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### Believing and belonging in multicultural Europe

*A minority perspective*

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# Believing and belonging in multicultural Europe: A minority perspective

*Inaugural lecture*

Delivered at the occasion of the appointment as

Professor of Sociology,

University of Amsterdam,

on Friday 14 October 2022

by

Fenella Fleischmann

*Mijnheer de Rector Magnificus,*

*Mevrouw de Decaan,*

*Dear members of the academic community, friends and family,*

Welcome to this academic ceremony at the occasion of my appointment as Professor of Sociology at the Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences at the University of Amsterdam. I greatly appreciate that you took the time and effort to mark this day with me by attending my inaugural lecture.

I have titled my lecture '*Believing and belonging in multicultural Europe: A minority perspective*' to reflect three key aspects of my research. Sociologists of religion will recognize the first part of the title as a phrase borrowed from Grace Davie (1994), and reshaped in many contributions following her work, on the question of whether the stunning rates of decline in church attendance and religious affiliation that we witnessed in Europe in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were also accompanied by a loss of belief – or rather whether those who no longer belong to a religious congregation still believe, but perhaps do so in their own, idiosyncratic ways. Believing and belonging, and the oftentimes conflictual relationship between the two in societies that are among the most secularized in the world yet also emphasize their Christian heritage, are the key substantive questions that inform my research agenda. But unlike most sociologists of religion, and this is the second key to my work enclosed in the title, I approach these questions through the lens of a migration scholar in the context of high and increasing diversity resulting from international migration. Third and finally, I conduct most of my research among immigrants and their offspring, based on the data of thousands of participants who left their country of birth, or who were born to foreign-born parents, and who were so kind to share their life experiences, viewpoints and concerns with the research community. My work is thus indebted to their participation in social scientific research. And this is not a trivial matter, I believe, considering their position as members of vulnerable groups, and also considering that believing and belonging address questions that go to the heart of the self-concept of many individuals. They go to the core of their very being: Who am I? What do I believe in? And where do I belong?

Some of you may wonder why these questions are relevant for a sociologist. Aren't these so subjective concepts that they are better left to our sister discipline psychology? Indeed, many psychologists (a disciplinary group by the way in which I like to include myself as a kind of peripheral member) have a lot to say about identity and sense of belonging, and they also are increasingly interested in religion as a source of social identity (Verkuyten, 2007; Ysseldyk, Matheson & Anisman, 2010). And it's that word 'social' to which I want to draw your attention here: because even though questions about the purpose of life and our place in the universe are fundamentally pondered by individuals in a very subjective and idiosyncratic manner, the

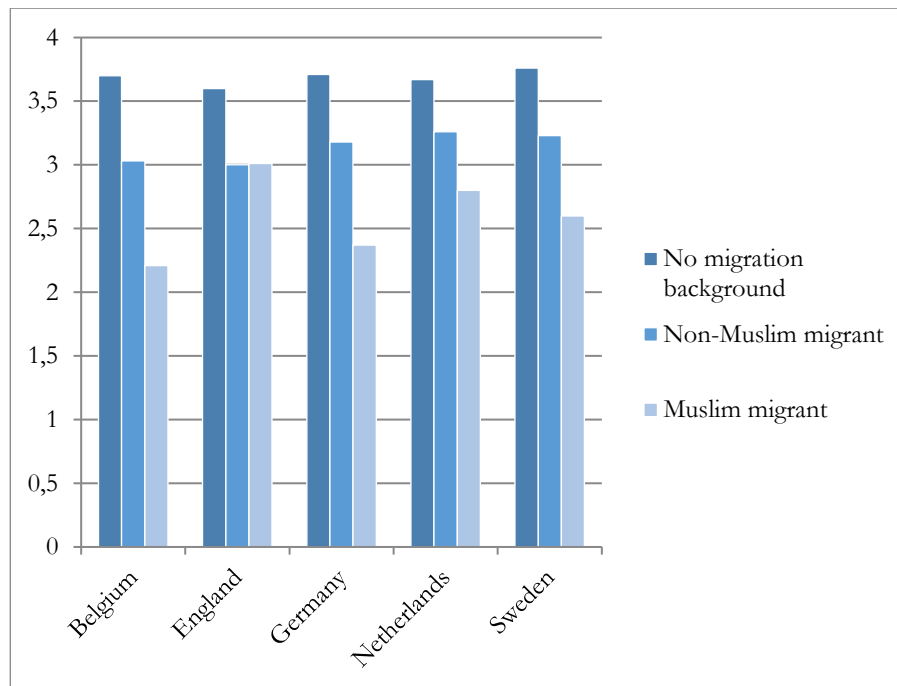
question of what to believe and where to belong is always being answered within a given social context. Contextual conditions, such as the level of religious diversity in one's surroundings, the governance of migration and religious diversity and internal dynamics within migrant communities set the boundaries within which individuals ponder these questions and which options they can choose from when saying "this is where I belong". My research thus fits squarely within the sociological tradition of studying macro-level phenomena such as religious change through the lens of micro-level actions, where individuals define their identity and beliefs – religious or non-religious – in response to the options that their immediate contexts afford, while their identity positions and beliefs, in turn, feed back into shaping the context and informing the question whether those who believe can belong. Or, more specifically, whether religion as such, and Islam in particular, remains the bright boundary in European immigrant-receiving societies that scholars like Richard Alba (2005) have observed it to be in the past.

#### *Religion as a group boundary in Europe*

How people answer questions about believing and belonging thus tells us something about group boundaries in contemporary society. Generally speaking, group boundaries are a form of social differentiation that is related, on the one hand, to unequal access to and distribution of resources and, on the other, to the way in which social interactions between individuals are structured (Lamont & Molnár, 2002). Group boundaries are always the outcome of a negotiation process in which groups define their boundaries in reference to each other, and they use a range of different criteria for that purpose (Barth, 1969; Wimmer, 2009). In the context of migration-induced diversity, these often include ancestry in the receiving country, but increasingly also religion. Group boundaries emerge in response to individuals' need to organize the social world, which results in the division of this social world into 'us' and 'them' (Turner et al. 1987). And while the need for social categorization is universal, the characteristics used to define social categories and the strength of group boundaries depend strongly on the societal context. Therefore, the characteristics that define a specific social boundary are better conceived of as a function of the boundary itself, rather than being externally given. In other words, group boundaries like religious affiliation or migrant origin should not be considered as fixed and self-evident units of analysis but as dynamic constructs that are objects of study in themselves (Barth, 1969; Wimmer, 2009). Against this background, migration scholars aim to address the question which, if any, boundary markers are used to differentiate people of immigrant origin from non-migrants, and how the contents and salience of these boundaries change over time (cf. Alba, 2005; Zolberg & Woon, 1999). My research in this context has focused on the role of religion, and both for reasons of societal relevance as well as due to practical considerations, it has been conducted mostly among immigrants from Muslim-majority countries in European destinations. So what do we

know about the importance of Islamic religious affiliation and religiosity as a boundary marker in European societies?

Figure 1. Levels of national identification among adolescents



Source: Wave 1 CILS4EU + LeuvenCILS, calculations based on Fleischmann & Phalet (2018)

In line with the notion of religion in general, and Islam in particular, as a bright boundary in Europe, data collected among adolescents in Belgium (Flanders), England, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden show that Muslim youth are even less strongly identified with European national identities than their non-Muslim immigrant peers. This means that European national identities are not only relatively inaccessible for those who lack ancestry in European nations, but even more so for those who self-identify as Muslims. In these analyses of the CILS4EU and LeuvenCILS data, which I conducted together with Karen Phalet (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018), we could additionally show that the lack of friendship ties to non-migrant peers contributed most to the explanation of the religious gap in levels of national identification. This is a worrisome finding, as we know from network analyses of the same data conducted by my former PhD student Müge Şimşek (Şimşek, Van Tubergen & Fleischmann, 2021), and of similar data from the Friendship and Identity in Schools project by my German colleagues Lars Leszczensky and Sebastian Pink (Leszczensky & Pink, 2017), that Muslim youth are most segregated from non-Muslim peers even in mixed classrooms where there are

ample opportunities for developing friendship ties across religious and ethnic boundaries.

These network analyses thus reveal that Islam acts as a strong social boundary in diverse school classes across Europe. And we know from research on national identity contents that it also acts as a symbolic boundary. Muslim youth are not only excluded from prevalent definitions of European national identities due to their lack of ancestry in European countries, but additionally by cultural definitions of nationhood that emphasise the need to have a shared cultural heritage, including the Christian tradition, to be recognized as a 'true national' (Reijerse, et al., 2013). Similarly, sociologists of religion have argued that Christianity in Europe nowadays acts mostly as a marker of national identity, rather than as faith enacted in religious rituals (Storm, 2011).

Religion thus occupies a central position in public, policy and scholarly debates on migration and diversity. Coming from an interdisciplinary background in migration studies, as a chairholder in sociology I am most interested in the relation between migration-induced diversity and broad trends in religious identification, practices and beliefs. A central research question for me is therefore whether and how individuals with a migration background change their religion, not necessarily their affiliation, but perhaps the intensity of their belief and practice, or the meaning that they derive from it, in response to changing societal environments. Needless to say, moving from one country to another is one of the most profound changes of societal contexts individuals can experience over their life-course, even where this happens completely voluntarily and at low financial, social and emotional costs – let alone in more dire circumstances.

Of course I am not the first social scientist who studies the role of religion in the context of migration to Europe. Research interest in this topic started to take off from the 1990s onwards, and many researchers here at the University of Amsterdam contributed to this emerging field. Early work on the religion of Muslims in Europe initially focused on religious institutions and legal regulations. Studies typically asked what types of Islamic organisations were present in a given country, what their activities were, how they were positioned vis-à-vis each other and the state in their origin countries, and how they were accommodated by the state in the receiving society (Allievi & Nielsen, 2003; Maréchal, et al., 2003; Nonneman, et al., 1996; Rath, et al., 1996, 2001; Shadid & Van Koningsveld, 2002; Sunier, 1996; Vertovec & Peach, 1997). These works revealed the internal diversity of Muslim communities in Europe (e.g. between the Turkish state-sponsored Diyanet (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı) communities and their then oppositional counterpart Milli Görüş, e.g. Spuler-Stegemann, 1998; Sunier & Landman, 2015), as a function of distinct migration histories and the different ways in which religion is practiced and organised in migrants' origin countries. In terms of the accommodation of religious minority rights, they taught us about

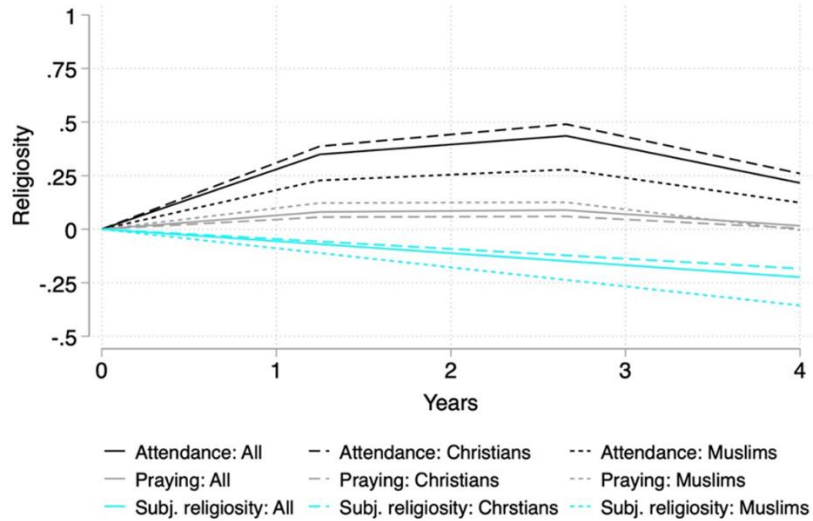
the importance of path-dependency, where religious newcomers had to come to terms with existing church-state regimes that were more or less religiously neutral and open towards not previously established religious groups (Bader, 2007). Cross-national differences in the legal position and institutional support of Muslim minorities raised the question of whether Muslims would show different patterns of religious change and intergenerational religious transmission in response to the different opportunity structures that they encountered across European societies. Answering this question called for comparative research among large samples of Muslim minorities across European receiving societies.

Such large-scale survey data that allowed for empirical examinations of levels of religiosity, their development over time and their relation to (specific domains of) immigrant integration became increasingly available from the year 2000 onwards. I recently reviewed the two decades of empirical research based on these data (Fleischmann, 2022) concerning two central research questions: First, how does immigrants' religion change in the context of migration? And second, does religion form a bridge or barrier to immigrant integration? My conclusion based on the existing body of scholarship was that the evidence regarding the overall trend of immigrant religiosity, and its association with multiple integration outcomes, is rather inconclusive to date.

#### *Religious change in the context of migration*

With regard to the question of whether the religiosity of (primarily Muslim) immigrants and their children declines with increasing length of stay in secular receiving societies, different methods of studying over-time change yield different results, and the findings moreover differ for different indicators of religiosity. I would like to illustrate this with findings from a recent study that I conducted with my former PhD student Yassine Khoudja (Fleischmann & Khoudja, under review). For our analysis, we drew on the four waves of the NIS2NL panel data among recent immigrants that Marcel Lubbers, Mérove Gijsberts, Mieke Maliepaard and I collected (Lubbers, et al., 2018). Previous research with similar data had already shown that the event of migration often leads to a sharp decrease in religious involvement, particularly in terms of service attendance (Van Tubergen, 2013; Diehl & Koenig, 2013). Following recent immigrants for up to five years of settlement, we could show that migrants' religious service attendance initially bounces back and thus recovers from the shock of the migratory event to some extent. Despite this initial increase, the results of latent growth models revealed that the overall trend across the observation period is downward for all indicators of religiosity – and this trend is remarkably similar for Muslim and Christian immigrants.

Figure 2. Trends in recent immigrants' religiosity during their first years in the Netherlands



Source: Wave 1-4 NIS2NL, based on Fleischmann & Khoudja, (under review).

Conducting similar analyses of within-person change over time among a different target group, adolescents in secondary schools across Europe based again on the CILS4EU data, Müge Şimşek documented that religiosity declined among Christian youth (both migrant and non-migrant) across a two-year period, whereas it remained stable among their Muslim peers (Şimşek, Fleischmann and Van Tubergen, 2019). Even though a part of the Muslim youth in the four countries under study showed declining religiosity over time, an equally large part showed increasing religiosity.

I will not bore you here with more details about the large number of studies that have been conducted on comparative levels of religiosity of migrants in Europe, its intergenerational transmission and over-time trends. Rather, based on my earlier review (Fleischmann, 2022), I think the current empirical literature concerning the first of the two central questions can be summarized as follows: Muslims in European societies stand out due to their higher religiosity (e.g. Van Tubergen & Sindradottir, 2011) and its greater stability over time (e.g., Şimşek, Fleischmann & Van Tubergen, 2019) and across generations (e.g. Scourfield, 2012; Şimşek, et al., 2018) compared to the religiosity of migrant and non-migrant Christians. A general long-term trend towards either secularisation or religious revival, however, is hard to discern. There are only few signs of religious revival or increasing religiosity among large parts of the Muslim population. Findings of religious stability or slight – but not sweeping – decline are more common. In addition to clarifying the direction of the broad trends among the general immigrant and Muslim



population in Europe, future research on religious change among immigrant-origin minorities will need to move beyond its descriptive character and address the question of how differences in religious developments can be explained: Why do some Muslim youth increase their religiosity during adolescence, while others decrease or stay stable? I am happy that thanks to generous funding by the Amsterdam Centre for Inequality Studies, Müge Şimşek and I will have the opportunity to delve further into this question.

#### *Religion and immigrant integration*

But I also still owe you an answer to the second question, which asked how immigrant religion relates to exposure to, participation in and orientation towards traditionally Christian but increasingly secularised European societies. The overarching question in this regard is whether religion functions as a bridge towards incorporation, as has been historically the case in the US (Hirschman, 2004), or rather as a barrier, which has been argued to be more likely in the European context (Foner & Alba, 2008). Given the multidimensional nature of the integration concept, the body of research concerned with the association between religiosity and immigrant integration is substantial and draws on different theoretical explanations for the very distinct outcomes under study. In an attempt to summarize across these different studies, a differentiation between three overarching dimensions of integration – structural, social and cultural – is useful.

Both for structural and social integration, there are conflicting and partly gender-specific findings: thus some studies find positive, others negative and still others no significant associations between immigrants' religiosity and their educational achievement and attainment (e.g. Carol & Schulz, 2018; Ohlendorf, Koenig & Diehl, 2017), labour market participation (e.g. Connor & Koenig, 2015; Fleischmann & Phalet, 2012), contacts with members of other ethnic groups (e.g. Maliepaard & Phalet, 2012; Maliepaard & Schacht, 2018) and participation in civic association (e.g. Fleischmann, Martinović & Böhm, 2016; McAndrew & Voas, 2014). With regard to cultural integration, the association with religiosity tends to be more consistently negative, such that those who are more religious hold more conservative values regarding issues such as gender equality and sexual liberalism (e.g. Eskelinen & Verkuyten, 2018; Kogan & Weißmann, 2019) and tend to identify less strongly with European nations (e.g. Maxwell & Bleich, 2014; Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007). Importantly, much of the research on social attitudes compares the association with religiosity between migrants and non-migrants of different religious affiliations, and finds similar associations of religiosity with conservatism also among Christian migrants and non-migrants (e.g. Diehl, Koenig & Ruckdeschel, 2009; Lewis & Kashyap, 2013). Thus, while immigrants in general and Muslims in particular seem to be more conservative on average than non-migrants, this conservatism results primarily from their higher levels of religiosity, but their religiously-inspired conservatism does not

distinguish them from similarly religious non-migrants. Moreover, in our research on national identification among youth in Europe, we found that higher religiosity went along with lower national identification also for non-Muslim youth (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2018).

Overall then, the upshot of 20 years of large-scale survey-based research on the role of religion for immigrant integration in Europe is rather puzzling. On the one hand, there is strong evidence for the continued importance of religion among immigrants in general and Muslims in particular, and for comparatively higher levels of religiosity and religious stability among Muslims compared to non-Muslims. On the other hand, it is still unclear how and why this matters for specific aspects of their integration into European societies. This is a pressing problem for migration scholars as religion continues to be important from the migrant perspective, and in public debates where it acts as most important fault line to discuss cultural differences (Brubaker, 2015). To move beyond these inconclusive findings, I therefore aim to extend the study of immigrant religion with the concept of religious cognition, and I was so fortunate that the Dutch Research Council NWO recently awarded my proposal with a Vidi grant.

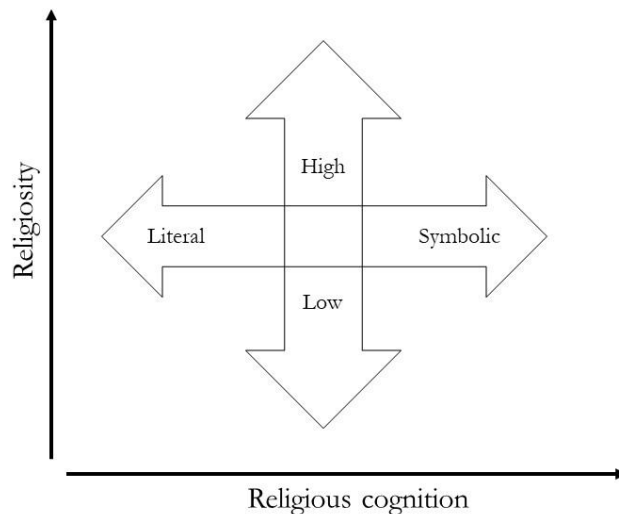
#### *The role of religious cognition for immigrant integration*

In the coming five years, my aim is to enhance the large-scale quantitative study of immigrant religion with more than counting practice frequencies and importance of religion, by including measures of religious reasoning and meaning-making. This research agenda follows the classic account of William James (1902) that it is not *what* individuals believe, but *the ways in which they hold their beliefs* that is important in understanding the social function of religion. Qualitative research on immigrant youth' religion already showed that individuals take different approaches towards, for instance, being a Muslim (e.g. De Koning, 2008; Peek, 2005; Vertovec & Rogers, 1998). To some extent, such different profiles can be replicated with quantitative methods using person-based analytical techniques (such as latent profile or cluster analysis) to construct typologies of Muslims (e.g. Huijnk, 2018; Maliepaard & Gijsberts, 2012; Phalet, Fleischmann & Stojcic, 2012). Yet with the measures currently available, such person-based analyses are still limited to what people do in the realm of religion, how often they do it, and how much importance they attach to it, but they do not shed light on the different ways in which people reason about religion.

To illustrate why this limits our understanding of immigrant religion and religious change, consider the example of a father and son who both visit the mosque every week for Friday prayer. Conventional survey research would interpret this as a sign of intergenerational stability and lack of change in religion, based on the identical frequency of their service attendance. However, not all mosques are the same, and if the father visits a liberal and the son a radical Salafi mosque (or the other way around), I would argue that

this constitutes a meaningful religious change across generations. But this change would not be evident in studies using existing research instruments as these do not include the different ways in which individuals approach religion and the different meanings that they can derive from the same religion. To comprehensively understand other religious changes than the commonly assumed religious decline, which is only one aspect of secularisation (Dobbelaere, 2002), in the context of migration, we thus need to better understand immigrants' reasoning about religion instead of focusing exclusively on their levels of religiosity.

Figure 3. The two dimensions of religious orientations based on Wulff (1997)



According to Wulff's (1997) seminal overview of the psychology of religion, religiosity is only one out of two dimensions of individuals' orientations towards religion or transcendence. The second dimension is religious cognition, which ranges from literal to symbolic. Literalists insist that there is only one correct answer to religious questions ('one truth'), whereas symbolists emphasise the need to (re-)interpret religious messages and acknowledge the validity of multiple worldviews. Individuals with more literal religious cognitions tend to hold more stereotypical worldviews and avoid questioning their convictions, whereas those with more symbolic cognitions are more open to challenging their worldview and adapting their attitudes and behaviours based on new information (Batson & Reynor-Prince, 1983; Hunsberger, et al., 1996). A symbolic religious cognition thus reflects "a tendency for people [...] to think complexly both about religion and about

people and diversity” (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005: 816). This way of thinking about religion and people in the context of diversity renders religious cognition of paramount importance for immigrant integration, which essentially requires individuals from different (religious) groups to come to terms with the diversity of their surroundings. However, unlike the dimension of religiosity, religious cognition has not yet been systematically investigated among immigrants and their offspring, neither has it been examined in relation to immigrant integration.

Outside migration studies, the notion that religious cognition is important beyond individual differences in religious involvement, is already more established. When the two dimensions are jointly considered, literalism is typically found to be more predictive than religiosity of attitudes such as prejudice, values such as universalism and behaviour such as political party choice (Duriez et al., 2007). Similarly, in a study based on representative samples of the German and Swiss population, Gert Pickel and colleagues (2020) found that dogmatic and exclusivist approaches to religion are more relevant for understanding prejudice than religious affiliation and religiosity. In an attempt to extend the empirical scope of this line of work beyond Western countries that are predominated by Christians and non-believers with a Christian heritage, my previous master thesis student Rachel Kollar could show based on data from the World Values Study (2006) that an exclusivist understanding of religion – in other words insisting that one’s own religion is the only true religion – is consistently related to higher levels of distrust of religious others across seven world religions. Regarding different indicators of religiosity such as belief in God, importance of religion and participation in religious rituals, however, there was no clear pattern in relation to religious distrust (Kollar & Fleischmann, 2022).

More recently, I was able to conduct a first analysis of four measures of religious cognition that were assessed in conjunction with religiosity in an oversample of Turkish Muslims in Germany, collected as a part of the KONID study by Antonius Liedhegener and Gert Pickel (Liedhegener, et al., 2021). These measures capture literalism and exclusivism, but also explicitly operationalise symbolism by asking to what extent participants agreed with the statement that “one always has to take the historical context into account when interpreting Qur’an”. In line with the notion that religious cognition is conceptually distinct from religiosity, agreement with these statements loaded on different factors than measures of religiosity, and religious cognitions had different explanatory power for several dimensions of immigrant integration. Interestingly, however, literalism and symbolism did not emerge as opposite ends of a single dimension. Instead, agreeing that Qur’an should be interpreted literally and that there is only one true religion turned out to be related in this sample to the dimension of religiosity. Importantly, this did not imply the negation of a symbolic approach as those who agreed more with the statement that Qur’an needs to be interpreted literally also agreed more

that the historical context is important in this interpretation. These findings imply that a focus on literalism and exclusivism – as well as the related concept of religious fundamentalism (cf. Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004; Moaddel & Karabenick, 2021; for research on fundamentalism in the context of migration, see Koopmans, 2015) – might be too limited in operationalising religious cognitions and rather capture normative forms of religiosity, at least among Sunni Muslims. Operationalising symbolic approaches to religion thus seems to be particularly important to better understand the role of religion for immigrant integration. In line with theoretical expectations, our analyses further revealed symbolic approaches to religion to go along with less social distance towards people of other religious groups, and it was uniquely associated with higher levels of participation in civic associations and volunteering. This suggests that symbolic religion seems to be able to provide the kind of ‘social glue’ that is urgently needed in today’s diverse societies, and that literal and exclusivist approaches to religion do not necessarily stand in the way of more symbolic ways of deriving meaning from religion.

In my Vidi project, I therefore aim to extend the research on religion and migration conceptually with the differentiation between religious cognition and religiosity. Examining individual differences in religious contents within the same religious group, I expect, will also help to shed light on the question how people of immigrant-origin can develop a sense of belonging to European national identities if they believe in a religion other than Christianity. If we succeed in measuring literal and symbolic religious cognitions cross-culturally, we will better understand *how* people of immigrant background believe, and whether they relate in more complex or more narrow-minded ways to questions of meaning and truth. Generally speaking, my expectation is that religion, if defined in an exclusivist, literalist or fundamentalist way, is more likely to be a barrier to immigrant integration, particularly in domains that require cross-religious contacts or concern attitudes that are considered at odds with core religious teachings. If defined in pluralistic, inclusive or symbolic ways, however, religion should be more likely to be decoupled from immigrant integration or even have the potential to be form a bridge towards more frequent inter-ethnic contacts, participation in civic associations and developing a sense of belonging to European nations.

#### *Identity compatibility*

The study of religious cognition thus contributes to the investigation of group boundaries in the context of religion and migration to Europe by providing insights into the different ways in which adherents of the same religion can define what it means to be, for instance, a ‘true Muslim’. The planned research can therefore also inform my other research line on the compatibility of the multiple social identities of immigrants and their offspring. I expect that the more complex ways of reasoning about religion that constitute symbolic religion should facilitate greater identity compatibility. With this work, I aim

to contribute to highlighting the agency of individuals of migrant origin in defining and negotiating the contents of national identities in increasingly diverse Europe. With my focus on the minority perspective, I do not aim to deny that non-migrants typically have a stronger voice in defining the contents of national identities, both legally, in public discourses and in day-to-day interactions where they frequently signal the non-recognition of those with a migrant heritage by continuously questioning ‘where they are *really* from’ (cf. Cheryan & Monin, 2005). Yet immigrants and particularly their offspring who are born and raised in their parents’ destination society, can and do actively contest definitions of nationhood that exclude them. Although much more research is needed on how immigrant-origin minorities define national identities in Europe, we already know from the research I conducted with Nadya Gharaei and Karen Phalet (Gharaei, Phalet & Fleischmann, 2018) that migrant-origin youth experience a stronger sense of national belonging the more they think that peers who maintain their heritage culture, including Islamic religious practices such as wearing the headscarf, are considered ‘true nationals’.

This finding, which was additionally impacted by the ethnic composition of the classroom, serves to underline the *social* nature of collective identities, and the continuous negotiation processes around their boundaries and contents. It also highlights the need to have one’s identity constructions recognized (Klein, Spears & Reicher, 2007) to enable the development of a sense of belonging. Yet immigrants and their offspring do not only need to deal with a potential lack of recognition of their multiple group belongings by non-migrants. To the extent that they strive for more complex identity representations such as dual identification, they are equally responsive to their minority communities as a relevant audience that can afford and recognize, or deny and challenge, their specific identity construals. In hostile intergroup settings, the attempt to simultaneously identify with destination national and heritage groups can be interpreted as a lack of loyalty to the migrant community, and group members may exert pressure to conform to in-group norms (Verkuyten, 2018). Accordingly, Diana Cárdenas, Maykel Verkuyten and I found evidence across two studies among ethnic minorities in the Netherlands that those who more strongly expressed a dual identity, for instance as Turkish-Dutch, were more often perceived as “too Dutch” by members of their minority community (Cárdenas, Verkuyten & Fleischmann, 2021). Subsequent analyses of the 2015 Survey on the Integration of Minorities further reveal that identification with the origin and destination national identity were consistently negatively related at higher levels of perceived minority pressure across six immigrant-origin groups in the Netherlands (Cárdenas & Fleischmann, 2022). Pressure to conform to minority group norms and the policing of group boundaries by minority members can thus be important obstacles to establishing a simultaneous sense of belonging to European nations and migrant-origin communities. This echoes previous findings by myself and international colleagues that more

complex identification patterns are more difficult to achieve when there are more instances of perceived discrimination, as this signals a lack of recognition as full-fledged members of the national community (Fleischmann & Phalet, 2016; Fleischmann, Leszczesny & Pink, 2019; Kunst, et al., 2012; Martinović & Verkuyten, 2012).

In conclusion, looking at the state of the art concerning my core research questions, I think it is fair to say that religion has returned – if it had ever disappeared – as an important group boundary in Europe, both in terms of social relations as well as symbolic definitions of who can and cannot belong. I hope that I have also been able to convince you that these questions cannot be studied from the majority perspective only, but that understanding minority definitions of the contents of their various social identities, as well as the boundary work they engage in are key to understanding whether this currently bright boundary might become more blurred in the future.

#### *The university as a community*

So far, I have been talking about the content of my research, hoping to give you a glimpse of the questions to which I have devoted my professional life. I would like to add a few words about this professional life, as I consider thinking about the way we go about doing research, providing education and organising these processes as an integral part of my appointment, and not merely as an additional burden that comes with the job of a full professor. I have always considered the university as more than simply a workplace, and felt the need to think and engage in conversations about what the university is and for whom, and what it should be and for whom. This is what I think the university should be: a community of learners built on the entwinement of research and education.

I don't know how many people share this ideal, but I sadly know that many people experience the current state of the university quite differently. Earlier this year, on Valentine's Day, university teachers on temporary contracts organized a protest under the motto "The university won't love you back". And while this event was specifically asking attention for their precarious working conditions, I do think that this feeling is shared beyond this part of our staff. Many people who contribute to our academic community feel that they are not "loved back", or at least not enough to reciprocate their commitment to and investment in our academic community. I think it is imperative that instead of capitalizing on their intrinsic motivation – in other words, taking their love for granted – we make a better effort to recognize the different contributions that make up our academic community and reward them accordingly. I am therefore committed to the move towards a different model of recognition and reward, away from a focus on hyper-competition of individual 'talent' that one-sidedly emphasizes a specific type of research skill. Only with a greater valuation of the combination of education, research and organizational citizenship, we can achieve the mission to become a

community of learners to which we all can belong, as different players on the same team.

In such a community of learners, I envisage that students and staff can develop a sense of belonging, irrespective of their individual backgrounds, but founded on their common interest in fostering the growth of knowledge. And I mean knowledge not as an end in itself, but knowledge that is relevant to and serves our entire society – not only those segments of it who come here to study, do research and teach, but importantly also those parts of it that are more removed from university settings but which our activities, I believe, should nonetheless serve.

#### *Acknowledgments*

Conceiving of the scientific endeavour as a team effort and of the university as a community naturally leads me to the last part of my lecture, in which I would like to thank the many people who have contributed to me standing here today.

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