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

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1. Introduction

Within the field of study concerning the impact of migratory flows on the societies of receiving countries, the role played by migrants' religions has long been a subject of enquiry. As is often the case when dealing with religion and migration-related issues [1], the reflection started in the USA, where numerous scholars have tried to understand whether religious traditions favour a better integration process of immigrants and of their children in the host society [2]. Subsequently the debate shifted to Europe, where the analysis of these issues has developed in a more articulated way, considering different national realities; however, it focused mainly on religions outside the Judeo-Christian tradition, i.e., those perceived to be more "different" than the mainstream - in particular, Islam and Sikhism [3, 4].

There has also been an evolution in this field of enquiry from a generational point of view. How migrants lived and expressed their religion was first addressed by focusing on the first generations [5, 6]; intra-family relations, as well as migrants' descendants' religious experience and the outcomes of their socialisation, started being considered only in more recent years.

Concerning the Italian reality, just as in the rest of the European context, not all migration-driven diversities are considered equally different" in the public perception [7]. Some of them are perceived as conflicting conflict with values and beliefs considered essential for civil life: When it comes to religious diversity: while the different Catholic traditions and many Eastern religions are not seen as disruptive of the social order and get "ignored" [8], the multifaceted world that refers to Islam suffers from a deep-seated hostility, whose reasons are to be traced in the perceived "troubling" levels of religious practice of Muslims, which have been deemed to represent a challenge for increasingly secularised Western European societies [1]. Such differential perceptions of "othernesses" translated to academic research, too, which, especially in the European scholarship, especially focused on Islam and on Muslim migrants from different points of view: their religious faiths and practices, their worldviews about their desired society ("secular" *versus* "Islamic"), the definition of their identity (religious, European,

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cosmopolitan), their orientation about child rearing and mixed marriages, and the demands placed on institutional arrangements of European societies to accommodate religious diversity and Muslims' requests (recognition of holidays, teaching of religion in schools, construction of places of worship, etc.) [9].

In looking at young Muslims across European societies, their religious belonging has often been correlated with open questions in education (Does the increase in Muslim students give rise to demands towards secularisation and changes in educational paths?) and in the labour market (Are Muslims discriminated in their access to the labour market, compared to people of other religious belongings? Moreover, the attacks carried out since the beginning of the 2000s in Western countries, often at the hands of so-called "homegrown terrorists", put the group of Muslim migrants' descendants in the spotlight both of policies and of scholarly research: while the former tried to securitise the Muslim community, the latter attempted to understand if young Muslims are likely become new representatives of fundamentalism or jihadist candidates [10].Therefore, over time, the point of view of young people has become of particular interest, both in for the ways they display their religious identity in the public space and for the socialisation practices and the beliefs of a minoritarian religion.

This chapter offers an overview of the workings of religious socialisation within Muslim migrant families in Italy, both from the perspective of the first generation (the parents) and from the standpoint of the second generation (the children). Drawing from more than 80 interviews[2] with parents and young adult descendants of Muslim-immigrant families composed of two generations living in Italy collected in two Italian cities –Milan and Turin– and their respective hinterlands, this piece provides a sociological examination of the process of intergenerational transmission of religious values, evaluating the extent to which, within Muslim communities, the parents' lived religion [11] and religious identity [12] is maintained by their children. First, we will evaluate the conditions and the premises for the religious socialisation process among migrant families in general and specifically for Muslim families, reviewing the main findings and theories developed around these issues. Secondly, we will describe the specific features of the Italian context, analysing the level of inclusion of the Muslim minority in Italy and assessing the extent to which it may influence both the first-generation and the second-generation's experience of religion. We will then turn to the point of view of parents concerning the task of "handing down faith" in such a context, which we will subsequently compare with children's words about how they experience the transmission of religion within their own families. In discussing the religious divide emerging between parents and children in these Muslim families, we highlight how family-related and context-related socio-cultural dynamics define three possible outcomes of religious socialization.

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[2] The analysis is based on two distinct research projects, one focusing on first- and second-generation Muslims in Turin, the other focusing on second-generation Muslims in Milan and Turin (Italy). The corpus considered for the present chapter comprises 80 interviews, of which 30% were conducted with first-generation representatives and 70% with second-generation Muslims, aged between 18 and 32. The sample includes an equal representation of the two genders; interviewees were selected both among members of religious associations and from outside religious organizations. In the interview quotations, they are indicated in the following way: sex, age, country of origin, city. All the material was collected between 2018 and 2020.

2. Handing down Islam in the West. What are the conditions for a Muslim religious socialization?

Religious transmission across generations is an underrepresented topic in migration studies. Several scholars have scrutinized the relations between religious identity and integration paths, but only a few have investigated what happens *within immigrant families* on this aspect, even if the «processes of social integration, as well as the definition of cultural identity, in many instances, are filtered by the relation with religious institutions and their educational socializing activities, and by the support they offer» [13]. Indeed, as some scholars showed [14, 15], there is clear evidence of the importance of religion in how immigrants engage in their intercultural relations, their educational choices and their integration paths.

There are many possible patterns in migrants' relationship with religion, with variations that depend on three kinds of factors: a) personal and demographic characteristics (e.g. gender, age, country of origin, acquisition of citizenship of the receiving country, place of residence); b) factors that are external to individuals and their communities (e.g. policies towards diversity in the society, as shown in par. 3); c) differences between immigrant groups and society at large (such as differences in values). In addition, when looking at how the descendants of migrants develop their relationship with religion, two aspects need to be duly considered. On the one hand, the acculturation process, i.e., how they fit into the (secularised) receiving society, where their parents' religion is often minoritarian [16, 17]; on the other, their self-identification process, i.e., how they define their multiple identity as young people with a migratory background, growing up in Western environments in a historical period marked by continuous globalised exchanges and influences.

In this sense, it is fundamental to recall that the descendants of Muslim migrants are exposed to two main sets of demands. The first set of demands has clearly to do with the expectations that their parents may express concerning their religious education and their adoption and display of religious behaviours taking into account that the Muslim faith has a prominent performative and visible character, since its orthopraxis permeates numerous dimensions of everyday life, and gest mingled with mundane practices (eating, dressing, praying, but also having fun, practicing sports, entertaining relationships with the other gender…). The second set of demands has to do with the trends pertaining to the radical post-modern transformations undergone by Western societies, whose "usual" socio-institutional frameworks have been disrupted by globalisation processes, meaning that the individual is no longer provided with reference points by social institutions: the life of the person is not "projectable" along predefined paths anymore, as the individual has to embark on a solo journey in his or her quest for meaning, navigating among multiple and relativist horizons. Such research is thus privatized and individualized and may entail a continuous experimentation on oneself [18, 19]. In this context, as is the case for their native peers, inheriting a religion by the parents is not inevitable nor self-evident, as religion may become one of the many options among which the individual may choose for his or her self-identification.

The secularising tendencies pervading the environment in which Muslim families settle represents an issue of concern for the parents: as we shall see below, they do worry about the possible negative influence of such context on their children, which might induce them to distance themselves from religion. This is particularly salient for Muslim migrants, compared to Christian migrant groups, because the everyday environment and the everyday cultural practices in the Western context of settlement bear no signs nor

symbols of the Muslim religion, thus making Islam even less "plausible" or "credible". As Roy [20] efficaciously argues, Islam undergoes a "deculturation" process in emigration countries, as it is not part and parcel of the culture of receiving countries as it is in Muslim migrants' countries of origin. To Muslim children in the West, Islam cannot not be obvious and taken-for-granted, because they do not have chances to "encounter" Islam outside their homes and their place of worship (when they are taken to the mosque by their parents). While sociology has already shown that, in fields ranging from religion to politics and relationships between genders, family is the actor that affects the most the socialization and the transmission of values in young people [21], in the case of the transmission of Islamic religious tenets to young Western Muslims this is more the case. Their family thus becomes *the crucial site and the first and foremost agency of their religious socialization,* arguably even more than for their native peers, as parents represent their earliest and – often their sole – "source" of Islamic religiosity.

Therefore, on one hand, young Muslims share with their native peers the exposure to globalising influences and the lack of socio-institutional points of reference to "direct" their lives, which are open to experimentation in a post-modern search for the "true", "authentic" Self; on the other hand, they differ from their native peers in that their parents often feel a heightened responsibility in educating them to religion values and to behaviours and attitudes expected of them in their cultural heritage. At the same time, for these youths, Islam is not a cultural trait of the context where they live, which may encourage them to appropriate their religion "in their own way", thus spurring personal –again, very post-modern– trajectories. How do these dynamics play out in Italy?

3. Being Muslim in a hostile context

In Italy, migration-driven religious pluralism represents one of the main elements of social transformation in recent decades. Italians look with a certain fear at this growing religious pluralism; however, as anticipated above, while the Italian society is already home to many religious expressions, the focus of concern is Islam. Uncountable authors [i.e., 22, 23] have shown how the debate about Islam across Western countries is simultaneously framed in securitarian terms (Islam as the enemy of the West from the geopolitical point of view) and in culturalist terms (Islam as intrinsically incompatible with claimed Western democratic and cultural values). Such a "moral panic" about Islam has affected the Italian debate [24, 25, 26] producing a negative perception of Muslims in the public opinion, as demonstrated by some recent surveys. Indeed, for a long time, in the Italian public opinion the image of "the Muslim" has been associated to that of "the immigrant", as people coming from Muslim-majority countries (especially Morocco) represented significant proportions of the first migratory inflows that Italy experienced between the late '90s and the early 2000s. Furthermore, such consistent arrival of Muslim migrants occurred in a period dominated by an overwhelmingly negative discursive environment surrounding Islam, spurred by the 9/11 attacks and their consequences. Therefore, Islam has come to be perceived –and portrayed by the media [27]– in deeply negative terms.

Such a hostile context generates concrete consequences for the practice of religion and for the related feelings of legitimation and acceptance as Muslims. Again, the condition of places of worship symbolically encapsulates the fact that Islam is not granted a fully-fledged visibility, something which affects young Muslims in particular, who, in contexts as different as Milan and Turin can be express similar frustrations

regarding the absence of decent places of worship and the patent inadequacy of the existing ones [28]:

> Muslim places of worship in Milan are horrible. It makes me sad. And I can't understand why there cannot be a real mosque, from the architectonic point of view, instead of a warehouse. [F, 23, Egypt, Milan]

> Mosques here are the ugliest places in the world (...). You suffer in the mosque because it's hot, it stinks, there are people who are cramped in a shameful way. [M, 27, Egypt, Turin]

This interviewee clearly remembers the internal discussions within his community concerning whether it was appropriate to claim a proper place of worship in the city:

> Our parents are obsessed with the mosque. I remember as a child, when I was taken to meetings with the imam, it was all they talked about. "They won't let us pray in a suitable place, they won't let us build our own halls, they only let us have garages. But how can we pray well in places that are also unsuitable for health", said some. Others, however, were more cautious, saying that the important thing was to be accepted, not always to be stopped by the police. After all, according to some, we have only just arrived, and we must be appreciated for what we do every day. The rest will come. We don't need big buildings to pray. [M, 20, Morocco, Turin]

In stark contrast with the views of first-generation Muslims reported in the quote above, their descendants seem to "dream" of officially recognized mosques that can legitimately claim their space and fit in the landscape of Italian cities as sites for intercultural encounters, as well illustrated by these words:

> I would like to become the leader of a mosque (…). If I become one, want to sign an agreement with the municipality. I want the mosque to be transparent, maybe also with a baroque architectonic background, so that it can fit well in the landscape. The khutba [sermon] should be in Arabic, in Italian and maybe also in English for the Pakistanis. It shouldn't just be a place of worship, but also a library. Because there's a lot of Arab philosophy and literature, like the Lebanese poet Khalil Gibran. [M, 25, Lebanon-Syria, Turin]

4. Everything should be the same everywhere: the dreams of parents

When introducing the topic of religious socialization, we did not touch upon the changes in religiosity that first- generation migrants, too, may experience when migrating. Religion –as a faith and a cultural trait– may be experienced differently or may even get abandoned in the country of emigration, as this example shows:

> There are people who come here and change their religion, their life... there are Egyptians who come here and live only the ugly things about Italy, others see only the beautiful things, others think only of money. [M, 42, Egypt, Turin]

However, as a consistent body of literature shows, religion is very much present in the lives of immigrants, even when their process of integration and the progress of the second generations lay the foundations for becoming Italian citizens [8]. Smith [29] has famously described the migration experience as a "theologizing" one, as migrants would resort to their own religion –and to their fellow believers– to alleviate the traumas of emigration and the difficulties of the settlement process [5]. Indeed, as this interviewee explains, some become even more religious after having emigrated, also due to reasons pertaining to the religious education they feel they should transmit to their children in a non-Muslim context, as explained below:

> I wasn't a practising believer in Morocco before I came here, but I have noticed that some people become more practising once they are here. Because they say you must protect your family, you must protect your traditions in the West. They also do it for their children, because they know that when you live here, you get used to a different way of life and maybe you take a slightly different path... whereas, if you become very religious, it is easier for you to stick to your own path. Religion serves to give clear rules: don't do this, do that... [M, 48, Morocco, Turin]

This is echoed by the words of an Imam, who explains how parents deem it important to remind their children "where they come from":

> For us as parents abroad, it is important to pass on our culture, our language, our religion to our children. It means keeping the link with whom we are and where we come from. [M, 46, Morocco, Turin]

In fact, parents bear in mind the socialization they received "and the possible negative judgement of the extended family residing in their own country of origin, should the children not abide by the "model" they are expected to align with:

> Many women are worried when they go back to Morocco about how their children will behave. They don't want to be judged negatively. It is as if they think they are not good mothers because they are not able to transmit religious feelings in a profound way. Others are resigned to these problems and try to agree with their children to behave differently depending on the environment. [F, 39, Morocco, Turin]

While some mothers "surrender" and accept that children may strategically change their behaviours according to situational contexts, others genuinely feel that the relatives' expectations do not just impinge on their children, but also on them *as mothers* for not having done "a good job" with their sons and daughters. What is interesting is that children hold quite opposite views regarding the possible opinions of their extended family, revealing how differently they experience these transnational linkages:

> For my mother, my sister had to be the best at school and the best in the Qoran recitation competition. She repeated the competition three times, she had to win, but my sister didn't care. It was my mother who wanted to be able to tell her sisters and mother-in-law that she had done well and brought up her children as good Muslims. [M, 26, Morocco, Turin]

However, the religious education they attempt to transmit to their descendants does not necessarily generate the expected results:

> We don't talk about religion. Only during Ramadan or when we have family celebrations and online get-togethers with relatives, then we must be careful and pay attention to how we dress, how we talk, what we say. Our parents have understood that we are different Muslims. It's natural, we live in Italy. [M, 26, Morocco, Turin]

> They come to the mosque when a relative arrives from abroad. It's like staging a script. Those who live in emigration are afraid of being judged by those who stayed in the home country as incapable of being good parents in non-Muslim contexts. [Member of Muslim association, F, Morocco, Turin]

Indeed, young Muslims have to mediate their religious belonging with living in a non-Muslim context that may affect them in various ways. Parents appear quite worried about these influences: as has been confirmed also by other studies [8], parents – and not only Muslim ones – do declare to be worried for the negative influence that the Italian secularized context may have on the children and try their best to prevent their sons and daughters from distancing themselves from religion. The same Imam quoted above explains it clearly:

> In many families, there are conflicts. The children live in different environments; they meet friends who have other traditions, and other habits, and for whom religion is not important. Then, they want to live like their friends and move away from the mosque, they behave "haram". [M, 46, Morocco, Turin]

For these reasons, Muslim parents turn to the community – at the place of worship or through religious associations – to seek help from their peers, with whom they share the difficulties of being a parent in the context of emigration, in a sort of "mutual support" within the comfort zone of the group of co-believers:

> We get together with other mothers to talk about how our children are moving away from religion. We try to understand what to do; how to involve them in the activities of the mosque and how to make them understand that they can reconcile being Muslim with being Italian. It is an effort that we must make, that they have to make. For us parents it means showing that we have done our duty. (…) There are also many fathers who come to the mosque to ask the imam for advice on how to deal with children who say they are "ashamed of being Muslim". [F, 54, Morocco, Turin]

5. The role of the mosque: diverging views

The place of worship as a further agency of religious socialization represents another dividing line between parents and children, as the two generations, while agreeing on the need of official recognition, attribute different meanings to it. For the parents, besides representing a place where they can support each other and seek advice to educate the children, the mosque is eminently a place in which they can recognise themselves and

maintain their identity. It means seeking refuge within one's own roots and retrieving oneself in a space in which one's own identity is recognised and respected, as opposed to what happens in society outside the prayer halls, where it continuously gets questioned. In the mosque, they can shield themselves form the negative external gaze within the secure "cocoon" represented by the community.

Their descendants show a variety of attitudes towards the mosque, which represent further differentiations with their parents' generations. For some, it is simply a religious marker on the territory, rather than a space for social gatherings: a place of prayer that must be simply considered as such, even in its structure and decorum. Going to the means going to a building recognised essentially and exclusively as a sacred place. Others, especially those who are more actively engaged in the mosques' activities, acknowledge their parents' achievements in arranging a place of worship, but would like to go beyond this by turning the mosque also into a reference point for the whole local community, and not just for Muslims, as they would entrust it with more functions, besides the religious one: as mentioned in the citation quoted above, they would like the mosque to become a cultural centre able to attract non-Muslims, too, so as to debunk stereotypes about "backward" Muslims, in the attempt to finally acquire legitimacy within the local social landscape.

Furthermore, the youths involved in the mosques' leaderships are particularly keen to organize activities for their peers and especially for adolescents and children. Indeed, the younger components of mosques' boards share with the older generation of their parents a particularly acute awareness of the risk of "losing the young ones" – a preoccupation they have in common with all faith communities, starting from the Catholic one [30]. However, it is particularly young leaders who take the initiative to make the mosque appear attractive to teenagers, by organizing activities that may appeal to them, such as establishing football teams linked to their mosque and registering them for local tournaments, creating local chapters of the new-born Italian Muslim Scouts' Association (*Associazione Scout Musulmani Italiani*) or organizing summer camps and trips [31]. These examples show young leaders' ambition of expanding the activities of Muslim places of worship and make them similar to parishes –a stated intention in the words of some of them (ibid.) Indeed, as research on contemporary youths' religiosity shows [30], young people are more likely to cultivate the faith they inherit from their parents when they are given the opportunity to socialize with the peers of their religious community and when they get "to do things" with them, such as sports or volunteering. This holds for Muslims, too, whose youths get to be involved also in the organization of initiatives such as "Open mosques" (i.e. days in which the mosque is open to visits guided by the younger representatives of the local Muslim community) or Iftar dinners during Ramadan, but also in charitable activities such as regular blood donations set up by mosques in collaboration with hospitals or the Red Cross, or food distribution for poor families, also among the non-Muslim, native Italian ones, a circumstance occurred during the Coronavirus pandemic [31]. Assigning young people with responsibility roles in this kind of activities encourages them to take part in the mosque's life, even more as, with their knowledge of the Italian language and of the Italian context, they become pivotal to the improvement of the image of "Muslims" within local communities [ibid]. Hence, such initiatives allow to gain legitimacy and represent opportunities for expressing forms of participation and of "religious citizenship" at the local level – something which the younger members of boards' mosques have particularly at heart: since they *do feel* to belong to Italy [32], they strive to make their religion a fully-fledged accepted one by the country –or at least by the city– they call home. In this regard, the

characteristics of the Italian context, outlined above, play a crucial role, in that they may motivate younger Muslims to "defy" the hostility they are surrounded by, through their active and public engagement.

However, this aspect is not always understood by the older generation: while young leaders take the mosque and its activities as a springboard to claim recognition for Islam and for themselves as citizens, their parents often prefer to be less visible in the public sphere, limiting themselves to have "good relationships" with administrations or neighbouring parishes, without engaging in more structured forms of participation. As we shall see now, the relationship with the place of worship is not the only issue around which differences between parents and children emerge.

6. Mind the stereotypes: Muslim identities in the younger generation

Muslim minorities in Italy constitute a critical test case of competing theoretical expectations about the impact of inter-ethnic relations on religious mobilisation [33, 34]. When applied to ethno-religious minorities in a highly secularised society, assimilation theories predict less religiosity in more recent cohorts, because of increased inter-group contact and acculturation (Secularisation Hypothesis). By contrast, conflict theories expect more religiosity in recent years due to an assumed increase in perceived inter-group conflict or group threat (Religious Mobilisation Hypothesis).

Indeed, the secularized context that parents worry about may indeed play a role in young adults' trajectories and relationship with religion, regardless of the religious socialization they received. The two following stories well exemplify this tendency and seem to confirm the "secularisation hypothesis": significantly, these two persons received a very different religious upbringings, but end both disinterested in Islam. The first concerns a young man who declares himself "atheist": he describes his mother as "traditionalist" ("*she does not eat pork and observes Ramadan*") while his father as "progressive" ("*he does not fast at Ramadan and drinks wine at home*"). The mother tried to transmit him religious values and behaviours: "*When I was a child, my mother tried to transmit me religious tenets, she tried to give a direction to her son*". Yet, he feels completely remote from religion and thinks religion should not be "imposed": "*If one believes in God and attends the Mass, he should not impose his ideas and tell me that I should get in touch with God. [...] Religion is a big constraint*" [M, 27, Egypt, Turin].

Still, this does not mean that he never poses himself moral and spiritual questions. Rather than religion, he affirms to be more interested in the Buddhist "philosophy":

> I have never felt at ease with religion. The only religion I like – which is defined as a religion, but it is not, it is a philosophy – is Buddhism, because, according to Buddhism, you can do whatever you want as long as you are correct with yourself and with the others. [M, 27, Egypt, Turin]

He was only mildly exposed to religion. Hence, this young adult felt free to distance himself from his cultural-religious background and recognized himself in another "philosophy". This trajectory resembles that of many of his native peers and exemplifies the typical "mix 'n match attitude" that characterizes the "quest for meaning" in Western globalised contexts, where one can freely choose to adhere to cultural and religious tenets different from the ones he or she was socialized to.

The second case concerns a young woman who expressed an almost outright rejection of the behavioural model offered by her parents, who are strongly religious. She was socialized within the community of Moroccans that had settled in the small village in central Italy, where she grew up: the rigid social control – exerted especially on young girls – caused her to develop a marked refusal of the imposition of cultural and religious norms, which prevented her from doing a few things she would have wanted to, such as spending time with her schoolmates. Thanks to her hard work, she could obtain scholarships to attend high school and university, and then spend a year as an exchange student in Japan –an experience that changed forever her relationship with religion. Meeting a third culture –different than the Moroccan and the Italian one– allowed her to be "finally" able to choose who she wanted to be:

> I spent the first part of my stay in Japan during which I would wake up at night to pray, because it was Ramadan, and I used to pray only during Ramadan. I don't know if I was a believer at the time, maybe I was just following my family's tradition more than actually believing. And then in Japan I realized I was doing that only for tradition. I used to do it "Because I am Moroccan, so I am Muslim, so I fast at Ramadan". But this was not logic. Because you do not observe Ramadan because you are Moroccan, you observe it because you are Muslim. (…) During the second part of my Japanese experience I felt free because (…) I slowly started to discover myself, (…) I was really able to write my own story. Before that, I was conditioned by the community where I lived (…) – but from that moment on, I could reject those labels. [F, 30, Morocco, Milan]

Yet, she also intends to teach Arabic and transmit the basic tenets and values of her religion to her daughter, so that she would know her "roots" and would be able to "choose" based on actual knowledge. Although it originates from completely diverging conditions, compared to that of the young man reported above, this story, too, is exemplary of a typically post-modern search for "authenticity" and for achieved identities, instead of ascribed identities.

These two vignettes surely demonstrate the significant role played by the secularized context in which these young adults have grown up, but also, and probably even more importantly, of the influences of globalised exchanges and of the exposure to the circulation of cultural flows and trends. However, as telling as these two cases may be, they do not, by any means, exhaust they variety of possibilities that we could meet along our research. Indeed, the analysis of our sample offers a much more complex picture, which prevents reductions to either one or the other sets of theses and hypotheses – secularisation *vs* religious mobilisation. In the group of Muslims that we interviewed there were some girls who wore headscarves and others who did not, some of them were engaged in a mosque association, while others were not. Some who used to attend mosques frequently and others who argued with their parents for not being so committed to the religious practice. Based on such variety and on the accounts of the discussions occurring within families, we could observe three possible outcomes of the process of religious socialization, corresponding to three subgroups: the "uncritically adherent", the "pragmatic", and the "engaged" ones.

The subgroup of the *uncritically adherent* comprises young Muslims for whom the inheritance of religion from their parents is not problematic: they do not discuss or "fight" about religion within their families. To them, the subject was "naturally" in the atmosphere, it was part of the daily routine through the rhythm of prayers recalled by the

parents, the visits to the mosque, the reading of a few surahs in the evening. It was a habit that was not perceived as a "teaching":

> Religion is part of our life. Parents don't "teach" us to be religious, it is their very way of doing things that expresses religion. There is no need to say "Let's go and pray because it's Friday". That's the way it's always been done, none of us brothers or sisters have ever asked anything. Just as we learn to read and write, so we have learned the rhythms and activities related to religion (…). Our parents, especially my father, have experienced the mistrust, the looks of people dissecting him trying to understand whether he could be trusted or not. Perhaps this is why we have always been taught that our being Muslims is not something extra, but something inside us that we cannot do without. [F, 25, Egyptian, Turin]

Similar thoughts seem to be echoed by this other young woman, for whom starting to wear the veil did not really amount to a "decision". Rather, it represented an obvious step in her growth:

> I started [wearing the veil] when I was at the middle school… because I liked it so much! I liked to see my mother wearing it, and I liked to see other women making all the matches, with accessories, and colours, and I was like "It's so much fun! I wanted to do that too!", but I was too young, I could not understand the meaning, and my schoolmates kept asking me "Why do you wear it?" and I didn't know what to reply. (…) I cannot think of getting out without the veil, it would be as if I got out in the street naked... I don't understand why, but it has become a part of me. [F, 22, Egypt, Milan]

As it is clear, for this young woman the veil is such a natural part of her appearance, that she does not motivate the choice to wear it in sacralised terms, providing religious motivations to justify the need to don it. These examples invalidate the "deculturation" thesis advanced by Roy [20], according to which the religiosity of young Muslims in the West is always the result of a decisional process by which they consciously chose to appropriate their religion in a non-Muslim context. These cases show that handing down religion to the children may also occur "naturally", in a taken-for-granted manner, even in context of emigration.

The case of another young woman exemplifies how, for some of them, the decision to wear the veil may be difficult. However, what is perceived as difficult to understand is not so much the nature or the religious reasons motivating the veil, nor the prescription to wear it coming from the parents; rather, the gaze of the majoritarian society, which makes young women feel inappropriate according to Western standards:

> My objective is really to finally wear the hijab (…) It's a sin not to wear it, I have been told that I have to wear it... I've been told than on the judgement day we will be judged for wearing or not wearing it. I've been thinking about this... I had started donning it but then I did an internship in a hotel, and then in a travel agency, and they did not want me to wear the veil, so I kept taking it off and resuming wearing it. But my mother told me "Either you wear it or not, otherwise the people [other persons of the community] will think that you are not being serious, that you are playing with the veil". [F, 19, Morocco, Turin]

For some girls, starting to wear the hijab represents such an obvious act, that, sometimes, parents themselves prefer to make sure that their girl is fully aware of what she is doing and is taking an informed and conscious decision:

> I remember that I sat with my father and we talked about this [my decision to don the hijab] for long, because he wanted to make sure that I was convinced about this choice and he wanted me to motivate it with my own words. [F, 24, Egypt, Milan]

The subgroup of the *pragmatic* ones is composed by people who do reflect about their inherited religion, and do not just adhere to it uncritically. For some, this may mean seeking to balance their religious identification with other self-identifications, or actively searching for identifications other than the Muslim ones:

> Above all I am Moroccan, my parents remind me. According to them I must do "Moroccan" things, be like Moroccans are, be religious and be a Muslim, but I want to be Italian AND Moroccan, I don't want to be identified only on the basis of my religion. [M, 19, Morocco, Turin]

> but I have been living in Turin since I was 10. I speak Italian well; I have friends of many nationalities, and every year I go back to Morocco. It hasn't always been easy. At school, there is always someone who has something against foreigners, like Albanians, Moroccans, blacks… But there are many people, and fortunately I know many, who think of me as a person and not as a Moroccan in particular. [F, 19, Morocco, Turin]

> It is very hard to make people realize we are people, not just Muslims. [M, 24, Morocco, Turin]

These youths' words show that they do not want to be reduced to their religious identification, and show pragmatic attitudes concerning their religiosity, which may mean that they strategically adapt their behaviour and show their "Muslimness" to varying degrees, depending on contexts and situations. Sometimes, this may signify "succumbing" to society's negative perception of Muslims, as is the case of an interviewee, who, to occasionally work as hostess at fairs and conferences, wears a turban instead of a proper hijab, thus accommodating the requests or expectations of the employer to secure the job. However, this is not always necessarily the case: adopting pragmatic attitudes may also signify code-switching by flexibly playing with belongings, labels, and identifications, resorting to different repertoires of action, in ways with which the person is fully at ease. This is the case, for instance, of two male interviewees: one explains that he behaves differently with "Italian" (*sic*) and "Arab" (*sic*) girls, being more outgoing with the former and more reserved with the latter; the second interviewee describes how he spends time both with Muslim friends and with non-Muslim friends, paying attention to not smoke at the gatherings organized by Muslim friends, although they know that he smokes.

What should be noted across these examples is that being pragmatic does not necessarily mean becoming less believing: accommodating the orthopraxis to make it coexist with a non-Muslim environment does not mean distancing oneself from religious beliefs or from religious practice altogether. Gans [34] coined the concept of "symbolic

religiosity" to indicate second-generation religious identities as less linked to practices. It may happen that young Muslims born in Italy feel a common Muslim identity, which is shared and practiced in various associative activities, but this is not necessarily linked to the strict observance of all religious precepts and rules (such as daily prayers). Among the "pragmatic", we also identify some who, while defining themselves as Muslims, may question certain aspects of their religion. This is the case especially of young women who contest the control exerted on women's bodies, rights, and practices:

> When other Muslims tell me "Why don't you wear the veil", I always quote a proverb in Arabic which basically means that "It is my life and that it is only God that can judge us": I will regulate these things with Him directly! [F, 20, Morocco, Milan]

> The topic that I need to know about the most is the role of the woman, because I've always been told that the woman is respected in Islam, but then, for instance, the woman is denied the possibility to divorce in Islam. So, I ask myself "What kind of right is this?". And I would like to know more about what is truly written in the texts, I would like someone to explain to me the reason why even well-educated people accept this thing. [F, 23, Pakistan, Milan]

These young women, too, display a pragmatic attitude, in that they "choose" the aspects they prefer about their religion, while rejecting other aspects that they do not understand or are not comfortable with, thus showing a reflexive stance towards their religious tenets. The latter case, in particular, is exemplary of an increasing tendency among young Muslims, who feel an acute need that "faith" be accompanied by "reason": she cannot simply accept what she is taught without a thorough explanation of the "why" and the "how", something which make young Muslims similar to their peers of other faiths. Young women, however, express such need more strongly, as they are often the focus of attention both of their parents and of the Western society where they live: while the former may impose the respect of norms concerning how they dress or with whom they spend their free time, the latter often wishes that Muslim girls "liberate themselves" from the veil, taken as the symbol of their oppression. It is hard for them to juggle between these two sets of demands which both put significant pressure on young women, who always have to justify and explain themselves, with other Muslims and with non-Muslims alike. Hence, in response to the expectations of their families, of the community and of non-Muslims, the strategy they often resort to is that of distinguishing between what is truly prescribed by religion and what derives from the cultural traditions of the parents' country of origin:

> One thing that disappoints me a lot is the fact that often tradition gets confused with religion. Things that were valid 1400 years ago simply cannot be valid today. [F, 27, Morocco, Milan]

This is the reason why the above-quoted interviewee claims she wants to "know more about what is truly written in the texts". Such words point to the need to deepen her knowledge of religious tenets, to have more arguments to reject some of the rules that concern women, which she might be imposed by her family: if some of these rules pertain more to "traditions" than to the actual predicaments of Islam, then one is free to criticize and refuse them, *precisely in the name of Islam*. Hence, the fact that girls may not adopt

or question some behaviours often becomes a source of tensions within families: while parents blame the bad influence exerted by the "Italian" context on their offspring, children – and especially daughters – show a resourceful attitude in educating themselves about religion, to better respond to the negative remarks they might receive from their family and community. Faith is inherited from the older generation but also becomes the object of personal adaptations and re-elaborations that help sustain it.

One of the ways in which faith gets re-appropriated and adapted pragmatically consists in making the *hijab* "cool": the veil is not just a religious symbol, but has also become a fashion accessory, through which girls and young women can feel modern and at ease with their bodies and look in a non-Muslim context. That of so-called "modest fashion" is a burgeoning market across the world, but it has a particular resonance in Western societies, where Muslim women can combine modern *hijabs* with the garments in vogue, which they wear as Westerners *and* as Muslims. Just as claiming a deeper knowledge of religion helps them face the tensions they experience with parents, resorting to modest fashion allows to balance their desire to preserve their Muslim identity, without appearing "traditional" or "backward" in the context where they are growing up. These young women share the styles of their peers but add the ingredient of "modesty" by donning the *hijab* and by not showing some parts of their bodies. At the same time, mixing items of modest fashion with their outfits as Western young women represents a way to challenge Western aesthetic standards [35], because they do not simply "fit in" such standards, but elaborate a personal synthesis of the religious and cultural worlds they belong to – e.g., by ordering a hijab by a Turkish designer on Amazon to be matched with a blouse or a pair of jeans from H&M or Zara. While representing another instance of a post-modern "quest for authenticity" expressed through bodily practices -being true to oneself and to one's roots by wearing a "Modern version" of the veil– such repertoire of action has the potential to counter racist and Islamophobic discourses.

Indeed, the decision to wear the veil seems to be a way of "not disappearing", of presenting one's specificity to the world, one's being "many different things" and showing the complexity of being oneself to the outside world: it is the shift from being *labelled* "Muslims" to *owning* such identity by proudly and visibly displaying it. It requires, however, daily commitment and constant work, because the environment is not always perceived as being friendly and devoid of incongruities. As this interviewee explains, one cannot "code-switch" so easily with the veil – at least in the context of emigration:

> In Morocco I wear it one day and not the next, there's no problem. Here it's different – if they see me with it one day and without it the next, they don't understand. Nevertheless, in Morocco it's quite normal so they don't think anything, either good or bad. If I take it off here, what will the others think? [F, 19, Morocco, Turin]

The subgroup of the *engaged* ones comprises young people for whom religious socialization resulted not only in their adherence to religious precepts, but also in a conscious and reflected-upon appropriation of religious beliefs (contrary to the "uncritically adherent"), which often occurs within and through religious associationism, frequently with the group of peers. Individuals in this group decided to further the religious they inherited from the parents and continued their religious socialization. For instance, interviewees stressed how attending religious lessons with other peers in the

mosques had been a useful choice in the construction, support, and reinforcement of the Muslim ethnic identity in their lives. As an institutional vehicle for the cultural reproduction and socialization of the second generation, this is accomplished in the mosques by ideologically legitimizing and defending a set of core traditional Muslim values and forms of social relationships, Indeed, not all youths find it easy to seamlessly code-switch between settings and languages and may encounter great difficulties in their processes of self-identification; in this regard, religious associations represent safe havens, where to discuss these problems with peers. Larger and more established mosques, where young leaders are involved in the mosque board, show a particular awareness in this regard: since these young representatives empathize with the condition of their peers and younger "siblings", they started creating spaces where to openly discuss these issues –for example, through weekly meetings led by young leaders and reserved to young people, devoted especially to the identity crises they face, to help them overcome such difficulties [31].These moments of reflection are aimed explicitly at aiding young Muslims to balance their identity as Muslims and as Italians, from a religious perspective.

Again, the case of the veil is emblematic here: many female interviewees explained that their decision to wear the veil was taken after attending religious education sessions within their religious associations, and with the support of peers, who thus act as another strong agency of religious socialization.

Becoming more pious after joining religious associations occurs also among young men:

> [Name of the association] is a very good thing (…) They helped me a lot, because now I pray, and go to the mosque, which I didn't do before, and it is also thanks to them... And it is important because now I understand who I am, it gives me positivity, it gives me a direction… as we say, I returned to Islam. [M, 23, Morocco, Turin]

Staying with the group of fellow young Muslims reinforces one's own religiosity, yet sometimes this may occur in a "reactive sense". Group religious identity is particularly attractive because it can be a positive source of social identification, especially in the face of discrimination [36]. Indeed, seeking "refuge" in the group of peers may reflect forms of defensive ethnicity against their perceived marginal status within Italian society as both a migrant and a non-Catholic group. Therefore, beyond its role as a vehicle for the cultural interests of the first generation, the paradoxical appeal of the religion for many second-generation members could lie in its capacity to provide a kind of reaction to this sense of marginalization, and, along with it, positive social identity and group empowerment, which partly gives credit to the "religious mobilisation" hypothesis explained above.

Admittedly, such reactive religiosity might entail the creation of oppositional identities [38] and of more radical trends – something which would justify the creation of a fourth subgroup of "fundamentalists", although we do not have sufficient cases of young people holding extremist religious views in our sample. This is the case of people whose religious socialization mainly occur on the internet, within the so-called "Islamosphere", where neo-Orthodox and fundamentalist interpretations are increasingly gaining currency due to their literalism, which makes them appear as more reliable [20]. One of our interviewees well exemplifies this trend, as she autonomously developed a resolute commitment to religion, with a strict observance of orthodoxy, although, she has

grown up in a family that is not characterized by high levels of religious practice - or perhaps precisely because of that. Her sources of information came from webpages and chats predicating literalist views, mainly focusing on what is "licit" (*halal*) and "illicit" (*haram*) in Islam.

7. Concluding remarks

Migration processes usually represent challenges for inter-generational relations within families, as integration in a host society can have a collateral effect on parent-child relations. Indeed, children can interiorize social and cultural values in contrast with what their parents believe in or with how they behave. Among these cultural challenges, religious identity plays an important role. The gradual "coming of age" of Muslim second generations and their increasing visibility in the public arena added a new challenge in the field of interactions across generations.

The outcomes of the religious transmission described above shows the numerous possibilities of managing religious identity among Muslim second generations: indeed, from those who strictly follow their parents' steps without any critical reflection on the feasibility of being Muslim in a non-Muslim country to those who decide to live in a more secularized way, a plethora of positions may appear, with variations according to gender, social class, area or residence, cultural and social capitals, parental attitudes. Both the Secularisation Hypothesis and the Religious Mobilisation Hypothesis are confirmed. Following these findings, several similarities with what is going on within Italian, Catholic families emerge, beyond the different religious belonging [38]: comparing and contrasting native Catholic and migrant Muslim families on the modalities of religious transmission and their effects could be a promising ground for future research. In any case, the experiences of Muslim youths display significant fluctuation among the first and the second generation, overturning simplistic representations according to which Muslims are all necessarily pious in the same way.

Moreover, besides the question of whether or not young individuals are strongly religious or practicing, the collected interviews show how the management of religious identities among children may create frictions between parents and children [39], and with the extended transnational family, too. As we have seen, parents (or relatives) appear worried or frustrated about the possible absence of religion from their children's lives due to the influence of a secularised context; indeed, the exposure to non-religious lifestyles, which characterize the majority of their peers, as well as being continuously questioned about Islam by a hostile perception of this religion, causes many youths to experience identity crises. At the same time, they often do not feel fully understood by their parents in their attempts to balance the pressing demands of society, or in their quest for "authenticity" beyond ascribed, received identities. Some of these conflicts may cause fractures and sorrow on both sides, but the may also represent the opportunity to find common ground around the re-appropriation of religious tenets, beyond the parents' cultural heritage,. With regards to the relationship with relatives abroad, with their set of demands and expectations, the focus on immigrant families provides an opportunity to study how being closely in touch within transnational families may amplify cultural distances and cause intercultural misunderstanding, especially as far as emotions, sense of belonging and identities are concerned. Such misunderstandings – or possibly new understandings within the definition of new globalised identities – could represent a further interesting line of enquiry.

Lastly, to answer our initial questions, we found continuity, rather than disruption, in the importance of religion from one generation to the other: however, the non-Muslim context in which young Muslims grow up inevitably influences the way they inherit their faith, which leads to transformations and original re-elaborations, that also reflect contemporary tendencies that privilege the self-expression of consciously chosen identities.

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