aspects among informants in the UK, France and Belgium; a shared secular character identifying the host societies in the three countries under study; the lack of homogeneity in the national models of integration; and, finally, the limited impact of the official philosophies/models of integration on how the host society practically functions regarding the attitudes towards migrants.

In a wealth of literature, it has been argued that the unwelcoming context of reception may lead to migrants' segregation (Portes and Rumbaut 2006), or that a more intolerant context of reception can create more separate ethno-religious groups (Connor 2010). More specifically, it has, also, been found that perceived rejection is associated with positive/stronger co-ethnic identification, and negative/weaker identification with the country of destination, displayed here as a strategy to cope with the unwelcoming atmosphere in the country of destination (Hogg 2000; Schmitt and Branscombe 2002; Verkuyten and Yildiz 2010: 1450 -1460).

Subsequently, as discussed in Chapter Four, it has been outlined that the more positive (receptive) the receiving state and society, the more successful the integration of migrants, whereas the more negative the receiving state and society, the more complicated and less successful the integration of migrants (Crul and Schneider 2010; Portes and Rumbaut 2006).

While my thesis relates to these arguments, most importantly, it extends them to capture the link between the unwelcoming context of reception and sociocultural segregation within the bigger picture of the ultimate relationship between the context of reception and religiosity, where segregation here functions as a mediator between both variables. Besides that, my research here adds nuances to literature by emphasizing that such unwelcoming context of reception has to be first perceived in order to lead to such segregation. Therefore, the causal link between the unwelcoming host society and sociocultural segregation takes place through a practically

perceived context of reception. So, it is not that the context of reception is objectively or factually unwelcoming, with its objective set of policies or structures, but it is rather perceived as such.

In the three countries of destination, my empirical data underlines a vigorous impact of the unwelcoming context of reception on sociocultural segregation. Core elements emerging from the interviews show that different forms of the unwelcoming context of reception stimulate and enhance informants' social and cultural distance and/or segregation from the host society. In further elaborating, when the host society is perceived as non-receptive, and does not exhibit an attitude of openness, tolerance or support towards informants, then it is most likely that those informants are motivated/encouraged to mix and mingle only with their co-ethnic peers, as their sense of community increases. Their peer community, as such, becomes their most suitable sphere of solace, support, and resources.

Most importantly, the research signals that informants who were most critical about the host society, holding strong complaints about discrimination, exclusion and prejudice, are actually the same who stressed the importance/significance of mingling and socializing with their peer Egyptian and Arab community in the three countries of destination. Thus, my analysis did not detect a direct form of causality between the unwelcoming context of reception and sociocultural segregation, but rather drew important inferences about the implicit and/or subtle link between both. In other words, informants did not report directly that acts of discrimination and/or exclusion have forced them to mingle only with co-ethnic peers, but rather those who stressed most the issues of discrimination and exclusion are actually the same who upheld the importance of situating themselves among a religiously and a culturally similar community, connoting their distance from the host society.

For example, in the UK, Nadia, while expressing her concerns about the impact of discrimination and prejudice on her children in the UK, has stressed, in parallel, the importance of raising children among their peer community, she said: “the most thing that worries me about my children is the very bad image stigmatizing Islam and Muslims in the west, especially after the last events...I’m afraid they might suffer from islamophobia or discrimination in the west these days...”, later on, in parallel, she added: “the most important thing with raising children, is to try to give them the feelings that they are not alone...not alone with a certain life style or restrictions...but rather to show them that there are plenty of other children do live similarly in the UK...”.

Fatma, also, stressed the benefits of the proximity to peer Egyptian Muslims after flagging the kind of discrimination she experienced at work, mainly because of her headscarf: “some didn’t want to talk to me...some avoided me...and after I removed it [the headscarf] everything changed...I started seeing people who used to avoid me to come and talk to me...”. Simultaneously, her advice to a potential Egyptian migrant included: “I’ll tell him/her to try to stick closely to an Egyptian community...because nobody understands you except them”.

Similarly, Yasmine highlighted the issue of discrimination in the British society, while in parallel emphasizing the role of peer Egyptian Muslims and Arabs communities in helping her maintaining her religion. She mentioned: “they [the host society] are racists, but it’s hidden...they won’t express it...”, then later she added, in elaborating on the reasons of her success in maintaining religion, by saying: “the right company...the excellent group of Egyptian and Arab families we got to know here”.

In France, the findings were almost the same. Ehab, after identifying various aspects of prejudice in the French society, went on to underline the importance of raising children among peer Egyptian Muslims in France. “The French society does not accept differences...and they want you to do

exactly what they do...how can I make them have a different impression towards me as a Muslim”, he then commented about the impact of peer community in raising his children by saying: “most of their friends [his children] were Egyptians...and they used to do sport together...there should be some sort of solidarity between the kids, in order to support each other here...it is important that young Egyptians here should stay together”.

In a similar way, Nesma, after expressing her disappointment towards the kind of racism she witnessed in France, she then stressed the importance of socializing with Egyptian peers for preserving one’s religion: “normally I used to love going to mosques in Egypt...but here they make you hate the most precious part of your culture which is religion”, she added later on: “if you want to maintain your religion and tradition...it’s important to make Egyptian friends”.

These findings show that in response to discrimination and exclusion, migrants find themselves identifying more with their co-ethnic/peer groups, and less with the country of destination (especially its host society), nurturing a state of sociocultural segregation. The idea is to empower themselves by stressing their self-worth and self-esteem through establishing strong ties between each other, while facing the bitterness of an unwelcoming context of reception.

As a whole, my research clearly finds that an unwelcoming context of reception, identified mainly by the negative attitude of its host society, stirs feelings of vulnerability and weakness among migrants, and subsequently channels them into their co-ethnic peers for comfort, support, and validation. In this regard, by and large, I am not implying that an unwelcoming host society is the only factor stimulating such segregation, but certainly it counts as a significant one. Hence, the research findings indicate a clear form of causality between the unwelcoming context of reception and sociocultural segregation, through which a host society, that is perceived unwelcoming and

inaccessible for Muslim migrants, encourages those migrants to resort to their co-ethnoreligious peers on both the cultural and social levels.

## **B. How sociocultural segregation affects the unwelcoming context of reception?**

This section completes the facets of the relationship linking segregation and the unwelcoming context of reception in this thesis, by arguing that, in the three countries under study, inasmuch as the unwelcoming context of reception stimulates sociocultural segregation (as seen in the previous section), in turn, such state of sociocultural segregation can reinforce the unwelcoming context of reception, by stimulating the negative attitude of the host society, or instilling the level of hostility and distaste towards informants.

The research finds that informants are not only negatively represented, as being part of the Muslim community in Europe, but also, and most importantly, that part of such negative representation is associated with them being seen by the host society as socially and culturally segregated, which is traced back to issues related to cultural threat and consolidated secularism (see Chapter Four). Interviews analysis reveals how informants partially attributed the unwelcoming attitude they receive in the three countries of destination to the stereotyping of Muslims in Europe as a segregated and closed community, and how such segregation creates an environment which feeds off the perception of cultural threat among the host society, and accordingly reinforces the unwelcoming attitudes towards migrants.

In addition, by looking closely at what has been outlined repeatedly about the negative representation of Muslim migrants in Europe, and the level of prejudice and stigmatization directed to them, we can conclude that a significant part of the related narratives, terms, and expressions used in public and academic discourses about Muslim migrants reflects how such migrants are (a)

stereotyped by the host population as one similar group of people, which hold similar religious norms and values, and (b) that this group is seen as primarily segregated.

For example, in the study conducted by Maliepaard and Phaet on Muslims in the Netherlands, sentences such as: ‘their religious identity, values, and ways of life are devalued by large parts of the majority’; ‘ninety-two percent of the native Dutch population feel that Muslim men subordinate women’; and ‘a little over half feel that Muslims and Dutch values are incompatible’ (2012: 131-132), all these phrases connote a general perception that Muslims represent a group that is ideologically similar and strongly segregated, and that such segregation, in and of itself, is an important factor in further strengthening the negative representation of Islam and Muslims, which occupies part of the unwelcoming context of reception.

Furthermore, in literature, it has been argued that, in Europe, the presence of large number of migrants being segregated into enclaves has been a key reason in substantiating certain negative and unwelcoming attitudes directed towards them from the host native societies (Enos 2016), where existing segregation instills this unwelcoming attitude (Phillips 2007; Alba and Nee 2008; Beaulieu and Continelli 2011; Enos 2016; Maliepaard and Schacht 2018), especially if such segregation stems from cultural distinctions (Schneider 2008).

On that basis, in the UK, for example, most of the critique on multiculturalism shows how parallel segregated lives of Muslim migrants provokes anti-immigrant rhetoric in public discourses (Joppke 2009; Manning and Georgiadis 2012). In France, also, segregation of Muslims is highly stigmatized, based on the critique of the in-group religious identity that is seen contradicting with the French secular character (Bertossi 2011). Similarly, in Belgium, the criticism of migrants’ segregation rotates around what is seen as overemphasized liberties given by multiculturalism, as

well as the rejection of the secular Belgian identity by segregated communities (Kaya 2012; Modood *et al.* 2006).

In my study, and building on what has been argued in Chapters Four and Seven regarding the negative representation of Muslim migrants, core themes emerging from my interviews in the three countries of destination indicate that what is seen by the host society as self-imposed forms of segregation (or patterns of self-segregation) of Muslim migrants appears to be a major provocation of more prejudice and discrimination. This posits that the unwelcoming attitude by the host society is not only driven by cultural concerns and/or objection towards certain religious norms of Muslim migrants, but also rests on the host's intolerance to Muslims' communal (co-ethnic) segregation, including the extent of cultural threat such segregation can pose.

In this regard, building on what I outlined previously with regard to the theory of cultural threat, and the intergroup threat theory (Velasco Gonzalez *et al.* 2008; Stephan and Stephan 1996; Sniderman and Hagendoorn 2007), where the host society feels culturally under threat by the presence of large numbers of Muslim migrants, it appears in my research that a perceived cultural threat strongly triggers a negative and unwelcoming attitude towards Muslim migrants in Europe, in which migrants' segregation nurtures such perception among the host society. Therefore, the unwelcoming attitudes towards Muslim migrants can be strongly attributed to the threat that is seen by the host society in Muslims' membership of a large segregated group.

In the interviews, Osama, in France, commented about Muslims being ascribed as a segregated community by saying: "the media is putting people in boxes...and you are not allowed to move to a different box...everyone is growing here like that". In addition, in underlining how the French host society is trying to portray Muslims as unwilling to integrate, Shady said: "I used to invite some French people...I used to tell them it's a house party but without alcohol...you know, if a

French person tells you he doesn't drink, that's ok...it is perceived normal...but if a Muslim tells you the same, he will be labeled". In the UK, Ahmad expressed similar views, as he noted: "they say that Muslims are not accepting the English values, my question is, what English values exactly they are talking about...[ ]...here it is either you know people from group A or B or C...it is hard to mix them together".

In addition, empirical data, particularly in France, show that while elaborating on the unwelcoming attitudes, informants highlighted how the host society stresses the issue of cultural threat in their relations to Muslim migrants. For example, Hamed asserted: "at the beginning during the first couple of years the society here was open and free...but then, and after the arrival of many Muslims, they changed...racism started to rise...the French society is very sensitive towards its identity...and they feel that their identity is under threat". Similarly, as Tawfeek simply put it: "their fear from Muslims is mostly a fear related to their culture...and from the possibility that Muslims want to change their culture...or to Islamize the society...and this is because they weren't ready to host Arabs or Muslims." Also, Mai linked cultural threat with unwelcoming attitude by saying: "they are also afraid from anything threatening their culture...culture here is highly important...racism is increasing and spreading".

With regard to what I mentioned previously in Chapter Two about the concerns that were raised by some informants regarding the possibility of misinterpreting the findings of such research by some western institutions, it is worth mentioning, in this respect, that these few informants (mentioned above here) are among those who underlined their doubts about the neutrality of part of the western research on Muslims.

It is important to note that these findings of my research have been also voiced in other studies, arguing that one aspect of religious-based barrier for integration is when the host society creates

boundaries by avoiding segregated places with high concentration of Muslim migrants (schools, cafes, or neighborhoods) (Maliapaard and Schacht 2018). Part of this behavior is attributed to the cultural threat that such segregated places are seen to represent, for which the host society applies different strategies to ‘construct physical and symbolic boundaries between themselves and those depicted as threatening others’ (Sibley 2002, qtd in Phillips 2007: 1148).

For example, Islamic schools, as being portrayed as segregated entities of Muslims in Europe, have been repeatedly criticized as impeding the integration of Muslim children (Hertogh 2009; Maliapaard and Phalet 2012). Thus, being distant from what is regarded as a socially segregated community of concentrated disadvantaged people, may be perceived as a benefit to the host society. Such situation substantiates many of the negative attitudes directed to Muslim migrants by members of the host society (Beaulieu and Continelli 2011).

Therefore, laying the bulk of the blame for unsuccessful integration on segregated venues or institutions (i.e. schools), based on the cultural threat they represent, implies how the perception of sociocultural segregation triggers unwelcoming attitude. As a whole, in sum, although unwelcoming context of reception in the three countries under study can be triggered by multiple factors other than segregation (i.e. ethnicity, political demands, security issues, radicalization, etc.), the research finds that these unwelcoming attitudes are also stimulated and enhanced by existing forms of segregation.

## **V. Conclusion**

This chapter pulls together the main conclusions highlighted in the previous empirical chapters in order to argue that the nature of the overall dynamics of interaction between migrants’ religiosity

and the context of reception in this thesis takes place in a cyclic fashion with a self-perpetuating effect.

The chapter moves on to further argue that this cyclic dynamic of interaction is best understood in an iterative two-dimensional process that is mainly mediated by a state of sociocultural segregation, where first a perceived context of reception contributes to developing a status of social and cultural segregation, and second, once set in place, that status of sociocultural segregation gets locked in two parallel bidirectional dynamics. One takes place with informants' religiosity, whereas the other interacts with the unwelcoming context of reception.

Existing literature argued that unwelcoming context of reception in Europe is broadly associated with Muslims' religiosity, however, it was not empirically clear how such relationship between religiosity and the context of reception emerges. This research fills that gap by illuminating that the dynamics of interaction between religiosity and the unwelcoming context of reception does not unfold in a linear process, but rather takes place in an iterative process comprising the perceived context of reception, and a state of sociocultural segregation.

In this respect, it is important noting that my research signals the existence of a clear state of sociocultural segregation between informants and members of the host societies in the UK, France, and Belgium. On the social level, there are strong co-ethnic and co-religious social contacts among informants with their Egyptian Muslim friends/peers. In parallel, this is accompanied by limited or restricted ties with members of the host society. On the cultural level, my research emphasizes strong signals of informants' retention of their culture of origin, manifested in reinforced forms of religiosity, and coupled by a clear objection to the culture of destination. Most importantly, the chapter concludes that such segregation is, in fact, a result of both a choice of migrants, anchored

by their religiosity, along with certain constraints in the context of reception, based on an overall perceived unwelcoming context of reception.

In further summarizing the two directions of the cyclic relationship between religiosity and the context of reception, the following can be outlined: on the one hand, regarding the first direction of interplay that takes place between segregation and religiosity, factors such as motivation and peer pressure play a key role in substantiating the impact of segregation on religiosity. Whereas issues such as preserving religious identity, maintaining distance from the host society, and intermarriages, all represent factors that epitomize the parallel impact of religiosity on segregation.

On the other hand, with regard to the second direction of interplay which takes place between segregation and the unwelcoming context of reception, the chapter argues that the existence of an unwelcoming host society, coupled with the availability of religious and diversity rights, plays a major role in stimulating and enhancing sociocultural segregation. In parallel, the chapter moves to assert that inasmuch as the unwelcoming context of reception stimulates sociocultural segregation, in turn, such state of sociocultural segregation nurtures the unwelcoming context of reception by enhancing the negative attitude of the host society.

Finally, and most importantly, based on these findings, and building on the research approach to sociocultural integration (see Chapter Three) as a phenomenon where differences between migrants and members of the host society are expected to narrow over time with regard to social distance and cultural characteristics, and based on the clear social and cultural distance between informants and members of the host society demonstrated in this research, in which the retention of the culture of origin (epitomized in religion) supersedes the acquisition of the culture of destination, this chapter concludes that the overall self-perpetuating dynamic between religiosity

and the unwelcoming context of reception, as mediated by sociocultural segregation, has, indeed, an overall negative impact on migrants' sociocultural integration.

This can be substantiated as follows (as shown in the diagram in figure 1): given that the unwelcoming context of reception stimulates segregation, and that segregation, in and of itself, stimulates religiosity, then we can conclude that the unwelcoming context of reception reinforces religiosity. In parallel, since religiosity stimulates segregation, and that segregation triggers an unwelcoming context of reception, then we can also conclude that religiosity reinforces the unwelcoming context of reception. Both conclusions are drawn based on a significant mediating role by sociocultural segregation, which is derived from a perceived context of reception by migrants.

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# Conclusion

## I. General Concluding Remarks

My thesis has examined the relationship between Muslim migrants' religiosity and their sociocultural integration, drawing on research among Egyptian Muslim migrants in the UK, France, and Belgium. Initially, while emphasizing what has been found in previous studies about the existence of a robust impact of Muslim migrants' religiosity on the trajectories of their integration (Güngör *et al.* 2011; Maliepaard and Schaacht 2017; Damstra and Tillie 2016), the significance of my research lies in presenting a more nuanced picture about the nature of this relationship between religiosity and integration, and in its rich primary data collected from interviews with 128 Egyptian Muslim migrants in the UK, France, and Belgium.

By drawing on the academic school of thought which underlines the role of both religiosity and the context of reception in influencing Muslim migrants' integration (Maliepaard and Schacht 2018; Reitz 2002; Adida *et al.* 2016), my study becomes crucial in identifying the dynamics of interaction between both variables. It argues that the focus cannot be restricted solely to the idea that religiosity and the context of reception influence migrant integration, but what matters most is the dynamics of interaction between both.

In this respect, the thesis advances existing literature by arguing that this dynamics of interaction between migrants' religiosity and the context of reception takes place in a self-perpetuating cycle, by which both reinforce each other in a sequence of mutual cause and effect. In addition, and most importantly, my study argues that such interplay between religiosity and the context of reception does not take place in a linear process, or in a direct form of causality, it rather unfolds in an

iterative process, through a mediating role played by the development of a state of sociocultural segregation, as well as an empirically perceived context of reception (as opposed to a structurally studied context of reception). This iterative process contributes strongly to academic literature in showing the nuances of the interaction between migrants characteristics (studied here through religiosity), and the receiving country and society of destination (studied here as the context of reception).

It is important to note here that a significant nuance is shown in this thesis by highlighting the role of the perceived context of reception, which serves to show that migrants' religiosity and the context of reception influence integration primarily through the perception of migrants. It is migrants' own perspective on religiosity, secularism and context of reception, captured here through interviews, which mediates (together with segregation) the self-perpetuating dynamics of interaction between religiosity and the context of reception. Accordingly, my research conclusion about the existence of an unwelcoming context of reception does not mean that this context of reception is objectively or factually unwelcoming, with its objective set of policies or structures, but it is rather perceived as such.

Therefore, the research concludes by identifying that such dynamics of interaction can have a negative impact on migrants' overall sociocultural integration. More specifically, when different aspects of migrants' religiosity (i.e. positions towards sexual liberties and alcohol, upbringing children, religious identity) interact with specific elements in the context of reception (i.e. discrimination, exclusion) and get locked in a self-perpetuating cyclic dynamics, where each of these aspects and elements feeds off the other, migrants' sociocultural integration, thus, can embark on an overall negative path.

On the one hand, this path is found to be characterized by clear social distance between migrants and members of the host society, along with strong signs of cultural maintenance on migrants' side. Such maintenance is materialized, from migrants' perspective, in a rising desire of retaining and/or preserving their religion, accompanied by a clear objection to the acquisition of the host society's cultural norms and values, especially those that are seen devoid of religion. Therefore, this path can be also defined by a) migrants' strong identification with their co-ethnic/co-religious group, b) migrants' strong identification with the religious norms (and religious identity) characterizing this group, and c) placing high value on these religious norms. On the other hand, this negative path of sociocultural integration is also featured by a perceived overall unwelcoming context of reception, as evidenced in acts of overt and passive discrimination.

My research emphasizes this conclusion, and discerns that the belief of the existence of wide cultural differences between informants and members of the host society is a nuanced way in substantiating how migrants can choose to isolate themselves, reflecting a chosen aspect of segregation. However, in parallel, the unwelcoming context of reception, as evidenced in discrimination and exclusion, represents what I refer to here as the imposed aspect of migrants' segregation in this research. Therefore, my research concludes that segregation is, indeed, a result of both a choice made by migrants, anchored by their religiosity, and an ascription imposed on them by the host society, based on an overall perceived unwelcoming context of reception.

## **II. Specific Concluding Remarks**

The contribution of my study to academic literature does not stop only with identifying the dynamics of interaction between religiosity and the context of reception, but it also goes beyond that to include other important specific contributions, which could be addressed across two major

points: the criteria used in examining religiosity of Muslim migrants; and the role of the host society in shaping the integration process.

## **A. Examining religiosity**

My research presented an in-depth understanding of the study of Muslim migrants' religiosity in Europe, based on their perceptions of their everyday lived experiences, as to how religiosity is lived and reinforced in a European country of destination. However, the thesis highlighted a number of important issues, in this regard, that are crucial in the field of religion and migration:

*First*, relying only on the observance of religious practices and rituals in examining Muslim migrants' religiosity is not enough, especially when associated with integration. This can be seen in the ways in which academic studies tend to look at Muslim migrants' religiosity less by its impact on their daily lives, and more through measurement of practices and rituals. My research found that it is insufficient to approach religiosity as a purpose or a measurable scale, and instead argues that religiosity can be more accurately understood through an approach as 'a state of being'. This state of being refers to an attribute or a phenomenon of a present life experience, that captures the impact of religion and its magnitude on Muslim migrants' daily lives, accompanied by the level of emotional reliance on, and conscious awareness of, one's own religion. Religiosity, on that basis, is an attribute that goes beyond structured rituals, codified procedures, or established institutions, as it, instead, provides codes of norms, values, and behaviors used in interpreting and perceiving daily life situations that are linked, in the most part, to the conditions of the context of reception.

*Second*, from the migrants' perspective, sexual liberties and alcohol-related norms, especially in the upbringing of children, are pivotal elements in looking at Muslim migrants' religiosity in

Europe, and its impact on integration. My thesis concludes that migrants' positions towards sexual liberties and alcohol, in a western secular society, are not only major contexts of displaying religiosity among Muslim migrants, but also reinforce the magnitude of this religiosity in migrants' lives, as well as influencing how migrants socialize and situate themselves (and their children) towards the host society.

In addition, the importance of sexual liberties and alcohol-related norms strongly emerged in my data as a crucial tool in interpreting certain elements of European secularism. Given that secularism is primarily seen in this thesis from the perspective of the role of religion in the society (Birt *et al.* 2016; Calhoun 2008), where such role is perceived to be almost absent, the thesis, then, strongly suggests that this absence is much more about moral issues related to sexual liberties and alcohol, than it is about the philosophical understanding of secularism in the system. The existence of sexual liberties and alcohol in the country of reception plays a key role in stimulating migrants' desire for more religiosity preservation (or cultural maintenance), while minimizing their social contacts with members of the host society.

Moreover, the significance of these acts of sexual liberties and alcohol-related norms appears, also, in how they are strongly linked to other important aspects of religiosity. They are guided by *halal* and *haram*, highly intertwined with religious identity, closely related to religious emotions, and largely overlapping with the upbringing of children. The particularity of sexual liberties and alcohol, thus, is not only limited to how they are related to the core pillars of religiosity in this thesis, but also that they are closely associated with the components of the context of reception, especially the understanding of secularism within the societal context of reception.

Therefore, I argue that the actual challenge for Muslim migrants is not primarily represented by just living in a secular society or country *per se*, with a general limited role of religion (or a

declining role of religion), it is indeed associated with these two forms of acts of cultural liberties, most strongly represented by sex and alcohol.

## **B. The role of the host society**

My research concludes that the host society plays a far more important role in Muslim migrants' integration than its portrayal to date in literature. My thesis signals such role in the overall negative perception of migrants towards the host society, which is reflected in both a general belief of the existence of wide cultural differences with the secular host society; and a belief of an overall unwelcoming context of reception.

My study has shown that the role of the host society is not only instrumental in examining and identifying anti-migrants and anti-Muslims attitudes, but also, and most importantly, its significance lies in the dominating role it plays in shaping the overall perception of the context of reception, in a way that outstrips the role of the institutional arrangements and structured policies within the system. This also includes the influence of the host society in determining how secularism is represented and interpreted among Muslim migrants.

My thesis also underlined, here, that, on the one hand, the host society is key in influencing how Muslim migrants can choose to isolate themselves (through a belief of the existence of wide cultural differences), and, on the other hand, it plays an active role in imposing/ascribing different acts of segregation on migrants (through discrimination and exclusion). As such, the host society is found to be strongly present in both scenarios, what I refer to here as the chosen dimension of segregation, and what is argued to be the ascribed or imposed aspect of segregation. Accordingly, the role of the host society is vital in understanding why different national models of integration

(between open multiculturalism and restrictive assimilation) are not solid predictors for a positive or a negative context of reception.

### **III. Suggestions for Future Research**

This research is an empirical study that focused primarily on migrants' perspectives on the issues of religiosity and integration. This was a perspective that has been overlooked in previous research and thus fills a crucial gap. Future research, however, will need to build on this basis, and include both the perspective of the policymakers of the country of destination as well as members of its host society.

One direction for future research could build on the migrants' perspectives of religiosity and the degree of welcomeness, in terms of how migrants live their religiosity, and how they see the host society and the institutional system in the country of destination, moving toward an investigation of the relationship between migrants' religiosity and sociocultural integration. A wider multi-dimensional perspective involving not only migrants but also various actors belonging to the societal and institutional context of reception in such qualitative study would be a logical next step in a research agenda. Expanding such in-depth empirical study in future research to include, also, other ethnic groups of first and second generations Muslim migrants in a wider cross-national study involving a number of European countries, from a comparative perspective, could be highly valuable for the novelty that can be provided on the relationship between everyday religiosity and migrant integration.

Another, more specific, direction for future research could focus on the role of the host society in particular. Despite being outlined a number of times in previous literature (Gordon 1964; Maliepaard and Phalet 2012; Carol and Koopmans 2013; Statham and Tillie 2016; Bohman and

Hjerm 2014), the host society's role in the overall integration process and its perceptions towards Muslim migrants' religiosity in Europe has been underemphasized in academic research. Future research could build on the findings of this thesis (with regard to the instrumental role of the host society in shaping migrants' perceptions) in further conducting in-depth qualitative studies on the multifaceted role of that host society in Muslim migrant integration in Europe.

This role is best understood, I suggest, from an everyday face-to-face perspective, where such role manifests itself outside structured institutions and codified behaviors. The focus, thus, could go beyond common issues such as the host society's general views about Muslims' representation or political claims in Europe, to involve, for example, an examination of patterns of the daily interactions (or lack thereof) between migrants and members of the host society, as well as an investigation on Muslim migrants' everyday religiosity in the eyes of the host society.

In addition, building on the conclusions of this thesis about the significance of sexual liberties and alcohol-related norms in Muslim migrants' integration, more research becomes crucial on the multi-dimensional impact of sexual liberties and alcohol in the study of Muslims' religiosity and their integration in Europe. Expanding the research on Muslim migrants' positions towards sexual liberties and alcohol to involve different ethnic groups of Muslim migrants in various European countries, can provide crucial information about Muslims' inclusion in European societies.

My thesis constitutes an important point of departure for future research on the complex issue of religious reforms among Muslims in the west. Fields such as sociology of religion and Islamic studies can highly benefit from the findings of this study in identifying specific points (i.e. daily life challenges and situations) where subtle differences in the interpretations of certain Islamic provisions can be decisive in pushing migrants either closer to or away from the host native society.

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