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› Gendered Citizenship in Multicultural Europe: The Impact of Contemporary Women's Movements

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**RELIGION, GENDER AND CITIZENSHIP:  
A CASE STUDY OF CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM WOMEN IN  
SPAIN**

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April 2010

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# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Introduction to FEMCIT WP4 Strand 2**

The overall question to be addressed in FEMCIT is the relationship between the changing forms and practices of gendered citizenship in a multicultural Europe, and the demands and practices which have emerged from 'second wave' women's movements from the late 1960s onwards. The religious arena, in the form of churches, mosques, temples, and other religious organizations, is one of the places in which gender relations are formed and negotiated. At the same time, the religious arena, including the gendered structures within it, provides spaces where women and men act as citizens. While religious organizations may sometimes produce barriers to, or actively limit, the practice of equal citizenship for women and men, at other times they may offer formal and/or informal opportunities for more gender equal citizenship practices.

The aim of our Strand 2 research is to identify and assess how women's individual religious identities and practices within mainly organizational religious contexts may provide both resources and barriers to citizenship. Our project examines links between women's gendered citizenship and their gendered religious identity and practice through studying whether and how organised religion can provide women with a platform for exercising active citizenship.

In line with our focus in Strand 1, we investigate religious identities and practices among ethnic 'majority' and 'minority' women in different contexts, and in order to capture the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and religion we have included both Christian and Muslim women in our research. We ask whether and how women within Christian and Muslim faith traditions use their religious identities and practices to define and mark their identities as women and as citizens, and how religious organizations they participate in provide opportunities and/or constraints for their citizenship practice. We mainly approach these questions through organised or institutionalised religious life, as we are interested in whether and how women experience constraints and opportunities for active citizenship through their

participation in organizational religious structures (churches and mosques). In order to explore possible links between religious women, feminism, and the women's movement, one of the questions we ask is whether the interviewed women's personal religious faith and practice has been influenced by women's movements, and whether or not the women identify with feminism. Moreover, we seek to understand the extent to which they actively embrace or resist an agenda for gender equality.

Our Strand 2 research consists of qualitative case studies in three countries: Norway, Spain, and the United Kingdom. We have chosen these three countries because they offer distinct examples of citizenship/immigration, gender, and religious regimes (defined as current state policies towards citizenship/immigration, gender equality, and religion). While our next aim is to develop a comparative analysis of our findings in the three countries, this working paper presents findings from one of our case studies, that of Spain.

## **1.2 Research Context**

### **1.2.1 Citizenship/immigration regime in Spain**

Spain has only recently experienced a large inflow of immigrants (see Bruquetas-Callejo et al., 2008), and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance noted in 2006 a general lack of awareness in Spanish society regarding racism and discrimination (CRI, 2006).

Policy formation and implementation in this area has only been seriously addressed at the national level post-2000, and includes a recently established (2005) national observatory against racism and xenophobia. Along these lines, on 11 January 2008 a National Plan for the Alliance of Civilizations was launched. The Alliance of Civilizations is an initiative proposed by Spanish President, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, at the 59<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations in 2005. The effort seeks to galvanise international action against extremism through the forging of international, inter-cultural and interreligious dialogue and cooperation, with a particular emphasis on eradicating tensions between the Western and the Islamic world.



Legal residents born in another country must reside in Spain for ten years before they can seek citizenship. Although there is no formal citizenship test, the law requires basic knowledge of Spanish before citizenship can be conferred (Medrano, 2005). In 2009 there were about 5.5 million foreigners living officially in Spain (see Table 1), amounting to about 12 per cent of the total population.<sup>1</sup>

In Spain, Organic Law 4/2000 established the right to independent residence for immigrant women who are victims of domestic violence or sexual exploitation (Protection of Migrants, UN, 2007: 11). An independent residence permit is, however, given for one year only, with access to social benefits but no right to work. According to Amnesty International, immigrant women who experience domestic violence 'suffer discrimination in law and practice when trying to access justice and essential resources such as financial assistance, psychological treatment and access to shelters' (Amnesty International, 2008). The first ethnic minority women's organizations in Spain were founded in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and include *Romi Serseni*, an association of Spanish Romani women established in Granada in 1990 and in Madrid in 1991, and *Vomade-Vencit*, an association of immigrant Dominican women established informally in 1989 and formally in 1992. Among the first ethnically mixed organizations for women were *Ca La Dona*, established in Barcelona in 1988, and *Association Women Opanel*, established in Madrid in 1991.

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<sup>1</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estadística. Revisión del Padrón Municipal (2009).

**Table 1 Immigrant Figures by Country of Origin**

<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Total as of 31 December 2009</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Morocco	767784	16.02
Romania	751688	15.69
Ecuador	440304	9.19
Colombia	287205	5.99
United Kingdom	222039	4.63
China	151547	3.16
Italy	150667	3.14
Bulgaria	14708	0.31
Portugal	126928	2.65
Bolivia	117106	2.44
Germany	109438	2.28
Argentina	103171	2.15
Dominican Republic	87201	1.82
Poland	86314	1.80
<b>Total</b>	<b>4791232</b>	<b>12%</b>

*Source: Permanent Observatory on Immigration (2009)<sup>2</sup>*

Table 1 above shows legally registered foreign residents by country of origin as of 31 December 2009. These data are gathered by the National Police and Civil Guard and are used by the Permanent Observatory on Immigration. These figures do not take into account asylum applicants, temporary residents, and those who have not renewed their paperwork or are in the process of doing so.

<sup>2</sup> <http://extranjeros.mtas.es/es/InformacionEstadistica/>

### **1.2.2 Gender regime in Spain**

In relation to policies promoting gender equality, Spain has developed gender equality legislation and policies later than both Norway and the UK, but recent developments have put Spain at the forefront of gender equality measures, be they political or legal (see Bustelo and Ortals, 2007).

Spain was classified by McBride, Stetson and Mazur (1995) as a country with a policy machinery (the Women's Institute, or *Instituto de la Mujer*, IM) that enjoyed high influence on equal employment policies, but it was considered as giving 'low access' to feminist groups (ibid.: 275). Indeed, in 1995, Valiente noted the close ties between the Instituto de la Mujer and the socialist political party PSOE (Valiente, 1995). The IM has continued to play a significant role in Spanish gender equality policies, and both the conservative People's Party government from 1996 until 2004 and the subsequent (and current) Socialist party government have continued to support gender equality policies. Moreover, the current government has strengthened the gender machinery through the recently created Ministry of Equality and its several entities including the 'Equality Policies General Secretariat', signalling the high value it places on gender equality through the appointment of a Cabinet consisting of an equal number of women and men and through the creation of an array of new laws to support gender equality (Bustelo and Ortals, 2007).

In terms of political access for feminist and women's organizations, the picture in Spain is more of a division between majority and minority organizations. While majority women's organizations are being consulted on various gender equality issues, minority organizations have yet to achieve a role in the dialogue, design and implementation of gender equality policies broadly conceived.

The United Nations Human Development Index offers comparable data on key indicators related to gender development. In the table below, we show some of the relevant statistics for Norway, Spain, and the UK, thus offering a glimpse into some of the key characteristics of and differences between the three countries.

As Table 2 below shows, Norway is a top scorer on both the HDI (Human Development Rank; second place) and the GEM (Gender Empowerment; first place)

measures. Neither Spain nor the UK score in the top ten on these two measures, with Spain obtaining the 13<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> places on the two measures, respectively, and the UK obtaining the 16<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> places, respectively.

**Table 2 Selected HDI Indicators for Norway, Spain and the UK**

	Norway <sup>3</sup>	Spain <sup>4</sup>	UK <sup>5</sup>
Population in 2005	4.6 million	43.4 million	60.2 million
HDI Human Development Rank	2	13	16
Women obtained right to vote	1913	1931	1918, 1928
Women seats in parliament	38%	31%	19%
Women in government at ministerial level	44%	50%	27%
GEM Gender Empowerment Measure	1	12	14
Ratio estimated female to male earned income	0.77	0.50	0.66

In all three countries women received the right to vote before World War II, but women have not gained full parity in any of the three parliaments. In Norway, women hold 38 per cent of the parliamentary seats, while in Spain they hold 31 per cent, and in the UK only 19 per cent. At the ministerial level, however, Spain is highly advanced with women holding 50 per cent of ministerial posts, while in Norway and the UK women hold 44 and 27 per cent, respectively, of ministerial posts. All three countries have some way to go in terms of gender equality in earnings, with Norway as the most developed country and women earning 77 per cent of men's income, while in Spain and in the UK women earn 50 and 66 per cent, respectively, of men's income.

<sup>3</sup> [http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data\\_sheets/cty\\_ds\\_NOR.html](http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_NOR.html)

<sup>4</sup> [http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data\\_sheets/cty\\_ds\\_ESP.html](http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_ESP.html)

<sup>5</sup> [http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data\\_sheets/cty\\_ds\\_GBR.html](http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_GBR.html)

Gender attitudes in Spain appear to be somewhat more traditional than those that exist elsewhere in Europe.<sup>6</sup> We analysed data from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), which is a collaboration of 41 nations that conduct harmonised surveys about topics of ample interest for social science research. We examined a set of attitudinal survey items of the 2002 module on gender attitudes. A total of 2,471 respondents from Spain and 19,309 from Europe and the US combined participated in the ISSP module on gender attitudes in 2002.

**Table 3 ISSP Survey Results on Gender Attitudes in Spain and the United States & Europe, 2002<sup>7</sup>**

<b>Strongly Agree/Agree That ...</b>	<b>Spain</b>	<b>US/Europe</b>
Children suffer if mother works	52% <sup>1</sup>	43%
N	1,253	7,984
Mean <sup>2</sup>	2.84	3.00
Family life suffers if women work	54%	41%
N	1,331	7,711
Mean	2.75	3.05
What women really want is home/children	42	34
N	984	6,073
Mean	3.07	3.20
Women's place is the household	24	19
N	601	2,977
Mean	3.61	3.72

<sup>1</sup> Percentage of respondents who answered 'strongly agree' or 'agree'.

<sup>2</sup> Where 1= strongly agree and 5= strongly disagree.

<sup>6</sup> Europe includes EU15 member states (except Greece, Belgium, and Luxemburg, which were not surveyed for gender attitudes in 2002), Norway, and Switzerland.

<sup>7</sup> Taken from Quintero, E. (2008) *How are Job Applicants Disadvantaged by Gender-Based Double Standards in a Natural Setting*, A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Cornell University in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Respondents were asked to rate a series of statements on five-point scales where 1 was 'strongly agree' and 5 was 'strongly disagree'. Next, I present some descriptive results concerning respondents' attitudes toward men and women's perceived roles and preferences (see Table 3).

About 32 per cent (N=785) of Spaniards believe that working mothers cannot have a warm relationship with their children. About 21 per cent (N=3,964) of respondents shared this view in other European countries and the US combined. Similarly, approximately 52 per cent (N=1,253) of Spanish respondents agreed or strongly agreed that children suffer if their mother works outside the home. About 43 per cent (N=7,984) of respondents in Europe and the US answered likewise. In the same vein, 54 per cent (N=1,331) of respondents in Spain agree or strongly agree that family life suffers if women work outside the home. About 41 per cent (N=7,711) of respondents in Europe and the US answered the same. Regarding the perception of women's preferences and aspirations, 42 per cent (N=991) of Spanish respondents agreed that what women 'really want' is to stay home and take care of their children. About 34 per cent (N=6,073) of US and European respondents shared the same views. Roughly 24 per cent (N=601) of Spaniards agreed that men's jobs are outside the home and women's jobs are in the household. In the US and Europe combined, 19 per cent (N=2,977) of respondents answered likewise. Table 3 summarises the results discussed. Percentages represent the proportion of respondents who 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' with the statements on the left hand column (i.e. 'Children suffer if mother works'). Table 3 also shows the mean values for both Spanish and US/European respondents. Higher values indicate less agreement with the statements on the left (i.e. 1= 'strongly agree' and 5= 'strongly disagree').

From this examination of gender role attitudes, it seems that generalised beliefs exist in Spain about men's superior social status relative to women. The figures above also suggest that, on average, Spanish respondents are somewhat more traditional with regards to gender-role attitudes than European and US respondents. Thus, there are reasons to believe that gender operates as a status characteristic in Spain, with men being seen as higher status than women.

Spain has the fourth highest female unemployment rates of the EU-27 (10.9 per cent for females, 6.4 per cent for males); only in Croatia, Slovakia, and Greece are female unemployment rates higher than in Spain. The unemployment gap between men and women in Spain (i.e. 4.5 per cent) is the second highest in the EU-27 (Greece is first with 7.6 per cent). To put these figures in perspective, the average unemployment rate in the EU-27<sup>8</sup> is 7.8 per cent for women and 6.6 per cent for men, and in the US it is 4.5 per cent and 4.7 per cent for women and men respectively. Secondly, women in Spain are considerably more likely than men to hold part-time contracts. This fact reflects that women face family obligations and are compelled to reduce their work hours even if that means lower earnings. In terms of salary, Table 4 shows there are important differences between women and men's earnings across all professional/educational categories.

**Table 4 Average Income of Men and Women Across Occupational/Educational Categories (2005)<sup>9</sup>**

	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Diff.</b>
	Euro	Euro	
Management	41138	63968	56%
5-Year University Degree	26733	35930	35%
3-Year University Degree	23059	29843	29%
Vocational Studies	20837	29377	41%
Administrative Jobs	14701	20801	42%

### 1.2.3 Religious regime in Spain

Norway, Spain and the UK have a historical Christian majority church, while other religions have first and foremost become established through post-World War II

<sup>8</sup> [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?\\_pageid=1996,45323734&\\_dad=portal&\\_schema=PORTAL&screen=welcomeref&open=/&product=STRIND\\_EMPLOI&depth=2](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page?_pageid=1996,45323734&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&screen=welcomeref&open=/&product=STRIND_EMPLOI&depth=2)

<sup>9</sup> Taken from Quintero, E. (2008) *How are Job Applicants Disadvantaged by Gender-Based Double Standards in a Natural Setting*, A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Cornell University in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

immigration. In all three countries, religious minorities are facing 'low restrictions', meaning they are basically free to operate as they wish (Fox, 2008).

Fox (ibid.) characterises Norway as having *an active state religion* through the Lutheran State Church, the UK as having a *historical or cultural state religion* in the form of the Anglican Church of England and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, whilst the Spanish state demonstrates preferred treatment and support of the Roman Catholic Church (Fox, 2008).

According to Fox, an active state religion involves that 'the state has one or more official religions *and* the state actively promotes the state religion through legislating aspects of the religion, granting it control over some aspects of law, requiring religious education for members of the religion, funding the religion often through religious tax collection, and support for clergy and seminary education' (ibid.: 111).

A historical or cultural state religion is described by Fox as:

*'... official state religions, but other than this official designation their governments take few or no steps to support the religion more than they support any other religion. Other than funding for religious education and perhaps some other minor funding of religion, their involvement in religion tends to be symbolic, ceremonial, and generally a result of historical momentum rather than any active support for religion.'*

(ibid.: 119)

Lastly, Fox understands 'preferred treatment for some religions or support for a particular tradition' as:

*'... countries hav[ing] no official religion but support one or more religions more than they do other religions or otherwise endorse a specific religious tradition. This often takes the form of multi-tiered recognition systems for religions in which religions in each category are given different privileges and levels of support.'*

(ibid.: 121)<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The other two types of relationships between religion and the state forwarded by Fox are 'near full separation' with near to none or no government involvement in religion (Netherlands and the USA), and 'hostility' where states are hostile to religion (France).



Roman Catholicism is by far the largest denomination of Christianity present in Spain. According to a July 2009 report<sup>11</sup> by the Spanish Centre of Sociological Research, about 76 per cent of Spaniards self-identify as Catholics, two per cent as another faith, and about 20 per cent identify with no religion. Most Spaniards do not participate regularly in religious services. The same study shows that of the Spaniards who identify themselves as religious, 58 per cent hardly ever or never go to church, 17 per cent go to church some times in a year, nine per cent go some times per month and 15 per cent go every Sunday or multiple times per week.

Despite the common social perception of Spain as a religious country, agnosticism and atheism enjoy social prestige. According to the Eurobarometer 69 (2008), only three per cent of Spaniards consider religion as one of their three most important values; a figure even lower than the seven per cent European average. Evidence of the secular nature of contemporary Spain can be seen in the widespread support for the legalisation of same-sex marriage - about 66 per cent of Spaniards support gay marriage.<sup>12</sup> In sum, being a Catholic in Spain had less and less to do with regular attendance at mass and more to do with the observance of rituals such as baptism, marriage, and burial of the dead.

In Spain the law prohibits the collection of census data based on religious belief,<sup>13</sup> which limits the ability to have accurate figures on religious adherence in the country.

The Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities (FEREDE) estimates that there are 1.2 million Evangelical Christians. A 2006 annual report by Observatorio Andalusi, an institute associated with the Union of Islamic Communities in Spain (UCIDE), estimated that there are 1,080,000 Muslims in Spain, the majority of which are recent immigrants from Morocco. According to the Government, as of March 2007, there

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<sup>11</sup> Barómetro de Julio (2009) Avance de Resultados, Study no. 2.811, Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas. See [http://datos.cis.es/webFtp/fileGetter.jsp?dwld=Es2811mar\\_A.pdf](http://datos.cis.es/webFtp/fileGetter.jsp?dwld=Es2811mar_A.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Boletines/36/BDO\\_36\\_index.html](http://www.cis.es/cis/opencms/-Archivos/Boletines/36/BDO_36_index.html)

<sup>13</sup> Dietz, G. and El-Shohoumi, N. (2005) *Muslim women in Southern Spain: Stepdaughters of Al-Andalus*, Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, UCSD, California. The book states that there are no available census data on membership in religious communities in Spain, but unofficial estimates are that approximately 400,000 people, or one per cent of Spain's population, identify as Muslims.

were 575,460 Moroccans living in the country legally and as many as 120,000 illegal Moroccan immigrants.

In June 2007, the Ministry of Justice's (henceforth, MOJ) Register of Religious Entities<sup>14</sup> listed 12,418 Catholic Church entities. There are 1,851 non-Catholic churches, denominations, and communities in the register, including 1,325 Evangelical Church entities and 443 entities of Islam. But the number of non-Catholic churches and religious communities in the country may be much larger. Some religious groups choose to register as cultural organizations with regional governments rather than with the National Registry of Religious Entities in Madrid because the national registration process requires more paperwork and can take up to six months.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Religious freedom***

The Spanish Constitution guarantees religious freedom and states that 'no religion shall have a state character' (Fox, 2008: 127). It also protects against discrimination on the basis of religion and the Government generally respected this right in practice. Even though there is no state religion, the Catholic Church enjoys privileges unavailable to other faiths and defined by a series of accords with the government.

The Government at all levels sought to protect this right for religious freedom in full and did not tolerate its abuse. Article 16 of the Constitution provides for religious freedom and the freedom of worship by individuals and groups. However, as mentioned above, the Government provides the Catholic Church with certain public financing benefits that are not available to other faiths. These benefits derive from four accords signed in 1979 and cover economic, religious education, military, and judicial matters. The Catholic Church receives financing through voluntary tax contributions and direct payments; however, direct payments were scheduled to end in January 2008, according to the Government. Taxpayers may select a box on their income tax forms to contribute up to 0.5 per cent of their taxes to the Catholic Church. The maximum percentage was expected to increase to 0.7 per cent on 1

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<sup>14</sup> See <http://dgraj.mju.es/EntidadesReligiosas/>

<sup>15</sup> International Religious Freedom Report (2007), see <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2007/>

January 2008, as an offset to the cessation of direct payments, according to the Government. In 2005 taxpayers contributed approximately €125 million to the Catholic Church. In addition to voluntary taxpayer contributions, the Government provided the Catholic Church an additional €15 million via direct payments. This sum did not include state funding for religion teachers in public schools, military and hospital chaplains, and other indirect assistance.

Representatives of Evangelical, Jewish, and Islamic faiths signed bilateral agreements with the Government in 1992. These agreements provide certain tax benefits and give civil validity to weddings performed by the religious groups. They also permit the religious groups to place their teachers in schools and chaplains of their faiths in hospitals and prisons. Islamic entities signed as the Islamic Commission of Spain<sup>16</sup> (CIE). The CIE is composed of two federations: the Spanish Federation of Islamic Religious Entities (FEERI) and the Union of Islamic Communities in Spain (UCIDE).

In 2003 the Government expanded this concept of 'well-known deeply-rooted' beliefs to allow other religious groups to sign bilateral agreements - e.g., the Mormons in 2003, Jehovah's Witnesses in 2007, etc. Some religions do not have official recognition and are considered 'cultural associations' (e.g., Scientology).

Detailed information about financing for religious organizations in Spain is scarce. The next section is based on information from recent newspaper articles and a study sponsored by Fundación Alternativas in 2005 written by author Alejandro Torres-Gutiérrez, PhD Law and Associate Professor at the Navarra University, Spain.

According to Torres-Gutiérrez, there are two channels via which religious groups obtain public funding in Spain. First, a direct channel coming from the General State Budget, which in 2005 meant about €141.469.680 for the Catholic Church while

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<sup>16</sup> Islamic Commission of Spain is the legitimate representative organ of Islam and Muslims before the citizenship and the Spanish Administration - Law 26/1992. In 1967 the first law allowing the Muslims to organise themselves was promulgated in Spain, leading to the establishment in 1968 of the first local Muslim Association in Spain, and in 1971, the first national association, the Association of Muslims in Spain (AME). CIE is a member of the Muslim Council of Cooperation in Europe (MCCE).

minority religions that subscribed to 1992 Agreements (Muslim, Evangelical, Jewish) and Mormons received €3.000.000 - with restrictions on the use of funding, meaning only to invest in cultural, educational and social integration type projects.<sup>17</sup> This situation clearly breaches the principle of non-discrimination due to religious factors especially since Spain is governed by the principle of separation State-Church. The second channel is indirect through the granting of tax exemptions and benefits, which particularly favours the Catholic Church. According to author Torres-Gutiérrez, such differences are clearly unconstitutional and/or are incompatible with European legislation in terms of tax harmonisation. In sum, the advantages enjoyed by minority religions in Spain are substantially less than that of the Catholic Church.

Since 2004 the Foundation Pluralism and Coexistence, which depends on the Secretary of Justice, has been providing funding to minority religion communities for cultural, educational and social projects. According to Fernando Arias, in 2009 about €463.500 were given to Muslim projects related to primary education book publishing, university-level courses to train imams, and Spanish classes for imams and women. This initiative is part of the Alliance of Civilizations framework implemented in 2008.

According to a recent newspaper article,<sup>18</sup> various mosques in Spain representing Wahabism or Islamic fundamentalism financially depend on Saudi Arabian money - e.g., the M30 mosque in Madrid,<sup>19</sup> and the mosques of Marbella and Málaga. Sunni Islam from the Malequi School - practiced in Morocco - also reaches institutions such as the earlier mentioned FEERI. The fact that religious doctrine and/or inspiration may be shaped by 'the hand that feeds' these mosques is a contentious issue. Nonetheless, the situation is slowly changing as the connection immigrant-Islam becomes weaker and an increasing number of European citizens adhere to Islam. According to the 2008 Andalusian Observatory from the Comunidades Islámicas de España, which, together with FEERI, acts as liaison with the Spanish government, about 37 per cent of Muslims in Spain are Spanish citizens - these figures include

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<sup>17</sup> Disposiciones adicionales 11a, 12a y 23a de la Ley de Presupuestos Generales del Estado para (2005).

<sup>18</sup> Sánchez-Vallejo, Antonia (2009), 'El islam, un emporio con franquicias'. El País.

<sup>19</sup> Legally owned by the Muslim World League, one of the largest Islamic non-governmental organizations in charge of international Islamist propagation.

converts, immigrants who obtained citizenship, and second and third generation immigrants.<sup>20</sup> Foreign financing is becoming obsolete and, after 9/11 and 3/11, even suspicious. According to Riay Tatory, General Secretary of Spanish Islamic Commission (which subsumes FEERI and UCIDE); it is individual religious adherents who finance the community, including renting, building of mosques and the salary of imams. Although there is no official data, the estimation is that there are about 30,000 Muslim converts in Spain representing the most progressive part of Islam. However, these Muslims are still politically underrepresented<sup>21</sup> even though their aspiration is to become the Western Muslim model,<sup>22</sup> meaning supporters of non-radical branches of Islam. According to Prado, the Government must take interest in what happens in the streets. In 1992 the Spanish government designated the Islamic Commission of Spain as the Spanish Muslim community proxy for religious matters; nonetheless, as mentioned above, there is evidence that the Commission's interests are linked to the Moroccan monarchy.

In conclusion, Islam financing is on its way to institutionalisation; this should positively impact the handling of issues that generate controversy such as the reliance on outside funding, and potentially outside politics and doctrine.

Today's growth of Islamic associations in Spain is illustrated by the emergence of new organizations such as the Muslim Federation of Spain, or Federación de Musulmanes de España, (FEME), the third Islamic association at the national level. Some believe Catalonia, with the largest Muslim community (350,000 individuals according to the Andalusi Observatory, 2008) in Spain, would be a good place to test initiatives to improve administration, management, etc.

The Law of Religious Freedom of 1980 implements the constitutional provision for freedom of religion. The 1980 law establishes a legal framework and certain privileges for religious organizations. To enjoy the benefits of this regime, religious

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<sup>20</sup> Second generation Muslims - born or raised in Spain - amount to 200,000 individuals.

<sup>21</sup> El País, '¿Toleramos el machismo si es musulmán?' by F Barsels 03/03/2010.

<sup>22</sup> Laure Rodríguez - Unión de Mujeres Musulmanas de España cited in El País, '¿Toleramos el machismo si es musulmán?' by F Barsels 03/03/2010.

Abdennur Prado - presidente de la Junta Islámica Catalana y director del Congreso Internacional de Feminismo Islámico.

organizations must be entered in the Register of Religious Entities maintained by the MOJ Office of Religious Affairs and updated regularly. Catholic dioceses and parishes are not required to register to gain benefits under the 1980 law.

The law provides for optional Catholic education in public schools. Muslim and Protestant leaders also have called for the Government to provide more support for public religious education in their respective faiths, in accordance with the agreements signed with the government in 1992. In 2004 the Government responded to these calls by approving legislation that mandated funding for teachers for courses in Catholic, Islamic, Evangelical/Christian, and Judaic studies in public schools when at least 10 students request them. The courses are not mandatory. Those students who elect not to take confessional courses are obliged to take an alternative course covering general social, cultural, and religious themes.

For the 2006-07 academic year, the Government employed 33 teachers to teach courses on Islam to public school students. By comparison, the Government funded approximately 15,000 teachers of Catholicism in public schools. The Islamic Commission estimated that there were 74,000 Muslim students who would take classes in Islamic education if possible. Observatorio Andalusi estimated 120,000 Muslim school-age children and called for the hiring of 285 teachers to provide religious instruction for these students.

### ***Restrictions on freedom***

In general the Government placed no legal restrictions on opening new places of worship; however, representatives of minority religious groups sometimes had difficulty opening places of worship, most frequently because of resistance from neighbourhood groups. According to the MOJ Office of Religious Affairs, local governments are obligated to provide land for the opening of places of worship; however, this law has been largely ignored by local municipalities. The Ministry carried out a campaign to educate local governments about their responsibilities to minority religious groups. According to Fox, minority religions have reported problems with gaining permits for building places of worship, and the wearing of headscarves by women and girls is also a contentious issue. Also, the Spanish Evangelical Alliance (AEE) complained that Evangelicals are discriminated against

by the Government. AEE recommended eliminating the tax designation option and suggested that religious faiths should finance their own expenses.

The Islamic Commission reported that sometimes new mosque construction was forced into less visible suburban areas, primarily because of resistance from neighbourhood groups.

The guide *Muslims in Spain*<sup>23</sup> holds that mosques organise community life of Muslims in Spain. However, every time a new mosque is open, non-Muslim neighbours oppose systematically. According to this study, there were about 435 mosques in 2006 although more recent estimates by the State's Security Forces and the Justice Department sustain that there must be more than 600. There are 13 large centres or mosques and hundreds of small praying spaces located in garages and not always apt for community prayers. Some of these are not registered in the Minority Religions Registry of the Justice Department; some actually develop their activities secretly. According to this report, the fear, negative associations and suspicion that building of new mosques raises among non-Muslim citizens may mean that future mosques may need to be located outside the down-town, in the outskirts of the city centre.<sup>24</sup>

According to another recent newspaper article,<sup>25</sup> when Muslim communities want to build a new mosque in the neighbourhood, non-Muslims respond negatively, which limits Muslim religious freedom. Since the '90s there have been about 60 public demonstrations against building new mosques. In Spain there are about 650 religious sites for Muslims, one third of which are in Catalonia. People associate mosques with a spot of immigrants, social exclusion, etc. According to Ramón J. Moles, as quoted in the article, praying centres are located wherever it was possible and are often underfunded. The majority are located in former commercial places, garages, and apartments. As for funding, who finances mosques and can therefore influence it doctrinally, experts say in 90 per cent of the cases, the money comes

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<sup>23</sup> Argiya, Elena and Martín Muñoz, Gema (2009), *Musulmanes en España. Guía de Referencia*, Madrid: Casa Árabe.

<sup>24</sup> Sanmartín, Olga R. 'Los Españoles tienen miedo a las mezquitas', *El Mundo* 21/04/2009

<sup>25</sup> García, Jesús 'Sin Mezquitas en mi Barrio', *El País* 14/09/2009.

from the actual local Muslim community, voluntary donations etc. Although, about 10 per cent does come from foreign governments and the funds are administered through foundations. These 60 conflicts have had very different resolutions. Local governments are often likely to concede to social pressure due to political reasons limiting in practice the right to religious freedom. There is a lack of political tools to effectively manage these situations: to what extent should neighbours lobby limit a fundamental right? The disparity of criteria to grant building permissions should change and obey to environmental and safety concerns like for any other building. In Lleida, for example, ad hoc regulations were created so as to avoid the construction of an Evangelical church - rules that effectively limit the possibility that these religious centres are in the down-town and limiting them to the outskirts, industrial areas, etc. Existing legislation is scattered and lends itself to interpretation, which has generated arbitrary and abusive decisions.

The growth of the country's immigrant population at times led to social friction, which, in isolated instances, had a religious component. Some citizens blamed recent Moroccan immigrants for increased crime rates in the country. Several books and newspaper articles discussed complex attitudes that society held about Spanish converts to Islam. The articles mentioned the traditional role of converts as the moderate face of Islam and liaison with mainstream Spanish culture; however, the articles alleged that some community and government leaders in the country saw converts as potential targets for extremist recruitment.

According to a report by Metroscopia<sup>26</sup> for the Ministry of Interior, 31 per cent of Muslim respondents said they were completely adapted to Spanish life and customs, 49 per cent were fairly well adapted, and 19 per cent said they were not well adapted. Among respondents, 83 per cent said they had not encountered any obstacles to the practice of their religion, while 13 per cent said they had. Among the respondents, 57 per cent believed Spanish society was tolerant of the Muslim religion, while 37 per cent thought there was some prejudice.

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<sup>26</sup> Metroscopia (2007), *Musulmanes de España: Segunda Oleada del Estudio de Opinión a Población Musulmana de Origen Inmigrante*, Madrid: Metroscopia



### ***Revised Law of Freedom of Religion 7/1980***<sup>27</sup>

The government will take to Congress the new Organic Law of Religious and Conscience Freedom, according to government sources. This will regulate aspects such as the Muslim's right to not work on Fridays, or for Jewish on Saturday. There are now two drafts prepared by Justice Secretary Francisco Caamaño. One is more generalist explaining that religious diversity calls for a revision of the current law 7/1980 which regulates the rights of non-Catholics. José María Conteras, director general of Relations with Confessions of the Ministry of Justice explained recently the new Law of Religious Freedom will increase the participation of autonomous communities and local political authorities. For instance, it will regulate things such as new temple construction. From now on religions will have the right, given certain conditions, of obtaining from their town halls free land where to build places for praying. In addition, the new Law will regulate access to public funding, the right to request non-work days outside of Sunday and so forth.

### **1.3 Chapter Overview**

Chapter 1 just offered a brief introduction to FEMCIT WP4 Strand 2 (Section 1.1) and a detailed description of the research context (Section 1.2) focusing on Spain's gender, migration, citizenship and religion regimes. This last section (Section 1.3) will provide a short overview of the report's subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 will discuss the theoretical perspectives guiding this research with a focus on religion as resource/barrier to citizenship, as well as the relationship of religion with gender, citizenship, identity, and gender equality.

Chapter 3 describes the research methods used, including a section examining the four types of religious organizations in our study (Section 3.1); an explanation of participants' selection, participants' characteristics, and recruitment procedures (Section 3.2); a discussion on research ethics (Section 3.3); an analysis of the advantages and limitations of our instrument and data (Section 3.4); and a final passage reflecting on our own position as researchers (Section 3.5).

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<sup>27</sup> ABC, 4 March 2010 [http://www.abc.es/hemeroteca/historico-02-04-2010/abc/Nacional/la-ley-de-libertad-religiosa-regulara-el-descanso-de-musulmanes-y-judios\\_124608360626.html](http://www.abc.es/hemeroteca/historico-02-04-2010/abc/Nacional/la-ley-de-libertad-religiosa-regulara-el-descanso-de-musulmanes-y-judios_124608360626.html)

Chapter 4 is the report's main chapter and contains our in-depth analysis of the empirical material. The chapter is divided into three major sections as well as an introduction (Section 4.1) and a conclusion (Section 4.5). These sections correspond to the three guiding questions of our research, with the majority-minority distinction as overriding organising principle. First, Section 4.2 analyses (a) whether and how religion helps create meaning and identity for women, and (b) the extent to which religion is described and used as flexible resource to both attitudes and practice. Second, Section 4.3 examines the relationship between gender equality, women's rights, feminism and women's movement on the one hand, and religious belief and practices on the other. Third, Section 4.4 explores (a) participants' perceptions of citizenship and citizenship practices, and (b) whether religion is framed as a resource or as a barrier to women's citizenship.

Chapter 5 is our concluding chapter and consists of two sections; first, Section 5.1 which offers a set of overall conclusions to our report, and second, Section 5.2 which suggests a series of good practices and policy recommendations.

## **2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

This chapter outlines the research focus of FEMCIT WP4, Strand 2. It introduces the theoretical perspectives which inform our research and the analytical approaches applied in the analysis of our data.

### **2.1 Religion: A Resource or Barrier to Women's Citizenship?**

As stated in the introduction to this Working Paper, the overall question to be addressed in FEMCIT is the relationship between the changing forms and practices of gendered citizenship in a multicultural Europe, and the demands and practices which have emerged from 'second wave' women's movements from the late 1960s and onwards. The religious arena, in the form of churches, mosques, temples, and other types of religious organizations, is one of the places in which gender relations are formed and negotiated. At the same time, the religious arena, including the gendered structures within it, provides spaces where women and men act as citizens. While religious organizations may sometimes produce barriers to or actively limit the practicing of equal citizenship for women and men, at other times they may offer formal and/or informal opportunities for more gender equal citizenship practices. Scholars have identified various features of religious faiths, including Christianity, Islam and Judaism, as patriarchal and oppressive to women, but other dimensions have been interpreted as conducive to the 'liberation' or 'empowerment' of women (see e.g., Brasher, 1998; Ahmed, 1992; Davidman, 1991). The aim of our Strand 2 research is to identify and assess how individual religious identities and practices within organizational religious contexts may provide both resources and barriers to citizenship. Our project examines links between women's gendered citizenship and their gendered religious identity and practice through studying whether and how organised religion can provide women with a platform for exercising active citizenship.

In line with our focus in Strand 1, we investigate religious identities and practices among ethnic majority and minority women in different contexts. Gunaratnam (2003) applies a social constructivist perspective to the usage of the terms 'majority' and

'minority'. She uses the term 'ethnic minority' not in a descriptive sense as such usage would reinforce and reify differences that are created through social exclusion, racism and discrimination. Rather, Gunaratnam views the labels 'majority' and 'minority' and their connotations as socially constructed, and thus uses these terms within quotation marks. She prefers the terms 'minoritised' and 'majoritised' as they signal 'the active processes of racialisation that are at work in designating certain attributes of groups in particular contexts as being in a "minority [or in a majority]"' (Gunaratnam, 2003: 17). In our research we use the terms 'majority' and 'minority' as socially constructed labels, and we use them interchangeably with those suggested by Gunaratnam ('majoritised' and 'minoritised') in order to signal that the labelling of groups of people is, in a large part, determined by existing power relations and differentials between different groups in society.

Another 'layer' of the 'majority-minority' problematic is embedded in the religious sphere, as some religions may be linked with the state and/or with the 'majority' ethnic group in a particular nation state. In Western Europe, Christianity has historically been accorded, and continues to enjoy, a privileged status as the 'majority religion'. Although practices within majoritised Christian religious organizations have been and continue to be gendered in various ways, it is possible that both women and men who adhere to Christian forms of faith and practice may experience less barriers and constraints on their citizenship practice than women and men who adhere to 'non-Christian' or 'minority' faiths. Religions such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism, and new religious movements, do not enjoy a similarly privileged position in Western European countries, and are in large part associated with various ethnic 'minority' groups. Practices within these minoritised religious faith traditions are also in many ways gendered, and women and men may experience additional barriers and constraints on their citizenship practice due to their minoritisation in relation to ethnicity and religion. Moreover, women within minoritised religions may be further discriminated against due to their gender, thus constituting a 'minority within a minority' (Eisenberg and Spinner-Halev, 2005).

In order to capture the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and religion, we have included both majoritised (Christian) women and minoritised (Muslim) women in our research. We ask whether and how women within Christian and Muslim faith

traditions use their religious identities and practices to define and mark their identities as women and as citizens, and how religious organizations they participate in provide opportunities and/or constraints for their citizenship practice. We approach these questions mainly through organised or institutionalised religious life, as we are interested in whether and how women experience constraints and opportunities for active citizenship through their participation in organizational religious structures (churches and mosques).

## **2.2 Feminism and religion**

In order to explore possible links between religious women, feminism, and the women's movement, one of the questions we ask is whether the interviewed women's personal religious faith and practice has been influenced by women's movements, and whether or not the women identify with feminism. Moreover, we seek to understand the extent to which they actively embrace or resist an agenda for gender equality.

Women's place within religious belief and practice has been a contested issue for feminists since the beginning of the 'second wave' women's movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and, indeed, since the 'first wave' women's movements of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century (see Morgan, 2002). In the UK context, for example, Christianity, Judaism and Islam have been scrutinised by religious and non-religious feminist women alike, and the question of whether religious belief can co-exist with feminist values has been vigorously debated. The journal of the organization *Women Against Fundamentalism* devoted a special issue to these topics in 1996 (WAF, 1996), where questions such as 'Why can't I be a Jewish feminist?' and 'Is there a space for feminism in Islam?' were posed by participants in the women's movement.

Far from being alienated from the women's movement, religious feminist women have identified with and sought to influence the women's movement in directions compatible with their faith. Moreover, religious feminists have sought to change gendered practices within their own faith traditions by arguing, for example, that women should be allowed to perform various functions that have traditionally been

the preserve of men. In the Christian tradition, women have challenged, and in some churches successfully overcome, the notion that functions related to religious leadership and evangelisation should be performed by men only. In the Muslim tradition, and especially in the West, women are taking on new roles related to religious leadership, and the notion that the functions of the Imam are a strictly male preserve have been challenged through high-profile women-led religious events in the UK and the USA (Roald, 2001; Wadud, 2006; Haddad et al., 2006).

Whether or not women's movements have influenced gender and power relations within religious organizations is a complex empirical question. Some non-religious feminists have rejected religion outright, claiming that all world-religions are patriarchal, and have opted for non-engagement with religion (e.g., Okin, 1999; Siddiqui, 2008). Feminist philosopher Susan Moller Okin, who in the 1990s became a reference point for all scholarly discussions about gender and multiculturalism, argued that the protection of minority cultures through group rights or privileges could have anti-feminist consequences in instances where specific cultures or religions endorse male control of women (Okin, 1999). Okin specifically identified Judaism, Christianity and Islam with founding myths that 'attempts to justify the control and subordination of women' (ibid.: 14). Acknowledging that progressive versions of these religions have 'softened' the drive to control women, Okin is nonetheless concerned about 'their more orthodox or fundamentalist versions' (ibid.: 14) which continue to propagate women's subordination. Viewing such patriarchal practices as fundamentally ingrained in certain cultures, Okin famously argued that women in patriarchal 'minority' cultures '*might* be much better off if the culture into which they were born were either to become extinct (so that its members would become integrated into the less sexist surrounding cultures, or preferably, to be encouraged to alter itself so as to reinforce the equality of women' (ibid.: 22-23). A strong reading of Okin would lead to a politics of assimilation and ethnocentrism, where minority groups would be called upon to rid themselves of any minoritised cultural characteristics and assimilate into the perceived hegemonic culture. A softer reading, however, does not necessarily imply assimilationist policies, but leaves us with the question of how to solve the multicultural dilemma of recognising (through the granting of rights and privileges) ethnic, cultural and religious minorities whilst protecting 'minority' groups (e.g. women and other disadvantaged groups) within

such minorities. If cultural or religious groups are allowed to practice gender discrimination, conflicts inevitably arise between women's rights to equality and the group's rights to possibly override such equality rights. On this issue, Sunstein (1999) points to the asymmetry between the fact that 'most civil and criminal law' apply to religious institutions, whilst 'law banning sex discrimination' does not.

The feminist political theorist Ann Phillips has suggested that 'multiculturalism can be made compatible with the pursuit of gender equality and women's rights so long as it dispenses with an essentialist understanding of culture' (Phillips, 2007: 9).

Essentialist readings of culture imply that cultural practices are static and unchangeable, which in turn has the effect that minoritised women in particular are seen as devoid of agency and 'victims of culture'. Forwarding instead a view of culture (and religion) as changeable and as contested from both within and outside, Phillips suggests that Okin's strong demarcation between egalitarian and patriarchal cultures is not very useful in moving towards a liberal practice that endorses both equality and difference. Phillips suggests three so-called 'limiting principles' in relation to whether or not social practices should be accepted or not, including protecting minors from harm, preventing physical and mental violence, and ensuring equal treatment of women and men (ibid.: 34). The notion of 'equal treatment' of women and men is of course a highly contested issue, not least within the women's movement itself, as different interpretations of what counts as 'equality' (from feminists and non-feminists alike) compete with each other. In relation to religious belief and practice, the question arises whether it should be tolerated and/or accepted that women are accorded less rights, status and privileges than men. Moreover, even if such beliefs and practices are tolerated and accepted, should they also be endorsed, either directly or indirectly, by the state (through financial or other regulations)?

In contrast to secular feminists, religious feminists have accepted the notion that religion may be used to support gender inequality and the discrimination of women, but they have generally rejected the notion that religions are *necessarily* patriarchal (e.g., Roald, 2001; Wadud, 1999 and 2006). Rather than rejection, religious feminists have chosen a route of engagement with their own religious tradition in an attempt to change gendered practices from within. They have started a process of

reinterpreting their religious faith to reconcile it with their feminist beliefs. Such reinterpretations have taken place across a variety of religious belief, including Christianity and Islam (e.g., Daly, 1994; Mernissi, 1991; Wadud, 1999; Cochran, 2005). Their position has found resonance with religious feminist and scholar Martha Nussbaum who is very critical of Okin's view of religion as irreversibly patriarchal. Nussbaum charges Okin with a fundamentally Marxist analysis of religion, where religion 'is little more than a bag of superstitions' ultimately aiming to control women (Nussbaum, 1999: 105). Highlighting instead aspects of religion as conducive to providing people with meaning, purpose and a sense of community, Nussbaum argues that internal religious debates within various faith traditions have been 'highly pertinent to religion's role in the search for women's equality' (ibid.: 107). She suggests that religion can 'contribute to the struggle for justice', including the struggle for gender equality, and that religious feminists are thus potential allies of secular feminists (ibid.).

Today, women from religious faiths including Christianity, Islam and Judaism continue to grapple with questions of faith and gender justice (see Manning, 1999), but Islam has become singled out as the most contested religion of the day due to perceived links between the Islamic faith and religious extremism in the form of terror attacks in New York, Madrid, and London. Moreover, Islam has become a symbol of women's oppression, as the religion itself (rather than certain interpretations or practices of it) is sometimes linked with both harmful and violent practices such as forced marriage and female genital mutilation and with non-violent but allegedly patriarchal practices such as veiling. Paradoxically, according to Dustin and Phillips (2008), the acceptance by both government officials and women activists of the notion that such practices are 'grounded in culture not religious belief' has sustained and further legitimated a practice in which the UK government either abstains from interfering with religious belief and practice or privileges religious belief and practice through anti-discrimination and other laws.

Although the increased diversity among women due to immigration has had an impact on the willingness of the women's movement to take on intersectional perspectives on gender, race, and class, we have argued (Nyhagen Predelli et al., 2008) that women's movements have yet to seriously engage with issues of faith and



belief, and the way in which religion can have an impact, either positively or negatively, on women's rights and on women's position in the home and in society. Rather than dismissing or ignoring the voices of religious women as irrelevant or non-conducive to feminism, the women's movement needs to engage with religious women and build alliances with feminist religious women. In the UK, an example of such engagement is that of the Women's National Commission which has been instrumental in developing and supporting the *Muslim Women's Network* established in 2002. This network can be said to be part of the broader UK women's movement and thus by its very existence it may contribute to the deconstruction of an alleged inevitable opposition between religion and feminism. We would argue that women's movements must voice clear demands to be heard when governments engage with women's faith groups, and continue to demand the protection of established women's rights from erosion caused by pressure from conservative religious groups.

On some issues, faith-based organizations may actually erode or undermine gender equality and women's rights 'by creating pockets in society where "religious freedoms" justify the marginalization of women' (Ghodsee, 2007; see also the section below entitled 'gender, religion and citizenship'). Religious freedom is protected in international conventions, and covers both individuals as well as religious communities. Such protection has been established mainly due to the oppression and persecution experienced by religious minorities throughout history. Today, the protection of religious freedom often collides with claims to women's rights and with rights of gays and lesbians, and the rights of women and sexual minorities often have to 'yield' to the rights of religious communities to practice in ways that discriminate against women and sexual minorities. We do not want to suggest that the protection of religious freedom is illegitimate. It could be that religious communities are sometimes justified to have the right to discriminate against women or sexual minorities. The crucial question is on what ground and to what extent. While Nussbaum (1999: 111) claims that faith communities have a right to unequal treatment of women and homosexuals within 'the core of worship', she does not define the limits of such a core. Solhøy, Strand and Økland, on the other hand, contest the claim that there is an unassailable core in religion that has the right to be protected. They argue from the standpoint that the right of religious

communities to practice unequal treatment or discrimination must be justified in each particular case.

### 2.3 Religion, Gender and Power

Sociology of religion scholars argue about how to define the phenomena they study. Inclusive definitions are often very broad and functional, and focus upon what religion 'does', including providing meaning, purpose and hope. For example, Anthony Giddens defines religion as 'a *cultural* system of commonly *shared beliefs and rituals* that provides a sense of ultimate *meaning and purpose* by creating an idea of reality that is sacred, all-encompassing and supernatural' (Giddens, 2006: 534; our emphasis). Exclusive definitions are much narrower and focus upon what religion 'is', or the content of religious belief, including whether or not it includes a belief in 'divine beings'. The starting point for our research includes a deep acceptance and acknowledgment of the importance of religious belief and practice in the lives of women and men in modern society. We do not examine the theological foundations of religious beliefs, but take the existence of religious beliefs and practices for granted. At the same time, we are interested in how religion can create meaning and identity for individuals (for women in particular), and how religion can be used as a flexible resource by individuals to support their own beliefs and practice.

The notion of religion as a flexible resource conveys the idea that religion is not so much a set of eternally fixed rules and beliefs as a malleable resource that can be adapted to various social circumstances. Religion is, in other words, a 'dynamic toolkit' (Bartkowski and Ghazal Read, 2003; see also Swidler, 1986) that can be used to support a range of views and practices among adherents of a particular faith tradition. Women can thus find backing for both gender traditionalism and more egalitarian views on gender relations in their own religious traditions.

Both Christianity and Islam include elements that can be interpreted as discriminatory and subjugating, and/or as liberating for women. In particular, a literal reading of foundational religious texts will often yield evidence of discrimination against women. However, a 'softer' reading of such texts, allowing for adjustments

to contemporary contexts, including gender ideologies which support equality between women and men, allows potential for more 'women-friendly' and gender equal understandings of religious canons. Women must, to be sure, relate to the patriarchal features of their own religion, but as agents they are also capable of finding ways to achieve power and influence through religious faith and practice. Women have a tradition for mobilising energy and resources through religious organizations (Warner, 1993; Wuthnow and Lehrman, 1990), and the religious arena is one of the spaces where the formation of and negotiations about gender relations are taking place (Nyhagen Predelli, 2008; Brasher, 1998; Stacey, 1998). Religious beliefs, practices and organizations are themselves gendered, to the extent that women and men are allocated different rights and duties and perform different religious roles.

Linda Woodhead (2007) has proposed a theoretical framework for understanding the relationship between religion and gender, and in her view *power* is central to this relationship. Woodhead approaches religion as a system of power (to which the notion of sacred power is unique), and distinguishes between religion's descriptive *situation* in relation to gender, and religion's normative *strategy* in relation to gender (ibid.: 569). On the one hand, religion is situated in relation to existing distributions of secular power, including gender power. For example, religion is empirically situated in relation to the (secular) state and the ways in which the state and society is gendered. On the other hand, religion can be normatively used to mobilise claims-making or action in relation to existing distributions of secular power, including gender power. For example, a church or any religious organization may mobilise for or against particular state policies, including policies that seek to advance gender equality.

Woodhead (2007: 569) distinguishes between four main ways in which religion can be situated in relation to gender: as mainstream, as marginal, as confirmatory, and as challenging. Religions that are situated as mainstream can be seen as *integral to* or a part of the existing hegemonic regime, including the existing gender regime. In Western Europe, various Christian faith traditions have been and often continue to be associated quite closely with the state. The Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church in Spain, and the Lutheran Church in Norway, are all examples of

'majority' religions that are still closely linked with the states in which they are located. However, the way in which they opt to relate to gender, or their strategies in relation to gender, might change and even fluctuate over time, and whether or not they resist or support changes towards gender equality is thus an empirical question.

Religions that are situated as marginal in relation to gender are, according to Woodhead, those that 'sit[...] at more of an angle to the social and gender order' and as such are treated as 'socially deviant' by the majority (ibid.). Religions that are situated as confirmatory in relation to gender, on the other hand, 'seek[...] to legitimate, reinforce, and sacralise the existing distribution of power in society, particularly the existing gender order' (ibid.). Finally, religions that are situated as challenging in relation to gender 'seek[...] to ameliorate, resist or change' the existing gender order' (ibid.).

Furthermore, Woodhead distinguishes between four ways in which 'religion as power' may relate to 'gender as power' (thus referring to religion's strategy in relation to gender). Firstly, a mainstream religion can act to *consolidate* existing gender differences and inequalities. An example is Orthodox Judaism, a form of religion which 'sacralise[s] gender difference and inequality' (Woodhead, 2007: 572) but which, nonetheless, manages to attract women precisely because of the traditional gender roles it endorses (Davidman, 1991).

Secondly, a mainstream religion 'can be used to give access to power from 'inside' and use it in ways which may be subversive of the existing gender order' (Woodhead, 2007: 569). Such a *tactical* pushing of the boundaries of the dominant gender order has, for example, been observed within the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Evangelical missionary movement. By allowing women to proselytise among potential Christian converts, and thus giving them an independent role in the mission field, the missionary movement was (albeit unintentionally) subverting the dominant gender order it otherwise upheld (Nyhagen Predelli, 2003). Missionary women were thus effectively 'bargaining with patriarchy' (Kandiyoti, 1988) by gaining an independent role and entering the male domain of preaching, whilst not radically undermining the patriarchal gender regime of the mission. Moreover, in her study of the Evangelical-Charismatic 'Women's Aglow' movement in the United States, Griffith (1997) has

shown how women accept a role of female domesticity and patriarchal family rule, while using women-centred activities to exercise autonomy and empower themselves as wives and mothers.

Thirdly, a religion might be in a position of marginality to the dominant gender order, but aim towards improving it - a situation Woodhead labels as 'questing' (ibid.). A religion can thus be 'used as a means of access to [the hegemonic] power from the outside', without aiming to radically alter existing power relations but rather 'improv[ing] one's position - and well-being - within it' through a focus on inner life and spirituality (Woodhead, 2007: 575). According to Woodhead, the New Age movement or self-spirituality are the forms of religion that most clearly represent a type which 'tacitly accept[s] the dominant gender order, whilst seeking to shift the balance of power within it' (ibid.).

Fourthly, a religion may be in a position of marginality to the dominant gender order but actively 'try to contest, disrupt and redistribute' the existing gendered distribution of power (Woodhead, 2007: 569). Such a 'counter-cultural' strategy is exemplified by the Goddess feminist movement, including witches and Wicca (ibid.: 576; see also Salomonsen, 2001). A focus on 'the divine feminine in their own lives and in society', coupled with female empowerment strategies and a deep commitment to gender equality, are the main characteristics of this fourth way in which religion as power may relate to gender as power (Woodhead, 2007: 576).

In our project we ask whether and how women experience constraints and opportunities for active citizenship through their participation in religious organizations, and we attempt to link citizenship practices within religious organizations to the actual gender regimes promoted by the Norwegian, Spanish and UK nation-states. More broadly, we are investigating the relationship between gender equality, citizenship, and religious belief and practice.

## **2.4 Gender, Religion and Citizenship**

Feminist studies of 'citizenship' have opened up the term from a narrow political-legal definition to a broader and more inclusive cultural-social definition, and include

attempts to analyse the extent to which women in various communities exercise citizenship in this broader sense (Lister, 2003; Tastsoglou and Dobrowolsky, 2006; Siim, 2000). The classic view of citizenship as delineating legal and political rights and duties has been challenged on several fronts, including its limitation of citizenship to the public sphere and its narrow view of citizenship as 'status'. Feminist scholarship has thus claimed that citizenship encompasses *practices* within all spheres of life - be they political, economic, social, cultural, religious, domestic or intimate. An emphasis on practice implies that citizenship is not a fixed attribute of a particular group of individuals included in a given polity, but that citizenship is contested, fluid and dynamic, and involves processes of negotiation and struggle (ibid.). A feminist perspective on citizenship would also argue that classic citizen rights such as holding a passport and voting in political elections are not gender neutral but may be distributed and applied in ways that are discriminatory of women in general and of ethnic minority, immigrant, and refugee women in particular (Lister, 2003; Tastsoglou and Dobrowolsky, 2006; see also Yuval-Davis and Werbner, 1999).

From this type of feminist argument it follows that if women do not have the same rights and opportunities as men to participate in all areas of life, that is, if women are not free to choose whether they want to act as full citizens at work, in the family, in civil society and in politics, then they are not treated as equal citizens and are hence discriminated against. In so far as rights and the freedom to choose do not guarantee equal outcomes for women and men, a radical implication of feminist theories of citizenship is that *practices* should be inclusive of women and men in all aspects of life. A precondition for inclusive practices, and hence for democracy, is *agency* - '[a] conscious capacity to choose and act at a personal and political level' (Lister, 1997: 38). Women are, on the one hand, agents that may put forward citizenship claims and demands in various contexts. On the other hand, their agency may be constrained or conditioned by the particular characteristics of the socio-economic, political, and religious structures in which they are embedded.

Religious practice poses a particular dilemma for a broadened notion of citizenship, as patriarchal religious laws, norms and practices are often at variance with state-implemented laws on gender equality and international conventions on human rights

such as CEDAW (Convention for the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women). For example, in the context of Islam and human rights, traditional Sharia law legitimates and even 'requires legal discrimination of women' (Mayer, 1991: 99), and in effect undermines the protection women in Muslim states have under international conventions such as CEDAW (ibid.: 137; see also Moghadam, 2002). In the Norwegian context, the state law on gender equality prohibits discrimination against women, but religious associations are exempt from gender equality legislation and can legally discriminate 'on the basis of gender or sexual orientation when such discrimination is based on religious doctrine' (Skjeie, 2004: 6; see also Skjeie, 2006). We might say that for religious associations, including the Norwegian State Church, the issue of gender equality is deemed a private matter by the state, as religious associations are exempt from laws dictating gender equality in leadership and participation. Likewise, in Spain and the United Kingdom, religious communities are free to implement gender-discriminatory practices which would contravene gender equality laws in other social spheres such as education and the labour market. We would argue that, by virtue of their status as 'voluntary associations of civil society' (Lister, 2003: 30), religious organizations are part of the public sphere and should thus be subject to feminist investigations of citizenship. In a sense, religious institutions, in overlapping the private and public spheres, can be seen as 'borderlands' where the contestation and negotiation of citizenship may become especially acute. It can be argued that the religious arena, in its different formations across a variety of religious belief and practice, presents a test case for the inclusion or exclusion of women in the broad definition and practice of citizenship that is currently being promoted by feminist scholarship. In the words of Tita Loenen (2007: 5), 'where should one draw the line between permissible differentiation and unacceptable discrimination' on religious arenas?

A particular problem arises when the state not only tacitly accepts or tolerates practices that discriminate against women, but also actively endorses such practices through financial support. In Norway, Spain and the UK, religious organizations whose practices contradict gender equality laws applicable to other areas in society can draw on public financial resources to support such practices. Principles of religious freedom and non-interference from the state are thus privileged through financial practices, whilst principles of gender equality must, as Skjeie has argued,

effectively 'yield' (Skjeie, 2006). Such yielding is however difficult for feminists to accept. Moreover, rather than giving a 'blanket freedom' for religious communities to discriminate against women, it could be argued that any religious practice that implements discrimination should be justified by religious communities on a case-by-case basis (Solhøy, Strand and Økland, 2010).

## **2.5 Religion, Citizenship and Identity**

Our project attempts to examine 'religious citizenship' in particular contexts, those of 'majority' and 'minority' religious organizations, including churches and mosques, with a focus on women's beliefs and practices. The idea that religion and citizenship are connected is not new; indeed, full citizenship rights are sometimes exclusively conferred by nation-states upon members of particular religions. Moreover, linkages between democracy and religion are being discussed in contemporary debates by authors such as Habermas (2006), Kymlicka and Norman (2000), Spinner-Halev (2000) and Weithman (2002). The term 'religious citizenship' appears, however, to be of a more recent coinage; its usage gaining momentum alongside the development in citizenship theory towards an increasing number of distinctions between different citizenship dimensions such as ecological, technological, sexual, and others (see Isin and Wood, 1999).

Although the term 'religious citizenship' appears to be increasingly used by scholars (including Permoser and Rosenberger, 2009; Levitt, 2004; Yip, 2003; Yip and Keenan, 2004), few offer a precise definition of what religious citizenship entails. An exception in this regard is Wayne Hudson (2003: 426), who makes a distinction between a 'nation-state definition', a 'civil-society definition', and a 'rights of persons'-definition of religious citizenship. Our own thinking about religious citizenship is more inspired by feminist developments of citizenship theory, where citizenship is regularly presented as encompassing the following three dimensions: status and rights, participation, and identity and belonging (Lister et al., 2007; see also Bellamy et al., 2003). Status and rights refer to both collective and individual levels, where the state assigns a certain status and rights (such as the status of national/state religion or minority religion, and the right to religious practice) to collectives and



individuals.<sup>28</sup> Status and rights are also conferred upon collectives and individuals by religious institutions themselves. Religious institutions often design hierarchies in which different groups of people (lay men versus religious leaders; men versus women) are assigned different status and rights.<sup>29</sup> In turn, the status and rights conferred by nation-states and by religious institutions have implications for the *participation* of various groups and individuals as citizens acting within nation-states and within religious institutions. There is not a deterministic relationship, however, between status and rights on the one hand, and participation on the other. Despite in many instances lacking both status and rights, women have been able to circumvent and challenge discriminatory rules and conventions, and to carve out independent roles and dignified practices for themselves. In doing so, they have often drawn on their own sense of identity and belonging as a resource for empowerment and action. Religious identity and belonging can thus be a (re)source of citizenship practice. As outlined above, however, religious identities may provide both resources and barriers to citizenship, depending on what frameworks of religious meaning individuals draw upon, and how they interpret and use such frameworks to support their own actions and practice. Religion is thus a flexible resource that individuals can use to support their own identities, beliefs and practice, and as such it may have both empowering and disempowering effects.

Religious identities, as other identities, are not unitary, stable or fixed. Rather, identities are 'in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions' (Hall, 1996: 4). As such, identity is a continuous *project* (Calhoun, 1994) which we constantly work on, reshape and change through the interplay between our own life-course, our personal agency, and the social and institutional contexts in which we are located and positioned. In the words of Linda Alcoff:

*'... [s]ocial identities are not simply foisted on people from the outside, as it were, but are more properly understood as sites from which we perceive, act,*

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<sup>28</sup> Hudson (2003: 426) refers to this dimension of religious citizenship as part of a 'nation-state definition' of religious citizenship.

<sup>29</sup> Hudson (2003: 426) refers to this dimension of citizenship part of a 'civil-society definition' of religious citizenship.

*and engage with others. These sites are not simply social locations or positions, but also hermeneutic horizons comprised of experiences, basic beliefs, and communal values, all of which influence our orientation toward and responses to future experiences.'*

(Alcoff, 2006: 287)

Identities, including religious and gendered identities, are thus constructed through a dynamic interplay between internal (within the individual self) and external processes which cannot easily be disentangled and observed. We find Sissel Østberg's notion of 'integrated plural identity' useful in this regard, as it captures both the floating and shifting (plural) aspects of identity and the stable and connected (integrated) aspects of identity (Østberg, 2003: 46). According to Østberg, our identities can be plural because we present ourselves in different ways depending on the particular situation or context (situational identity). Despite presenting such fragmented and varying pictures of our identities, each one of us is *her own integrated self*, in the sense that we are conscious of our (constantly created) self and how it changes over time. In this understanding of identity construction, the contradictions that may be detected in our story-telling do not necessarily demonstrate a lack of coherence in our selves. Rather, such contradictions display how we actively navigate and negotiate between multi-faceted aspects of our identities. In Østberg's terminology (ibid.: 18), our *narrative identity* is plural as it consists of many stories or multiple identities. Identities can be characterised by difference, instability, volatility, and context, but the individual does not let go of the feeling of 'being a self'.

Contemporary, modern approaches to identity (including the approach forwarded by Østberg, 2003) are enriched by postmodern concepts like hybridity and creolisation, where identity categories are viewed as contextual and dynamic. The concept of creolisation refers to 'the intermingling and mixing of two or several formerly discrete traditions or cultures' (Hylland Eriksen, 2007: 112). The notion of hybridity is according to Hylland Eriksen 'a more general concept than creolization, and [...] may be used to refer to any obviously mixed cultural form' (ibid.: 113). 'Hybridity' seeks to capture how individuals who live in a 'cultural borderland' (for example due to mixed national and cultural heritage) are not primarily characterised by cultural conflict and powerlessness, but rather by options and cultural creativity. A 'hybridity approach' means that individuals are not prisoners of culture, but reflexive, creative and active

users of resources available to them (Bredal, 2004: 52). In a study of arranged and forced marriages, Bredal insists on viewing religious identity as actively formed both reflexively and discursively, rather than as a simple continuation of unambiguous or fixed traditions (ibid.).

Concepts such as hybridity and creolisation, and also those of syncretism and bricolage, have thus been introduced by new theories of identity in late modernity in which binding traditions are understood to be superseded by the obligations to be responsible for one's own life and to make individualised choices (as opposed to relying on tradition and social/collective networks). Theories of late modernity have, however, been critiqued for overestimating individual choice and freedom. Yvonne Mørck (as cited in Bredal, 2004: 53) has, for example, suggested that certain stages and life situations may be more influenced by the continuity of traditions rather than by change.

Anderson's notion of 'identity work' (Anderson, 2000) is useful in describing the active work that goes into creating our narrative identities. Anderson views identity work as '[...] the dialogue between collective identities ascribed to us from others and our own identifications with various manifest and imagined communities of belonging' (ibid: 291). Identity work is thus (in line with Calhoun, 1994) a continuous project which refers to both reflexivity and constant attention to the question of 'who am I?' and to how different social contexts both constrain and provide opportunities for different forms of behaviour and practice. In our research, we are concerned with the identity work accomplished by religiously active Muslim and Christian women: how do they produce meanings of religion and of gender, and how do they construct their identities in relation to religion, gender, ethnicity, nation, and tradition?

## **2.6 Religion and Gender Equality**

Our research is based on the notion that religious belief and practice has both private and public aspects, and that the institutional practice of religious belief should ideally be governed by gender equality laws. We do not support, however, the notion that gender equality laws should be one-sidedly imposed upon religious associations. Rather, the road to gender equality within religious contexts should be

built and sustained from within, by women and men who support the gender equal rights and participation, *in combination with* strong recommendations and pressure (including prevention of the use of public funds to support gender inequality) from external actors such as the state and women's movements.<sup>30</sup> Notwithstanding the choice of strategy, the desirable outcome must be that women and men have equal rights and are free to choose the extent to which they want to act as full citizens at work, in the family, in civil society and politics and in religious observance.

As noted above, Phillips (2007) argues that multicultural practices cannot be accepted unless men and women are treated as equals. What gender equality means, is of course, a complex issue and feminists are also divided on what such equality entails. Different viewpoints include equal rights, equal opportunities, equal participation, and equal outcomes - all of which entail different opportunities and limitations for women's demands and multicultural demands. Furthermore, if equal rights and practices are only being supported and monitored in designated 'public sphere's' such as education and the labour market, and not in designated 'private spheres' such as the family and religious organizations, then it is difficult to sustain the notion that gender equality must encompass all areas of life, despite the insistence of feminists that citizenship practices must be gender equal in both the public and private spheres (see, e.g. Lister, 2003). From a feminist viewpoint it follows that the family and religious organizations should not be considered private, in as much as they constitute important areas for the formation and contestation of gender relations and as such require political interventions. The question is then what kind of political interventions are required, and how are they to be implemented and reinforced? Clearly, the state has a choice in whether to formulate and promote policies that support the development of more gender equal practices from within the family and religious organizations. However, women who favour gender equality in the so-called 'public sphere' may be accepting of gender hierarchies and complementary (rather than equal) gender roles within the alleged 'private sphere' (Siim, 2007). Religious women may simply not care at all about gender and positions, the lack of female preachers, of the 'God our Father' discourse (Høen,

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<sup>30</sup> For an elaboration of the use of external protection (of women's rights) to reduce internal restrictions upon women and other disadvantaged groups, see Shachar (2001) and her concept of 'transformative accommodation'.

2008; Thorbjørnsrud, 2007). In our project we explore the discourses of religious women on gender equality. We ask whether religious women find women's movements and feminism relevant to their lives, thus exploring their concern (or lack thereof) with women's rights and gender equality.

Our research analyses how women's experiences and participation in churches and mosques can be interpreted as contradictory and complex as women's active participation is sometimes encouraged, while at other times their participation is constrained through practices which cement or maintain the disciplining and control of women. In religious organizations both formal and informal negotiations take place about the group rights and duties of women and men. These group rights and duties are decisive in terms of the opportunities and constraints they produce for individual women and men who wish to be active citizens on arena such as churches or mosques. The 'successful integration and participation of [religious] citizens and residents into European societies' (Triandafyllidou et al., 2006: 1) may be crucial for an inclusive multicultural citizenship, but the integration and participation of women into religious communities and organizations may be equally important for an inclusive gendered citizenship.

### **3 RESEARCH METHODS**

#### **3.1 Overview of Religious Organizations**

The methodology used in Strand 2 of WP4 consisted of conducting in-depth interviews with religious women from within the traditions of Christianity and Islam. We assessed different sampling/recruitment strategies taking into account the characteristics of all three countries of the study so as to ensure the data collected would be comparable.

Initially, we considered recruiting women from national, voluntary religious associations for women; however, only the UK (but not Spain and Norway) displayed a sufficient number of such organizations that would have enabled us to achieve a successful organization-based selection strategy. For instance, although the organizational landscape in Spain includes a few national Christian women's organizations, there is a general absence of minority religious organizations for women at the national level. Hence, our recruitment method took an alternative path that produced data that would yield themselves to cross-country comparisons by focusing on religious organizations from majority and minority faith traditions.

While Christianity has the largest number of followers in all three countries, Islam is also the second largest religion in all three. A focus on both churches and mosques was thus deemed most appropriate in order to gather comparable data. In order to reflect the minority/majority dimensions as well as the state versus 'free' religious traditions, we decided to adopt a four-dimensional approach. Such strategy included recruiting members of Christian majority churches (in the form of the state religion) and Christian minority churches (in the form of a 'free church' Christian faith tradition), Muslim majority mosques (representing the largest Muslim group in each country) and Muslim minority mosques (representing a smaller Muslim population in each country).

Christian majority churches were easily identifiable in all three countries, and a large cathedral church was chosen in each as well. In terms of Christian minority faiths,

there were many traditions to choose from, including Methodists, Baptists, Pentecostals, and so on. We selected Pentecostal churches as our majority-minority faith with no ties to the state, as the Pentecostal movement is considered the 'fastest growing group of churches within Christianity today' (Anderson, 2004: 1). After ascertaining the presence of various Pentecostal faith traditions in all three countries, we selected to recruit women from Assembly of God churches.<sup>31</sup>

In terms of the major Islamic group, the strategy was to focus on the largest Muslim group in each country. All Muslims belong to the same *Ummah* or community of religious believers, but various historical processes of differentiation have led to a great variety of law schools and sects. Sunni-Islam, which represents the most widespread belief tradition and includes four major religious law schools, accounts for about 80 per cent of Muslim believers (Esposito, 1998). Shia-Islam, the second largest faith tradition within Islam, has its own religious law schools and represents about 20 per cent of Muslim believers (ibid.). In Norway, Spain and the UK, the largest immigrant Muslim groups are Sunni Muslims. In order to reach a minority Muslim group in each country, we opted to recruit from Shia mosques (there are roughly 80 per cent Sunni and 20 per cent Shia Muslims in the world; and the same ratio is found in Europe).

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<sup>31</sup> According to Anderson (2004: 94), the Assembly of God movement within Pentecostalism (at least in the UK) have been critical of centralised forms of organizational control in other Pentecostal movements such as the Elim movement, and has represented strong theological positions on the issues of 'initial evidence' and premillianism.

The following table illustrates the final recruitment strategy for Spain:

**Table 5 Recruitment of research participants**

	<b>Majority (Christian)</b>	<b>Minority (Muslim)</b>
<b>Majority</b>	Roman Catholic Church	Sunni Mosque
<b>Minority</b>	Assembly of God Church	Shia Muslims

Chapter 4 is based on empirical evidence from 20 in-depth interviews conducted with religious women in Madrid, Spain. Madrid is both the country's and the region's (or comunidad autónoma) capital.

Spain is structured in 17 regions or 'comunidades autónomas'; Madrid is one of them. An autonomous community is the first-level political division and was established in accordance with the Spanish Constitution - Article 2 recognises the rights of 'regions and nationalities' to self-government and declares the 'indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation.' Political power in Spain relies on the central government and the 17 autonomous communities. These are responsible for education, health, social services, culture, as well as urban and rural development.

Madrid is the largest city in Spain. It is the third-most populous municipality in the European Union after Greater London and Berlin. Due to its economic output, standard of living, and market size, Madrid is considered the major financial centre of the Iberian Peninsula; it hosts the head offices of the vast majority of the major Spanish companies, as well as the headquarters of three of the world's 100 largest companies. The population of the city is roughly 3.3 million (as of December 2009). The entire population of the Madrid metropolitan area (urban area and suburbs) is 6.4 million. The city spans a total of 698 km<sup>2</sup>.

As the capital of Spain, the city has attracted many immigrants from around the world. About 83.8 per cent of the inhabitants are Spaniards, while people of other origins, including immigrants from Latin America, Europe, Asia, North Africa and West Africa, represented 16.2 per cent of the population in 2007. The ten largest



immigrant groups include: Ecuadorian: 104,184, Romanian: 52,875, Bolivian: 44,044, Colombian: 35,971, Peruvian: 35,083, Chinese: 34,666, Moroccan: 32,498, Dominican: 19,602, Brazilian: 14,583, and Paraguayan: 14,308. There are also important communities of Filipinos, Equatorial Guineans, Bulgarians, Indians, Italians, Argentines, Nicaraguans, French, Senegalese and Poles.<sup>32</sup>

### 3.1.1 Overview of selected churches/mosques

**Table 6 Churches and mosques recruited from**

	<b>Church/Mosque</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Roman Catholic</b>	Santa María La Real de La Almodena Cathedral	Cathedral and episcopal headquarters of Madrid's 'diócesis'.
<b>Assemblies of God</b>	Iglesia De Cristo	Listed as main Jesus Church in Madrid capital.
<b>Sunni Muslim</b>	Islamic Cultural Center - Omar Mosque	Largest and most important Mosque in Madrid capital.

#### ***Roman Catholic***

The main city Cathedral, Catedral de la Almodena, was chosen but this turned out a difficult strategy due to the numbers of tourists who visit this place. Thus most women were finally recruited from the former main cathedral which is still a landmark but remains a traditional place of worship and not so much an artistic monument.

<sup>32</sup> [http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inmigraci%C3%B3n\\_en\\_Espa%C3%B1a](http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inmigraci%C3%B3n_en_Espa%C3%B1a)

### ***Assemblies of God***

A medium size Evangelical Church was chosen. The church is frequented largely by Spanish nationals although Madrid immigrant community is present to some extent. This Evangelical church is not, however, used by Roma.

### ***Sunni Mosque***

Participants were recruited from the Omar Mosque (also known as the M30 Mosque because it looks onto the M30 interstate), which is the largest and most important mosque in Madrid capital. It was created in 1976 when 18 Muslim country representatives signed an agreement to build a mosque in Madrid. However, the project was postponed for 11 years until Saudi Arabian king Fahd financially supported the execution. The mosque was inaugurated on 21 September 1992 by king Fahd and Spanish king Juan Carlos I. Today, the mosque's spiritual leader and major imam is Sheikh Moneir Mahmud, Sunni of Egyptian background. The mosque is administered by staff from Morocco, Syria, and Spain and is 40 per cent female.

### ***Shia Muslims***

The Shia participants in the study mainly resided in Madrid. There is no Shia Mosque in Madrid capital, the researcher was informed that the Shia community does not typically attend mosques mainly because, according to Spanish interviewees, Shia-Muslims based in Spain are not very religious, associate existing mosques with Moroccan and/or Sunni-Muslims, and prefer to get together more privately at each other's homes.

Thus, the Shia participants were one group who could not be identified with a single place of worship.

## **3.2 Participant Selection and Recruitment**

Selection of participants in this study was based on the following criteria:

- Residing in Madrid, Spain;
- Able to communicate in Spanish;
- Have attained secondary level education.

Five women were selected from each category, namely Catholic, Evangelical, Sunni and Shia. Snowball sampling describes the strategy used to recruit Shia participants. As for Sunnis and Assemblies of God, potential interviewees were approached as a group after initial contact was made with key people within the Church or Mosque chosen for the study. Interested individuals left their contact information and were later phoned for an interview. Catholic interviewees were selected on a one-on-one basis from the same Church due to the size of the congregation, the lack of a specific meeting group or Church leader, and availability of potential respondents.

E-mails detailing the aims and objectives of the study were sent to all interviewees when possible. In addition, prior to each interview sufficient time was spent with each participant explaining the goals of the study and addressing their questions.

Specifically, Sunni-Muslims were mostly recruited after an introductory meeting with a woman who led a group at Madrid's Sunni Mosque. She introduced the researcher to other group members. Interested individuals were contacted after that. A similar approach was followed for the Assemblies of God only there was a more informal introduction from the shepherd to other congregation members at Church service. Similarly, volunteers left their phone number and were later contacted. Making contact with members of the Shia community in Madrid was extremely challenging. Using the Sunni network proved mostly unfruitful. Some Shia women were approached directly after the researcher was tipped about their religious orientation. However, the fact that a trusted peer did not personally introduce the researcher to them, made these women suspicious and non-cooperative. Next, contact was established with the director of the Iranian Cultural Center. He provided one contact and then snowballing was used. Simultaneously, the researcher interviewed an acquaintance who also facilitated other two contacts. Since the Shia community in Madrid is both small and scattered only four interviewees were found. A sixth Sunni of Lebanese origin was recruited and included in the analysis.

Of the 20 interviews, eight took place in the homes of the research participants, 11 interviews were conducted in parks or coffee shops, and one was conducted via the telephone. The interviews were conducted within the period of March 2009 - August

2009; with the exception of four interviews that had to be repeated. Interview length ranged from 45 minutes to 90 minutes. Four of these interviews were conducted between February 2010 and April 2010.

### 3.2.1 Characteristics of participants

Twenty women from Madrid volunteered to participate in the research. Ten belonged to the ethnic majority (white) and ten were ethnic minorities; below is the breakdown according to their religious affiliation:

**Table 7 Religious and ethnic background of research participants**

Religion	Ethnic Majority	Ethnic Minority
Catholic	5	0
Evangelicals	4	1
Sunnis	1	5
Shias	0	4

None of the women who participated in this study were activists or had any association with the feminist movement. Participants ages ranged from 18 to 60s. About two-thirds were or had been married and had children. Finally, 40 per cent were retired and about one-third were, or had been, homemakers, and 40 per cent had, or were in the course of getting, a university education. Most of the interviewees spoke Spanish fluently although two of them were noticeably less proficient and about half of the non-Spanish natives were perfectly bilingual.

### 3.3 Research Ethics

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from Loughborough University's research ethics committee. Research participants were given a general letter of information about the project, and they signed a written consent form which stated respondents' right to withdraw from the study at any time without being required to explain any reasons from withdrawing. Additionally, participants were assured of

anonymity, such that their individual identities and location would be kept confidential. In the report, interviewees are referred to in relation to their religious affiliation, either as Catholic (majority-majority), Evangelical (minority-majority), Sunni (majority-minority) or Shia (minority-minority). All names and specific references that could identify respondents were removed from the transcript excerpts reproduced in this report.

### **3.3.1 Instrument and data: advantages and limitations**

In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation. In-depth interviews are useful when you want detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviours or want to explore new issues in depth. The primary advantage of in-depth interviews is that they provide much more detailed information than what is available through other data collection methods, such as surveys. They also may provide a more relaxed atmosphere in which to collect information. However, there are a few limitations, which will be described below.

While a qualitative approach as ours may offer comparable data, it does not aim to produce findings that can be generalised or are statistically meaningful. First, the sample is small thereby lending representativeness mute. Second, the actual sampling strategy was too diverse and only a few criteria were followed to facilitate cross-country comparisons. Thus, the results of this study only reflect the views of the women interviewed. Nevertheless, the findings reveal problems that probably represent the concerns of other women from these groups. Therefore the findings of this report must be considered exploratory.

### **3.4 Insider/Outsider Problematic**

A white female researcher of Spanish citizenship undertook the Spain study. She was raised as Catholic but describes herself as agnostic. She attended Catholic schools and was socialised in Catholic values but does not come from a highly devout or practicing family. The researcher had no previous knowledge of Islam other than that of the average person - some Muslim friends and general knowledge.

The researcher's previous academic work was related to gender stereotypes in workplace settings from a social psychological perspective and using an experimentalist methodological approach. Finally, prior to this work, the researcher had more acquaintance with quantitative sociological approaches and methods.

### **3.4.1 How are issues of gender, feminism, religion, identity and citizenship talked about in our interviews?**

In Strand 1 of FEMCIT WP4 we applied theoretical perspectives inspired by the political opportunity structure approach, frame analysis, and Bacchi's 'What's the problem represented to be' approach (Nyhagen Predelli, Halsaa, Thun and Sandu, 2009). In Strand 2 we have found Bacchi's approach to have continued relevance to our analysis. Although Bacchi is first and foremost interested in various actors on political arenas, including governments and non-governmental actors, and how they identify and define social policy problems, her approach is useful also on arenas that are associated with civil society more than with the state. Bacchi (1999) argues that actors give a particular shape to social 'problems' through the ways in which they are spoken about and the proposals advanced to address the problems. It is not 'the problem' itself that requires exploring, rather, it is how the problem is *represented*. Competing understandings of social issues can, according to Bacchi, be labelled as 'problem representations' (Bacchi, 1999: 2). She argues that it is important to identify competing representations of 'problems', because they will include concomitant representations of possible and desirable solutions. Bacchi is concerned with both structure and agency, or with both constraints and opportunities. She draws attention to the fact that we are all situated in discourses which may limit how we view the world, while we at the same time can use language constructively, intentionally and politically to shape the way we describe problems and prescribe solutions.

On the religious arena, we examine how individual religious women use language and discourse to construct particular problem representations of the relationship between themselves as women, their religious belief and practice, and the opportunities and constraints they experience in practicing citizenship within religious organizations. We also examine how religious women understand the concept of feminism, and how they talk about the women's movement. Bacchi's focus also

requires a 'reflexive scrutiny' of discourses and concepts, which engages a wide range of voices that may challenge our pre-existing and possibly biased understandings (Bacchi, 2005: 207). Such voices should include those that may struggle to be heard and voices that may be silenced by more powerful actors. By interviewing representatives of both majoritised and minoritised women within different religious organizations, we seek to identify different voices in current debates addressing the relationship between gender, religion and citizenship.

The following questions are addressed in the analysis of our interviews with religious women:

### **A Religion, identity and meaning**

- How is the meaning of religion represented in the interviews?
- Is religion represented as fixed, as flexible, or both? What aspects are talked about as fixed, or as flexible?
- How is religion practiced?

### **B Citizenship**

- How is citizenship talked about? (In general? In terms of religion?)
- Can/is religious participation and practice be linked to citizenship?
- Is religion represented as a resource or as a barrier (or both) to citizenship as practice?

### **C Gender equality**

- How is gender equality and women's rights talked about?
- How is feminism and the women's movement talked about?
- How are gender relations practiced?

## **4 ANALYSIS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter 4 offers an in-depth analysis of the empirical material described in Chapter 3. The chapter is divided in three major sections apart from the introduction and conclusion. These sections correspond to the three guiding questions of our research, with the majority-minority distinction as overriding organising principle.

First, section 4.2 discusses (a) whether and how religion helps create meaning and identity for women, and (b) the extent to which religion is described and used as flexible resource to both attitudes and practice. Second, section 4.3 examines the relationship between gender equality, women's rights, feminism and women's movement on the one hand, and religious belief and practices on the other. Third, section 4.4 explores (a) participants' perceptions of citizenship and citizenship practices, and (b) whether religion is framed as a resource or as a barrier to women's citizenship.

Each section contains some concluding remarks and general chapter conclusions are offered in section 4.5.

### **4.2 Religion and Identity**

This section explores what religion means to the identity of the women interviewed and discusses whether and how religion impacts and permeates different aspects of daily life including their everyday behaviour and citizenship practices. In addition, this chapter addresses the question of whether they perceived their religion as fixed, flexible or both. Finally, we explore admired religious figures to gain insight into interviewees' religious identity and possibly gender beliefs.

The opening questions of the topic guide are 'how would you describe your identity?' and 'how important is religion to you identity and everyday life?' Most interviewees found the first question too vague and ample, which sometimes prompted the



researcher to bring up religion as one dimension of identity. This could explain why the majority of interviewees focused on defining their identity in relation to their religiosity. In addition, participants were aware that they were selected on the basis of their religious adherence, which may have caused respondent bias - i.e., greater focus on religious identity. However, in the course of the interviews, discussions that are relevant to identity came up, and analysis of these fragments will also be included in this section. Finally, although descriptions of identity understood largely as religious identity was a clear pattern, several interviewees defined their identity in terms of nationality and cultural heritage, not religion.

Generally speaking, Sunni and Evangelicals participants appeared more eager to describe in full detail their religious identity, what it feels like to be a Muslim or a Christian, and how it shapes their everyday behaviour. Catholic women of our study, sometimes appear to take their religious identity for granted; sometimes their answers often signalled that (a) they had not pondered much about the meaning of being Catholic and/or that (b) they had not faced situations that encouraged them to justify or question their religious choice. This is intuitive in the sense that Catholicism is the majority religion in Spain;<sup>33</sup> to the extent that individuals tend to build their identity not exclusively in terms of who they are, but also who they are not, Catholics, being the majority, may not feel as compelled to define themselves in relation to other faith groups. Thus, individuals may be less predisposed to questioning and/or justifying their reasons for adhering to one set of religious beliefs versus another. For example, Evangelicals often build their religious identity in juxtaposition to Catholicism by emphasising their focus on God not the Church as an institution.

Sunni women relate a markedly different experience. In addition to experiencing the minority status of their religion, they are also aware and influenced by their ethnic minority status - in Spain, most Muslims are of Moroccan origin, and so were most of the Sunni women who participated in our study.

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<sup>33</sup> According to a July 2009 study by the Spanish Center of Sociological Research about 76 per cent of Spaniards self-identify as Catholics, two per cent other faith, and about 20 per cent identify with no religion.

The case of Shia Muslims is interesting because, unlike Sunni Muslims, the first label they use for themselves is that of their origin, nationality, cultural background and not religion.

Religion is quite central to most of the women we interviewed, however there is variation in how the religious experience is felt and expressed. Among the Sunni and Evangelical women, religion is often described in terms of discontinuity and personal discovery, the result of a process that sometimes involves questioning or departing from what was inherited from their respective socio-cultural contexts. Conversely, when the Catholic women describe their religious experience they reveal a sense of continuity, sometimes including a view of religion as fixed or established; religion is often discussed in terms of being the social glue that keeps individuals connected to a broader context, history, and tradition in somewhat superficial but still powerful and comforting/reassuring ways.

For example, for some Catholic women life is 'linked' to religion. The way some Catholic respondents discussed their religious identity suggests they may view it as the result of an inevitable path, something they seemingly believe could not have been different:

*'I have always been Catholic, I mean logically I was born Catholic from a Catholic family and was baptised, took the first communion and so on ... then I became old enough to know what I was doing, now I am Catholic because it is my conviction.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

The use of the word 'logically' reveals how this woman can't think of belonging to a different faith. Then she goes on emphasising the importance of Catholicism in her social context, as if that in itself sufficiently proved the substance or significance of her religious adherence. Interestingly, there must have been either a turning point or a slow process of reaffirmation for the interviewee above, in the sense that she explicitly mentions she is 'now' (now that she is older) sure of her religious conviction. However, she does not mention, presumably because she doesn't recall or didn't experience it as such, a specific moment where things changed for her. Thus, it is likely that the change was more gradual and/or happened a long time back.

The Catholic respondent below expresses things in similar ways emphasising time/duration ('since I was a child') and family. The fragment below suggests this woman believes being Catholic requires no elaborate explanation or justification: she's *always* been Catholic and so has *everyone* she knows.

*'To me it [Catholic religion] is everything. I identify with it since I was a child. It is my religion ... all my family's religion ... and we live it.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_02)

One Catholic woman, who did not appear too devout, conveyed that Catholicism is something you cannot escape; a phenomenon that influences you whether you want it or not. In a way, the Catholic women of the study tend to simplify the religious experience; rather than their choice, embracing Catholicism becomes normative:

*'Well I don't really practice Catholicism but grew up in a Catholic environment and religion did impact me, right? Many aspects of my life are shaped by, at least, Christian concepts ... perhaps not Catholic but definitely Christian.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_04)

Her tone and wording reveal that her question (e.g., 'religion did impact me, right?') is very rhetorical: 'how could it not have [impacted me]?'

The accounts by Sunni women in our study differ from that of Catholic women. For Sunnis who live in a non-Muslim country, being a practicing Muslim is often a very conscious decision they made; they tend to question the values and beliefs they received (from parents, family, background) because it seems they need to personally embrace Islam on a more individual basis.

For these women, being Muslim is something you become rather than something that you are. This is intuitive for several reasons. The younger Sunni women interviewed, to the extent that they are presumably more assimilated and are at an age in which fitting in is crucial, must have felt, at times, compelled to dispute their religious tradition living in a majority Catholic country. Such process of questioning could have led to abandoning their beliefs and/or not living up to them or embracing them more strongly. Thus, young Sunnis in our study were well informed, their

answers revealed they had thought what it means to be a Muslim, and, as a result, offered quite articulate views of their religious identity.

For Sunnis the religious experience is often talked about in terms of discovery sometimes after a period they describe as one of dissatisfaction with the way religion was introduced to them - i.e. something that cannot be questioned or around which doubts cannot be raised.

*'My family did not explain much to me and I felt a little withdrawn ... I distanced myself from religion because no one explained anything to me ... [when I asked questions] they [parents] used to answer "because it is so".'*  
(Maj\_Min\_01)

For some interviewees (Sunni and Evangelical Christian) understanding and learning was described as an important part of their faith and religious identity. Since they did not find answers at home, that led to an initial period of withdrawal and disinterest. At a later point respondents from these groups come to experience religion as something different and more positive, and perhaps as part of a broader self-discovery process.

*'When you speak with someone who thinks like you, together you find things that you didn't know and you learn together.'*  
(Maj\_Min\_01)

This suggests that for Sunnis living in a culture other than their own, religion is also a mechanism or a tool for bonding and finding similar others, and that the religious experience is the origin of making such friendship but also, and importantly, a strengthened religious identity results from such social interactions.

At other times, discovery is described as a revelation or born-again experience according to the religious conversion literature. Here, elements related to discontinuity also emerge among both Sunni and Evangelical Christian women, but not among Catholics.

*'It [belief] is something that just happened ... I don't know ... I was sitting on the bus looking out the window and, suddenly, I went from not believing in anything to believing there was something ... it felt like an angel touched me ...'*  
(Maj\_Min\_03)

In a context that is more complex and diverse, and where women may have partners from a different ethnicity and religion, faith and religion are used as a tool to create one's coherent reference framework:

*'We were travelling back from [name of town], on the bus, my boyfriend and I. We had spent Christmas with his family. His family is Christian Catholic ... suddenly I started to wonder how my life would be like in the future, if I had children ... he is Catholic but had said he would never teach anything to his children and I had always said I was agnostic [...] but when it comes to children I thought I would like to educate them under one religion because religion also includes important values [...].'*

(Maj\_Min\_03)

For older Sunni respondents, religion is described as a spiritual refuge or retreat, a source of peace. One Sunni woman expressed it quite nicely:

*'My religion is my refuge, it is what I look for, and it's my peace and tranquillity. When I forget that and I focus on material aspects of life I feel lost. Then I go back to my hideout, the refuge that protects me.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

Both Sunni and Evangelical Christian women describe their religious experience in a more personal manner. For them, religion cannot be separated from the self. For Catholics the religious experience is *connected* to the self, as a sort of companion attribute, more than as an experience that penetrates and shapes the self:

*'My religion is my life. If I am not a Muslim woman I am nobody.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

For Evangelical women, it is more about God not so much institutions; the personal dimension is the most important. Thus the association is that religion equals institutionalised religion not free religion.

*'Well, to me religion is not the key, God is. God is something personal. He's always been the central point of my life.'*

(Min\_Maj\_01)

*'Religion is very important to me [...] what have I learned from it? That God really exists. Why? Because I have met him in a personal way. It's not something that I have been told or heard about, rather it is something that I have experienced and felt. It goes beyond reading things on a book [...] To me, God is someone that is always there, everywhere I am [...].'*

(Min\_Maj\_05)

Particularly for the Sunni participants, religion permeates and guides all aspects of their life and their everyday behaviour. A Sunni respondent argues that she is a Muslim in:

*'... The way I speak, the way I act ... how I relate to other people, the promises that I make ... even the way I behave with my husband ...'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

Sunni women are very aware that practicing Islam means behaving in a certain way toward others. In this sense their religiosity is very connected to citizenship, being a good person toward others. It is part of being a Muslim, behaving a certain way, being generous and respectful to others.

For the Catholic women, religion is an inescapable element of the social context, but it is also used as a tool to being part of society and a community ... something that facilitates or leads to companionship, a mechanism for integration in the broader community, and in this sense, it is also connected to citizenship.

*'Wherever I go I look for a church because I feel like more linked to my own beliefs as a Catholic woman, I find companionship ... even if you really are completely isolated from the others, who you don't know ... [...] But at least you no longer feel alone.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

Evangelical participants sometimes discuss their religious identity in opposition to the dominant religion, Catholicism that is. These women describe Evangelism as a more personal religious experience based largely on establishing a closer relationship with God. Evangelism is presented as a religion that permeates the self more deeply. For example the woman quoted below mentions how she now reads the Bible, the implication being that she did not before (when she was Catholic).

*'Well, yes Christian or Catholic religion is, to me ... I mean I belong to it for 21 years ... I was Catholic and still am because we are all Catholic [...] but now I read the Bible, I go to listen to the word of God with the Bible ... and so it is a different way of looking for God. It has been so rewarding and fulfilling that I feel better now than when I belong to the Catholic Church.'*

(Min\_Maj\_02)

Similarly, the same woman emphasises how the process of getting to know God is a gradual and slow one and as such it may also be more lasting, deeper, and ultimately fulfilling:

*'When it comes to spiritual growth, maturity, and slowly getting to know God. That is something that I have learned in the Evangelical Church, thank God.'*  
(Min\_Maj\_02)

The social dimension is very important for both Evangelical and Sunni women in our study. Religion is a way of life, and a way of interacting with others, something that leads to and shapes friendship, community life, etc. Respondents from the Evangelical group in particular suggest that their religion offers a more real and all-encompassing social framework relative to the Catholic Church. It is not just about being at a Church with others who you presume think alike. It is more about building true friendships and community around a set of beliefs; in this case Evangelical beliefs:

*'We are Evangelical Christians because we preach the New Testament. If we study the Bible we find that God calls upon us to disseminate his word. That's the reason we preach [...] I found a different lifestyle [in Evangelism] in the sense that people I met [in the Evangelical context] were more honest [presumably, than in the Catholic context] ... you could find true friends there. I feel my religion [now] is exactly what I was looking for [...] just what I was looking for ... every time I read God's word I feel that's what I want to be and what I have been chosen for.'*

(Min\_Maj\_03)

Similarly, the woman quoted below argues that religious practice is not limited to going to church on Sundays (like it is customary in Catholicism) but about making religion a part of your daily life.

*'Religion is a lifestyle. It is not about coming here [to church] on Sundays and recharging ... not really, it is a part of your daily life ... it is everything.'*  
(Min\_Maj\_04)

Shia and non-Moroccan Sunni women in the study define their religious identity in a more cultural way. They describe themselves as true believers but do not typically practice religion. Religion seems like a mechanism or tool to staying connected to their roots, to their background.

*'Well, it [religion] is important [to me] in a cultural, more than religious, way. Well, like reaffirmation of identity, but not religious, of belonging, right? To a culture, a community. [A connection with] the culture, the history, the collective memory.'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

*'I consider myself a Muslim, I was raised as a Muslim, I don't lead a particularly religious life, I don't practice religious principles except in ... very few things like I don't eat pork. I am a great believer, but do not practice.'*

(Min\_Min\_05)

The participant quoted next offers an interesting remark:

*'Well, as you know, I am Lebanese, from Beirut ... and I come well, from a multicultural context, in my family there are many religions, my family is a bit mixed, my father is Russian, my mother is Muslim and I am half Muslim, but here I consider myself Muslim, although there are things that I don't practice.'*

(Min\_Min\_03)

First she describes her diverse religious background and then adds how 'here', in Spain, she considers herself a Muslim. This is interesting in two ways. First, the statement implies her religious identity is flexible and situational - i.e. perhaps she feels more of a Muslim in Spain than in Lebanon. Second, this might be instrumental. It is plausible that when abroad, religion becomes a form of connection to her home country, her kind, and her background and so, she feels more of a Muslim.

In contrast to almost all other women interviewed, Shia and non-Moroccan Sunni describe their identity in terms of their country of origin, which is one of the aspects that come first in the conversation - i.e. 'I am from Lebanon'.

*'I was born in Argentina. I have been in Spain for a long time now. When I am in Spain and someone asks, I say I am from Argentina, but because of my accent a lot of the times, [people can tell] there is something else and in the end I have to say I am Lebanese. [...] when I am not in Spain I always say I am Spanish, always; I don't know why but I have discussed this with other people who've also been here a long while and became [Spanish] citizens ... when one is abroad someone's always going to ask where are you from and if I start saying I was born in Argentina but I am half Lebanese ... I say "I am Spanish". So I feel a bit from everywhere, although less and less from Argentina.'*

(Min\_Min\_05)



The testimony above is fascinating and yet another example of how religious adherence and nationality/citizenship are dynamic and situational. This participant explains it well. In Spain she is one thing and when she travels she is something else. Her wording suggests that in choosing her descriptors (e.g., Spanish, Lebanese, Argentinean) she takes into account her context and uses the descriptor that she thinks best fits. It seems that she picks whatever other individuals may find more intuitive. In Spain, since her accent differs from that of Spanish people, she says she's from Argentina. When abroad, however, she says she is from Spain. It also seems like the Spanish identity hides or blends the longer version of her life story (e.g., I was born in Argentina but was raised and feel Lebanese) so seems she thinks it is convenient insofar as it shortens her narrative.

Interestingly, a Sunni interviewee from Spain describes herself as 'a citizen of the world' (Maj\_Min\_04). So perhaps for devout Sunni Muslim nationality is not as important, and religious adherence takes over nationality as an identifier. For example, very few of the Sunni women interviewees mention where they or their families are from when discussing their identity. If at all, the issue of their origin comes much later in the conversation:

*'Well I am Moroccan but have been here half my life. Which means I am half-half. And of course, deep down I am not Spanish, I am Moroccan, despite the fact that I have acquired citizenship, I am Moroccan, Muslim.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

*'I am Arab, Muslim, Moroccan.'*

(Maj\_Min\_05)

Interestingly, Shia women do not seem to have a community of reference or a place to pray in Spain. Praying is a more private activity done at home, even at a Christian church in the case of one of the interviewees.

*'Shias don't go to the mosque like people go to mass [...] especially women, we pray at home, especially here in Madrid ... I don't know those [Mosques] places [...] [Here] there aren't any places such as the ones where Shia people get together.'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

Also another participant from Lebanon says:

*'I like churches very much and go with someone, for example, my father in law, he was a priest and, aside from that I do like to go to Sunday mass sometimes, because I love churches, and I go in there do my own thing, as if I was at a mosque. That is, I pray but without anyone watching me, [I pray] to myself.'*

(Min\_Min\_03)

At times, practical considerations matter, such as living in a large city, working long work etc. The citation below also signals a bit of guilt in the sense that the Lebanese Sunni woman below likes to go to religious lessons but also mentions how her parents insist and view it as a form of compensation for all she does not do the rest of the year when out of Lebanon.

*'Not in Spain [I don't go to the mosque in Spain], in Lebanon I do go to religion lessons ... but with the goal of learning about my religion. Here I haven't really been because my life in Spain ... it's simply not easy. In Lebanon I am on holiday, it's a small country, like a small city in Spain where you have time for things and it's not as stressful as here, right? My family is quite religious, it's funny because my friends are not, but my family is. And so ... they insist that since I am abroad the rest of the year doing what I want, that I could at least resume things a little ... And I like it, you're told stories, taught things [...] whether you practice or not, it's teachings about what you fundamentally believe in so it is a way to reconnect with the culture, religion, the context.'*

(Min\_Min\_05)

Some prejudice against mosques was detected among some Shia participants. There is reluctance, even hostility to mosques as they are associated with Muslims from other countries like Morocco or Arab countries that are less progressive than Lebanon.

*'The religious issue, in my view, and considering the branch that I follow, is a delicate matter ... There are a lot of people who preach but not everything that is preached is correct, right? So, one has to be very careful with who one relies on to be taught, who you choose to teach you, right? That is why here I haven't been anywhere, have not participated in any forum, have not been to the Mosque, because these branches are, in general, they lean toward, not Taliban but Wahabi. For example, the M30 Mosque is Wahabi, which is a branch of Islam that Taliban belongs to. They are very extremist, and have other sets of beliefs within Islam that I don't share, so I leave that [participation in religious circles] for when I go [home].'*

(Min\_Min\_05)

Interestingly, the fragment above illustrates concern and distress about being influenced by unknown or extremist branches of Islam. This apparently determines that some interviewees end up not building or relying on a religious community and keep leaving that aspect of their identity untouched while they are abroad but try to reconnect (e.g., in the form of taking lessons) when they go back to their countries.

This participant has a similar story:

*'I go to the mosque if I am in Turkey or Lebanon but not here ... I don't like it at mosques here, the same people get together, the same Moroccan people ... for example, people from Algeria who are very different from us [Lebanese] and I don't feel very close to them, it is a setting that feels far away from me ... a mosque is a dirty and cold place and I don't like it. I do like to go to beautiful mosques but in other countries.'*

(Min\_Min\_03)

The Shia respondent quoted above also conveys the idea that Mosques in Spain are undesirable places that she feels removed from. Somehow mosques in Spain are not beautiful mosques according to her. It is almost as if mosques in Spain do not represent the interviewee's ideal view of a mosque.

The fragment below also suggest that some assimilation and blending in occurs to immigrants, their religious habits become weaker as time passes:

*'Years ago, in the beginning, I did Ramadan, the first few years when I was getting my MA degree, because there was an atmosphere ... I don't know Moroccan, some from Egypt, who always practice religion, so I also did.'*

(Min\_Min\_03)

When Shias were asked about the meaning of religion in their everyday life, some made an immediate association with prejudice. They seeming implied that if religion did not affect them, then others would not be able to have their judgments affected by their religion either - meaning others would not discriminate against them based on religious factors. By affect, it seems that some participants understood negatively constrain.

Also, none of the Shia interviewees wore the headscarf, so there would not have been outside aspects that would put them in the Muslim category in the eyes of fellow Spaniards.

*'Religion does not affect me in my daily life. Also my complexion ... that helps or influences things in a way; people do not directly associate me with it [Islam]. At least I don't feel it [religion] affects me. Perhaps when I say I don't eat pork there are comments, 'Why? Are you Muslim? How come?' The usual questions which you're not always in the mood to answer. But in general [it does not affect me] not too much, I've been here a long time so ... As a believer I know I should not dress like I do, at least in the summer, because to cover yourself is an obligation, let's say, a religious obligation, you ought to do it, I believe in it but don't practice it [...] My father tried to teach me religion and insisted a lot on many things although never forced me to cover myself [...] When I came to Spain things changed and I chose my path in life and I dress the way I like. When I go to Lebanon I wear normal clothes, of course to me to dress normal is to avoid short or very short clothes [...] or wear sleeveless tops although I do wear short sleeve tops and things like that.'*

(Min\_Min\_05)

#### **4.2.2 Religion as flexible/fixed**

The notion of flexibility is important because religious doctrines, traditions and practices have typically (and formally) supported gender traditionalism and gender hierarchy. One question we explore in FEMCIT is whether individuals, in particular our study participants, view religious ideologies as such or conversely have more flexible interpretations which permit both (a) holding religious convictions in increasingly egalitarian societies and contexts, and (b) using religion as a resource.

This section examines whether and how participants' personal approach to religion is flexible or fixed. Our data suggest that flexible/fixed representations are independent of faith adherence although more women in the Catholic group than in any other used a discourse suggesting their view of religion is relatively more fixed than that of their Evangelical, Sunni, and Shia counterparts. For example, many Catholic participants used the expression 'I was born Catholic' which signals they perceive Catholicism as an established or fixed attribute, something that you are, rather than something you become:

*'I have always been Catholic, I mean logically I was born Catholic from a Catholic family and was baptised, took the first communion and so on ... then I became old enough to know what I was doing, now I am Catholic because it is my conviction.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

Conversely, Evangelicals tend to view religion in more flexible terms possibly because most of them converted to Evangelism from Catholicism, which in itself reflects choice and flexibility:

*'Well, yes Christian or Catholic religion is, to me ... I mean I belonged to it for 21 years ... I was Catholic and still am because we are all Catholic [...] but now I read the Bible, I go to listen to the word of God with the Bible ... and so it is a different way of looking for God. It has been so rewarding and fulfilling that I feel better now than when I belonged to the Catholic Church.'*

(Min\_Maj\_02)

The quote above shows how different traditions within one denomination (i.e. Christianity) leads to individual to using religious texts in different ways. For example, the Evangelical woman cited above uses the Bible as a resource while she did not do so back when she was Catholic.

Muslims also view Islamic teachings and doctrine as subject to interpretation. For example, the Sunni participant quoted below implies there are biased and unbiased interpretations of Islam:

*'This is what the media conveys, right? Well, I suppose it is a product of ignorance, and perhaps when they [reporters] went to talk to someone, they talked to the wrong person, right? The person with less unbiased and independent information about what Islam is.'*

(Maj\_Min\_04)

Muslim participants generally see Islam as flexible, which is intuitive considering their need to adapt to a majority Catholic (and Western) environment. Furthermore, Muslim participants' discourses suggest flexibility is built into the very core of Islam in very specific ways that will be discussed later.

Table 8 offers a categorisation of how women in our study represent the different dimensions where they are using religion in flexible ways. We grouped the issues mentioned by interviewees into three categories: individual, community, and institutional. Also, we made a distinction between explicit and implicit discourses.

**Table 8 Religion as flexible resource**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Direct/ explicit</b>	<b>Indirect/ implicit</b>
Personal level	Religion as choice, conversion	Studying the Bible/Quran
	Practices versus beliefs	Being part of a group whose member share common values
	Women's roles	Gaining awareness of one's faith when meeting different people.
	Hijab as cultural and situational	
Congregation	Women as religious leaders	Encouraging more Muslim women to participate in the community
	Women's rights in Islam and Christianity	From memorising to discussing and learning
	Social cohesion	Differences among cities and communities
Institutional	Women leading Opening up for female priests	Flexible/new doctrines or interpretations of doctrines
	Flexible time/place for saying the prayers	From gender to sexuality as the main issue of contestation

### ***Flexibility at the personal level***

Several participants implied that flexibility stems from the separation of practices and beliefs:

*'I consider myself a Muslim, I was raised as a Muslim, I don't lead a particularly religious life, I don't practice religious principles except in ... very few things like I don't eat pork. I am a great believer, but I do not practice.'*  
(Min\_Min\_05)

When practice and belief need not be connected, exceptions to religious norms ensue. For example, the interviewee below has a relaxed attitude to norms such as alcohol or Ramadan:

*'In fact we drink wine and things like that if we feel like it, you know? [...] We are not your typical strict family. [...] At the beginning I used to do Ramadan [...] now I only pray from time to time [...].'*  
(Min\_Min\_03)

Some participants reclaim a more relevant role for women in Islam. They flexibly interpret Islamic texts to emphasise how women, in this case the Muhammad's wives, did have an important role in defining and expanding Islam:

*'The prophet's wives, I admire them quite a lot because they were very: 'I have my opinion' ... and they would correct men when, at that time, that was not common [...] a lot of people think that the prophet was the only one who help expand Islam but his wife helped him a lot.'*  
(Maj\_Min\_03)

Also, at a personal level, some interviewees see religion as a symbolic place, specifically a refuge, thereby implying a less dogmatic or fixed approach to faith and one that is simply more comforting or reassuring:

*'My religion is my refuge, it is what I look for, and it's my peace and tranquillity. When I forget that and I focus on material aspects of life I feel lost. Then I go back to my hideout, the refuge that protects me.'*  
(Maj\_Min\_02)

Despite the fact that most non-Muslims have universal interpretations of what the hijab means, there is tremendous flexibility in how actual Muslims view the wearing and purpose of the headscarf. This flexibility suggest the taking the hijab on/off is cultural and situational decision, full of subtlety and nuance:

*'Once I was in the subway and someone next to me said "I don't understand why a young and beautiful woman wears a headscarf" [...] Once I got a little lost and didn't know where I was and ... I asked a woman and she run as if [...] I was going to rob her or I don't know what. [...] Once I was looking for something inside my pocket and a couple next to me left, as I was going to blow myself. [...] Sometimes in empty streets, at night [...] I take off my headscarf so as to not attract attention. I also feel fear.'*

(Maj\_Min\_05)

For the interviewee below the hijab is implicitly understood as a mechanism to avoid being a fashion slave:

*'Today women are slaves ... slaves of many things, especially the mirror, they way they look before going out ... It is not about religion or the headscarf it is about elegance.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

The next citation suggests that the headscarf is also used as a tool for self-control. For this Sunni participant the headscarf acts as a reminder of who she has chosen (and therefore wants) to be:

*'In a way the headscarf is a reminder of who you are, wearing it is important for your behaviour. A Muslim should never scream, insult, lie, disrespect others and so forth. [...] In a way, it [the headscarf] corrects you [...] controls you so that you don't do things that you know are bad. [...] I do not wear the headscarf because I do not feel ready.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

### ***Flexibility at the congregation/community level***

At the congregation level, religion is often viewed as a tool for cohesion. For instance, the Catholic woman cited next implies that religion is a mechanism for social integration and a source of companionship and inclusion:

*'Wherever I go I look for a church because I feel like more linked to my own beliefs as a Catholic woman, I find companionship ... even if you really are completely isolated from the others, who you don't know ... [...] But at least you no longer feel alone.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)



Another example, the woman quoted below first describes her diverse religious background and then explains how 'here', in Spain, she considers herself a Muslim. First, her statement implies her religious identity is flexible and situational. Second, this might be instrumental in the sense that when abroad, religion becomes a form of connection to her background and birthplace, her kind and so she feels more of a Muslim:

*'Well, as you know, I am Lebanese, from Beirut ... and I come, well, from a multicultural context; in my family there are many religions, my family is a bit mixed, my father is Russian, my mother is Muslim and I am half Muslim, but here I consider myself Muslim, although there are things that I don't practice.'*  
(Min\_Min\_03)

Also at the community level, some participants showed a flexible approach to religion by supporting and advocating a more formal role for women in leadership positions within the church. For example, the Catholic woman quoted below complains that while women are very much engaged in Church activities, they still don't have formal titles like men do.

*'Well the thing is, I don't understand why women still don't have a more relevant role ... a more representative role in the church, yes sir. [...] In fact, she does have a significant role, but not formally.'*  
(Maj\_Maj\_01)

Churches and religious communities are also viewed as different, therefore flexible. In fact, the testimony of this Sunni woman suggests she prefers communities with a more Arab background or flavour such as those in the South of Spain:

*'[In Seville, Cordoba, Granada] these people, almost all have ... there are people of pure Spanish Christian blood, but there is something Arab in their behaviour. Arab culture is felt wherever you go.'*  
(Maj\_Min\_02)

For some interviewees (Sunni and Evangelical) understanding and learning was described as an important part of their faith and religious identity. Sacred texts and religion are not viewed as monolithic, but rather as subjects open to interpretation and discussion in the context of the community. Individuals learn about religion when reading the Bible or the Qur'an but also in their social interactions, which suggests that religiosity is malleable and always 'under construction'. This also suggests religion is a mechanism for bonding and finding similar others, and that the

religious experience may well be the origin of social connections but also, and importantly, religiosity is strengthened as a result.

*'When you speak with someone who thinks like you, together you find things that you didn't know and you learn together.'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

Women's rights and gender equality have changed in some communities (e.g. Lebanon), presumably as a result of more flexible social interpretations of the Qur'an:

*'From what I see in Lebanon they [gender relations] are changing, I see things I did not see before, for example it is now normal groups of boys and girls friends going out together. Also, the idea that women live in an apartment by themselves. Well ... a single woman ... you never know what happens in there [the apartment]. So now it is more normal when a woman does this and nobody is suspicious, has thoughts, or makes comments. [...] It's starting to be noticeable ... [...] Women have another ... a more relevant role, it is noticeable.'*

(Min\_Min\_05)

The woman above describes how inter-gender interaction is more permissive and how women have gained freedom despite traditional views and prescriptions such as 'single women must not live alone'.

Earlier we mentioned flexibility appears to be built into Islam. Some interviewees discussed how important it is to adapt to the times, which requires negotiation and flexible interpretation of the Qur'an. According to some Muslim interviewees, culture, and not religion, is to blame for the oppression of women. The testimony of this Sunni woman signals that different cultures practice religion differently, while religion itself is something quite stable:

*'Covering yourself has a religion foundation but going out does not, men and women are equals in that regard [...] it depends on the country and the culture ... Each interprets freely from the Qur'an [...] For example, stoning is in the Qur'an [...] it is there so that they [women] are scared and don't cheat on their husbands, but it also concerns men [...] cheating is a sin but to conduct a stoning four individuals must have witnessed it [the infidelity] [...] but then people have interpreted this in their own way, taking what they want, forgetting what they don't want and it's got to do more with culture than religion.'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

The implication is that, since it is so difficult to meet certain Qur'an requirement (e.g. four witnesses to prove infidelity), certain norms and rules exist mostly as deterrents. However, individuals have interpreted the Qur'an in a fragmented (e.g. 'taking what you want, forgetting what you don't want') ways often leading to disadvantages for women.

The same Sunni interviewee adds:

*'I respect my religion; things should be the way religion says. But in the world we live, things have changed, one has to adapt more [...] otherwise it is going against society. I am not saying one should go out to drink but a woman needs not avoid male or female friends and necessarily stay at home [...] from my point of view, things should not be as strict [...] as long as you are not committing a sin you need not stop talking to a man or have male friends ...'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

Orthodox views and interpretations of Islam and the Qur'an suggest that inter-gender interaction is often viewed a temptation. However, the participant above believes rules of this kind are too strict and need not be followed rigorously. The participant cited above derives a lesson from Islamic teachings (e.g. you should not have a physical or flirtatious relation with a member of the opposite sex) while she supports engaging in healthy, and natural social interaction (e.g., having male friends). Some of the Sunni women in our study argued that 'blaming religion' for existing norms regarding female dress code is an error. They asserted that such misunderstandings are the result of patriarchal interpretations of Islamic teachings. In addition, some participants noted that social norms, including dress code, are similar for men and women. Thus, these women implied that the Qur'an is reinterpreted in gendered and country specific ways, often creating disadvantages for women.

Also, the testimony of this woman illustrates how endorsing more progressive views is incompatible with rigid interpretations of Catholicism in this case:

*'Getting a university degree, becoming a nun ... Each woman has to find her independence within society [...] So, this thing about being a housewife, being submissive and all those concepts sometimes conveyed by Catholicism are completely dated. I mean, a woman needs to decide where she wants to be in society, whether she wants a partner or not, whether she wants to have children or not, right?'*

(Maj\_Maj\_04)

Similarly:

*'I think that [gender equality] ... well, I don't know, we all think our own way but, the way I see it, at times the Bible has been interpreted wrong. If you study the bible in-depth, there aren't as many differences [between men and women] and women should not be subordinated to men at all.'*

(Min\_Maj\_01)

The Catholic interviewee quoted above asserts that a careful examination of the Bible would debunk certain stereotypes and a view of Catholicism as male-centred. She argues that the Bible was interpreted erroneously.

### ***Flexibility at the institutional level***

Some interviewees suggest there have been changes in the general attitudes of the church:

*'Those issues [contraception, abortion], rather than discussing them directly [...] the Catholic Church can't say yes to some of them ... can't endorse the idea that women are too busy with work and have no time to have children. We know we have to reproduce and that we must have children. Now, the Church accepts that people don't have many kids if you can't provide for them [...] Let's say they [the Church] can't directly approve of certain things.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

The participant quoted above is making an indirect reference to abortion and contraception: 'they [the Church] can't directly approve of certain things', meaning the Catholic Church cannot explicitly endorse contraception but does so implicitly 'the Church accepts people don't have many kids'.

Some participants indirectly signaled that there should be more flexibility regarding the time and the place for praying:

*'I like churches very much and go with someone, for example, my father in law, he was a priest and, aside from that I do like to go to Sunday mass sometimes, because I love churches, and I go in there do my own thing, as if I was at a mosque. That is, I pray but without anyone watching me, [I pray] to myself.'*

(Min\_Min\_03)

Notions of flexibility are built into Islam's conceptions of citizenship according to some interviewees.

*'I will tell you one thing ... an example, our prophet, his neighbour was Jewish. But they were good neighbours, respected each other, each in their religion, but respected each other and got along well ... to the point that, the Jew had to sell his house and he put it out for a very high prize [...] People thought the house was not worth that much. He [the prophet] said, I am not selling the house, I am selling my neighbour [...] So, to us it is the same thing ... wherever you go you need to accept the way things are in that place.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

This woman connects Muhammad's story to the notion of adapting to the norms of the place you live in. Strictly speaking, the association is not direct but the specific lesson that one needs to show respect to those around him/her, regardless of who they are. The term 'neighbour' is interpreted figuratively and presumably represents society, in this case Spanish society.

Given the universalistic orientation of Islam it is important that there are norms that lend themselves to the interpretation that diversity and cultural variety are to be respected. Although the previous quote points to that direction, other participants were even more explicit:

*'Islam, in a way, tells you that you need to respect the laws of the country where you live [...] If you move to a country that is not your own and has laws different to the ones you are used to, you need to respect such laws above anything else. Qur'an has all kinds of laws, so it refers to all kinds of laws, as long as they don't conflict with your religion. For example if such law forbids praying or going to the mosque, then it is affecting you and your religion ... but anything that has to do with social and political laws you need to respect.'*

(Maj\_Min\_03)

The fragment above clearly states that a country's laws must be respected and followed so long as they don't interfere with essential religious rights such as the right to pray. It is plausible that this Sunni respondent offered this answer as a result of being more aware of her migrant background and need for adaptation to a different context. Thus, the Qur'an appears instrumental in that it lends itself to interpretation so as to facilitate social and cultural adjustment.

Again Islamic teachings are viewed as instrumental for social harmony in diversity because:

*'Many of us come to Islam from different origins'.*

(Maj\_Min\_04)

*'So, citizenship, here, even though I am not Spanish, I need to follow some rules, which are not my rules, but do not hurt me as a Muslim. It is one way of living with these people, who have a different culture, a different way of looking at life ... and well, of respecting and be respected.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

In sum, Islam provides mechanisms for adaptation and integration but also, simultaneously it offers means for protecting the distinctiveness of Muslim (e.g. religious Islamic law comes first) thereby preventing socio-cultural assimilation and the loss of Muslim cultural and religious distinctiveness.

#### **4.2.3 Admired religious figures**

The following section describes respondents' answers when asked about men and women they admired within their respective religious and cultural traditions.

Examining these responses we gain insight into both their religious identity and their view of men and women, gender roles and so forth.

##### ***Admired Christian women***

Admired female figures among Christian participants were women such as the Virgin Mary or Mother Theresa of Calcutta, that is, prominent figures within the Catholic tradition. However, a number of Christian interviewees often made an allusion to 'anonymous people' or 'invisible people':

*'Well we all think about Theresa of Calcutta, right? But there are many invisible people who are not Theresa of Calcutta. There are people who*

*devote their lives entirely to the sick, feed other people ... it's natural, we don't know those people because they don't want to be known.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

Admiration is often shown toward women possessing attributes such as charity, compassion and kindness. Catholic and Evangelical interviewees discuss how these women are not always known.

*'Within my religion ... well, the truth is they are anonymous. And then ... I don't know, Theresa of Calcutta ... Saint Teresa of Jesus, who, to me, was always more Evangelical than Catholic. [...] Santa Theresa said "Only God is enough" ... meaning, Christ, God, only that.'*

(Min\_Maj\_01)

One Catholic woman contrasts the religious figures she admires with those admired by the Evangelical community:

*'I admire the Virgin Mary. Our religion is not like Evangelicals'. We do believe in the Virgin Mary.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_02)

*'Yes, yes there are, there are many women who really are ... hard-working not merely religiously but also socially ... such as ... well, we could even start naming Saint Teresa of Jesus whose job was religious ... but a lot of people like Theresa of Calcutta ... here there is a chapel dedicated to María Micaela who funded Adoratrices del Santísimo Sacramento, she went from being a little miss in Madrid to helping homeless women and help them get out of their bad lives so that they could take care of their children ... There are a lot of admirable women within the Catholic Church.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_04)

In addition to well-known figures already: Saint Teresa of Jesus and Teresa of Calcutta, this Catholic participant admires another religious woman who, she describes, as having experienced a change in her life. The idea of a vital turn point is recurrent; some interviewees signal admiration for people who changed and reoriented their lives.

Other participants adopt a closer or more personal approach and mention friends and acquaintances among the people they admire:

*'I have a friend, Pilar, who is a devout woman ... she is a school teacher and her faith is incredible ... sometimes she has needed help nonetheless when you talk to her she conveys faith, strength ... [...] She has no negativity, she*

*is always in good spirits ... to me, she lives focusing on her faith ... she doesn't have a home, a job, a husband ... she is a single mother [...] She says it is all in God's hands and keeps going [...] When I need to pray I call her, we get together and talk ... I was with her just now ... she is a real blessing.'*

(Min\_Maj\_02)

This participant admires qualities such as optimism, strength, and faith. Similarly, the Evangelical participant below talks about a close friend:

*'I admire an extraordinary woman, Mercedes, who promoted all this [church, community]. I think she is a couple of years younger than me. She's worth a lot. She is extraordinary; humble ... she's good at everything. I admire her with a passion.'*

(Min\_Maj\_04)

In general, interviewees are more specific and articulate when describing admired others who are also close to them. However, one interviewee offers a very detailed account of Esther, making references to attributes such as courage and strength.

*'Not exactly within my religion but there are many women figures I admire. For example, in the Bible, in the Old Testament there is a woman I admire deeply named Esther, perhaps not many people know about her ... but she was real, she existed. [...] She was chosen by God to save a community. This community was enslaved and she was chosen; chosen by a king, she was a simple young woman; the queen failed him and he decided to find a substitute for the queen. [...] Esther had just arrived to that town, she was a young pretty woman [...] beauty is a virtue whether you want it or not. Esther's uncle told her "look, you know what we are going to do? We are going to the party the king is organising to choose a new wife ... You will wear your best clothes and you will go. You will be discreetly noticeable". She did that. But, since she was a religious woman and loyal to God, who made her see beyond her physical beauty, because she was also very smart [...] So she did what her uncle said and the king chose her and made her queen. She fought and fought to save that community. Since then she became a role model for many women. A lot of us, we who believe in that superior being that is God and believe in God's miracles, admire that woman because of her faith, strength, bravery, and especially because she consented to be the instrument of God. She always did what God ordered.'*

(Min\_Maj\_03)

According to this account, Esther is admired because of her youth and beauty - which are stereotypical female traits - but also because she was humble about it (e.g., saw beyond her physical beauty), faithful to God, and brave. Interestingly, the interviewee points out that her most valuable quality is that she put all her qualities in God's hands and 'consented to be the instrument of god'.



### **Admired Christian men**

The same pattern was observed when interviewees discussed admired male Christian figures. Some participants mention friends and people within their communities:

*'I'm not that into Saints ... [...] There are men who have fought against poverty ... not a long time ago, Vicente [a friend] died, he is still so close to us, and he still does because people still think about him when they do [good] things, there must be a lot of people for whom he is role model. He was a true saint, one of those role models like Jesus Christ who taught us so many things. But this man [Vicente] is there, tangible, how he fought until the end, and he never thought he was doing great things.'*

(Min\_Maj\_01)

The testimony above is interesting because a personal friend or acquaintance is put at the same level as symbolic figures such as Jesus Christ. It is also relevant that the interviewee appreciates how this man is 'tangible' versus abstract. Even though Evangelicals experience God in a personal way, the fragment above suggests that concrete and physical figures are more powerful. Qualities related to bravery and modesty are mentioned as the most relevant.

One Evangelical woman puts it this way:

*'One man I admire is Juan Luis, adjunct priest [of this church], he was just preaching because the regular priest is on holiday in Sweden but I imagine he is also preaching there because he never, ever takes holidays really. Juan Luis is a very devout man, an entrepreneurial man, and a man who cheers you up, and who has a great personality. He arrived three years ago and I have witnessed his growth, his desire to look for God, his growth in all areas of his life, as a person, as a brother, as a Shepherd, as a businessman.'*

(Min\_Maj\_02)

This fragment indicates that uplifting and cheerful people are very much admired. These characteristics are related to endurance and bravery - i.e. individuals who simply won't give up and carry out their duty in a happy manner. Again, the notion of change and personal growth is mentioned as positive. Finally, an interesting attribute, entrepreneurship is also mentioned as an admired trait.

The Evangelical woman quoted below also admires close male figures, the priest of her church who is also the founder.

*'I admire my priest and also the person who started this church with me, with our group [...] Juan Antonio Monroy, who founded this church; he is a writer, an extraordinary person.'*

(Min\_Maj\_04)

Catholic participants are more prone to thinking and talking about traditional Christian figures such as Jesus Christ. Also, explanations for such admiration appear more archetypal. For example:

*'Jesus. That's it. [I admire him] because he came to Earth and set an example [for the rest of us].'*

(Maj\_Maj\_02)

Similarly, an Evangelical participant in a less textbook and more passionate manner says:

*'Yes. [I admire] Jesus Christ ... he was, I dare say, that person who gave his life for me, for you, for all those who want to believe in him, and even if they don't want to, more so in this country. People are very incredulous in this country. But I am convinced that I feel him, that I believe him, that God chose him to come to this earth to suffer; he lived as a poor man when he didn't need to; he did it to set an example for us, so that we'd see how much strength he had, his capacity to get over things [...] he suffered, he was humiliated, betrayed ... [...] At 33 he was crucified, abused, and killed; died for us, for our sins and humanity's evil [...] I admire him because he was the person who most suffered for us, who stood more humiliation in life, and he was the person who overcame all that because of his love for us.'*

(Min\_Maj\_03)

This participant indicates that Jesus' main attribute was his capacity to love; this woman shows admiration for a person, Jesus Christ, who stood suffering, physical pain, betrayal, etc., because he cared deeply about his fellow human beings. So, her feeling appears to be one of profound gratitude and acknowledgment.

The concept of anonymity also comes up when talking about admired men:

*'Well, as a matter of fact, men have also done the same type of deeds [same as women], right? There are missionary brothers who have devoted their lives to ... well, bring culture to places ... or health to impoverished places, right? I can't think of names right now but there really are a lot of admirable men. Spiritually, I admire great mystics such as San Juan de la Cruz who*

*have achieved such a level of personal growth ... I admire both social and the spiritual deeds.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_04)

Also:

*'Well, they are anonymous [...] There are people, I don't know, who have led a very devoted life, who have been very committed. That deserves admiration.'*

(Min\_Maj\_01)

It is interesting how admired men are valued to the extent that they possess what could be viewed as stereotypically female traits such as kindness, personal sacrifice and commitment. This suggests that religious admiration is not as gendered as, say, professional admiration. Admired men are not represented to stand out because of physical attributes (while admired women are sometimes described as beautiful) but, outside this difference, admired men and women are thought to possess very similar qualities and seemed admired largely because of the same reasons.

#### **4.2.4 Admired Muslim figures**

##### ***Admired Muslim women***

Muslim participants were more likely than Christians to include a family member among both admired men and admired women. In the case of female figures, mothers are regarded as important and special:

*'My mother, for example ... A poet, but I am not sure that she was Shia, but she was an old poet called [name], she is like Teresa de Ávila, Saint Teresa of Jesus it's the same. She was a mystic, the first woman ... well, the story was that she was a woman of the world ... she worked, although I don't remember her profession, and then all of a sudden she would turn mystic and would write wonderful poems ... so she is very much admired.'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

The Shia participant above mentions her mother who is first to come to mind. Then she describes a Muslim poet and says she admires her multifaceted qualities, she was a professional woman and then became an acclaimed poet, a mystic. So she had both religious qualities and was professionally prominent. It is interesting how this participant offers the interviewer the Christian equivalent so as to bridge the gap between the cultural and religion gap with the researcher.

The fragment below shows how, for this respondent, admired women are women with marked nurturing traits, which, in the gender literature are prescriptive for women.

*'The person I admire the most is my mother because of who she is, perhaps she is not your typical Muslim woman wearing a headscarf and praying five times a day and following Muslim norms [...] but all else mentioned in Islam, she has it ... not because Islam mandates it but because she is like that. I think she is the nicest person I have ever met. Meaning, she worries about others, suffers if she sees other people suffering, she is very polite, speaks well, would never insult you or raise her voice at you, lying ... never. [...] For my mother I feel respect.'*

(Maj\_Min\_03)

This participant makes the point that it is a person's inner nature and motivation, and not so much conventional religious manifestations (e.g. praying five times a day) that make an individual admirable. This interviewee claims that her mother is intrinsically kind, thus, her kindness does not result from applying Islamic teachings or norms to her life but rather, she is naturally good; goodness and altruism do not result from leading a religious life but rather are her part of her true nature. So, the admired characteristic is authenticity.

Other Muslim respondents choose women who represent strength and courage, women who had their own views, who sometimes rebelled against their context:

*'I don't know if she is real or fiction, from the book I was reading ... Sultana ... I read a lot of books on her story [...] I admire her for all she fought for. She was a rebel; everything was against her, her own family. And especially because in Saudi Arabia all is more narrow-minded, you know? I admire her because in a way I have also been a bit of a rebel.'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

Another Sunni participant says:

*'I am not impressed by many people ... I am more impressed by average people, hard working people ... for example, widows who become responsible for a family ... [...] There is a person who was an Arab writer, I studied her, she is Egyptian, her name is Fadwa Tokan. This woman learned to read with her brother. He had the opportunity to go to school while she, as a woman, didn't ... [...] She is a fighter, she wrote a lot of, how do you call it, biographies, novels, poetry ...'*

(Maj\_Min\_05)

The interviewee quoted above does not specifically refer to religious figures. First she argues she is not easily impressed in general, that she admires people who rise above the circumstances with their effort and hard work such as widows. Then she discusses another example, a poet who also overcame the limitations of her context and essentially self-taught reading and writing to later become an acclaimed writer and poet.

Admiration also comes sometimes from being highly educated and firm in one's beliefs but simultaneously open-minded and fearless of having contact with dissimilar people. According to this Shia woman:

*'I had a friend in Lebanon ... [...] She is Lebanese but of Iranian origin, in the Middle East, many Iranians live in Lebanon. This woman did not have much in common with me, but we were very good friends, she always wore the headscarf, always well covered, from a religious family, but at the same time very open-minded [...] I admired her because she was one of the best students ... she mixed herself with Christians, in the Christian areas ...'*

(Min\_Min\_03)

The next citation also emphasises strong women who overcame contextual barriers. For example, women who would engage in intellectual as well as religious discussion and would stand for their views in male dominated environments:

*'Also Aisha, Safiya, the prophet's wives, I admire them quite a lot because they were very: 'I have my opinion' ... and they would correct men when, at that time, that was not common [...] a lot of people think that the prophet was the only one who help expand Islam but his wife helped him a lot.'*

(Maj\_Min\_03)

Also, the paragraph above suggests women did have an important religious role, even a key or leadership role, even though sometimes this is not known or discussed.

The next interviewee points out how finding a female role model is not easy in Islam. She talks about a friend but the impression is that the example was available but that deep down the interviewee thinks that nobody is a good enough role model, or in her words, 'nobody is perfect'.

*'There are many people I admire. People who behave correctly, I admire. [...] I have for instance a friend who just left, but I admire her because she is my friend [not because she is a role model]. A religious role model is not easy to find [...] nobody is perfect.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

### **Admired Muslim Men**

Not surprisingly, many participants chose Muhammad as their admired male religious figure. For example:

*'[I admire] my prophet Muhammad because he was persecuted and became poor because of that, and still he preached and preached the word [of God]. And he was told that if he stopped preaching he would no longer be persecuted. But he continued and didn't care, he was humiliated many times ... and still he carried on, it's like he was perseverant. And that's what I admire about him, you know?'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

*'The prophet Muhammad ... he is an example of all good things.'*

(Maj\_Min\_05)

Above all, Muhammad is portrayed as brave, perseverant, confident and strong. A Shia participant talked about Imam Ali:

*'There is an historical character very important in the community: Imam Ali. He was a wise man and had many virtues that were told about him, he was a great writer, he had a teachings book that was very well known and very well written, and it's a praying book, a reference book.'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

The following interviewee talks about a male figure she admires because of his wisdom:

*'There is a Sheik, and when I say Sheik people in Spain understand a powerful, prestigious man, from the Persian Gulf, with influence and harem and everything. But no, I am talking about a religious figure, like a priest, it's a product of studying and getting a kind of degree. He did a little while ago, from Ethiopia, and he is an important religious figure who everybody went to for advice [...] He is the most recent [that comes to mind] As historical figures, Saladino, who studied a lot in his time and always had a lot of impact.'*

(Min\_Min\_05)

Other participants preferred to talk about closer male figures, specifically family figures:

*'I admire my father in law, he's Spanish, he used to be a priest and he's a very open-minded person, not extremist at all, he saw me get married the Muslim way in Lebanon and I admire him ... because perhaps not all people accept that a Christian son gets married by the Muslim rite. I also admire him because he's well educated.'*

(Min\_Min\_03)

Tolerance and open-mindedness are the qualities that stand out in her father in law. She describes how someone else may not have been as respectful or accepting of faith diversity within the family.

Finally, this Sunni interviewee shows admiration but her father and, especially, her boyfriend who converted to Islam. It is interesting that this and the previous quote refer to members of the participant's political family and also the stories are about religious tolerance from Christians. It seems then that these Muslim women are particularly appreciative of attempts to understand Islam made by people from other religious traditions.

*'[I also admire] my father quite a lot, and my boyfriend a lot ... he [my boyfriend] went from even rejecting Islam because he didn't know anything about it, [he knew Islam] from the media, from what people say ... And I don't blame him because most people [do that]. At the beginning [at community meetings] he [boyfriend] would just listen and then when someone [new] came he was the one who helped that person and everybody would be "how do you know so much? How have you, in five months, learned what a normal person would have taken him ten years?" He knows a lot, he has an answer for everything; he is a very calm person, very polite.'*

(Maj\_Min\_03)

#### **4.2.5 Concluding remarks**

This section (Section 4.2) examined how participants describe their identity, their religious identity, and religious practices. Second we explored admired religious figures thereby getting a different angle of what participants value in their religious traditions and also a quick indirect glimpse on gender views, or views of men and women.

We have learned that for minorities, all groups except Catholics, identity, religious identity and the religious experience is more complex, multifaceted, and situational. Catholics on the other hand, seem to view these aspects more statically and often offer an uncomplicated view of who they are.

### **4.3 Religion and Gender**

This section examines discourses on gender equality, including gender roles and relations, as well as feminism and the women's movement. Thus, this chapter will address questions such as the extent to which interviewees embrace or react against equality, how are women's rights discussed, how are gender roles and gender relations practiced and viewed, whether or not these (i.e. roles and relations) are perceived to be changing, and how are women's movements and feminism perceived, including what their impact (or lack thereof) has been on participants lives and opinions.

#### **4.3.1 Women's issues**

##### ***Dress code in Islam***

Gender issues discussed among Sunni (not Shia) Muslim women in the study are largely related to dress code. In fact, reference to dress norms and clothing came up when asked about equality, gender roles, as well as when asked about women issues, even discrimination or experienced barriers. In sum, the clothing theme appeared important and relevant to a number of addressed throughout this report.

Several interviewees regarded the headscarf as something often more connected to culture than religion, although all respondents were aware that the Qur'an mandates that women (but also men) cover themselves in public. However, the extent of covering required was represented as quite flexible and often open to interpretation. This discussion will be extended later in the section on 'flexible interpretations'.

Some of the Sunni women interviewed argued that 'blaming religion' for existing norms regarding female dress code is a mistake. Some interviewees asserted that such misunderstandings are the result of patriarchal interpretations of Islamic



teachings. In addition, some participants noted that social norms, including dress code, are similar for men and women. Thus these women implied that the Qur'an is reinterpreted in gendered and country specific ways, often creating disadvantages for women, which in turn leads 'outsiders' to view women as oppressed:

*'Many aspects have a religious base but not all ... others come from culture [...] some people mix up the two, religion and culture.'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

*'It (dress code) is actually the same for men. Men can't show their arms or legs. There is also a dress code for them but it's not known or discussed as much. It is also recommended that men wear long shirts and pants. [...] Men should not wear tight clothes [...] The reason is the same as for women even though we (women) are not as inclined [to pay attention to physical aspects] [...] The only real difference is the headscarf because men don't have long hair thus there is nothing to cover [...].'*

(Maj\_Min\_03)

It is interesting to note that, according to the fragment above, the justification for more permissive dress norms for men is the notion that women are not as visceral or impulsive, therefore not as likely to act on or be influenced by, about men's physical attractiveness. This in itself represents a stereotyped view of men and women.

When asked about whether or not gender relations are changing some Sunni interviewees connected it to dress norms and their implications, including the culture specific dimension. Dress code is therefore thought to be key in articulating social and, especially, gender interaction:

*'My mother is from the Rif, a part of Morocco that is a bit conservative. Go there wearing a swim suit and they [men] will be all over you! Conversely, Tangier is more progressive and normal [...] I have even seen girls wearing mini-skirts in Tangier.'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

Again, the idea, that men can hardly control themselves comes up: 'men will be all over you', which conveniently means women would better follow the established dress norms.

Younger Sunni interviewees express conflicting views with regards to wearing the scarf. These conflicts most likely stem from the fact that they live in a Western culture (Roald, 2001). It is plausible that their desire to blend in makes them view

the headscarf as something that immediately differentiates them from the rest. Rationally, some interviewees understand the point behind covering but are nonetheless conflicted about taking this step because of the social context:

*'Regarding the headscarf ... let's see, I find it difficult because I have been raised here [Spain]. Qur'an mandates wearing the headscarf but does not explain why. Well ... it is so that when a man talks to you he doesn't pay attention to physical beauty ... the point is that he talks to you and hears what you say ... but I still find it [wearing the headscarf] difficult.'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

One Sunni participant more recently arrived in Spain, expressed very mixed feelings about wearing the headscarf. Her testimony conveyed deep awareness of how that attracted more attention even generated rejection around her. She admitted she sometimes opted for not wearing so as to feel safer. She described situations where unknown people walked up to her and inquired about the headscarf in disrespectful ways. Interestingly, this respondent has not been in Spain for very long, which may suggest other interviewees who related similar episodes in a more forgiving tone have perhaps grown used to some level of discrimination and have learned to cope with it to the point that discriminatory behaviours are no longer salient or relevant.

Many of the Sunni women interviewed are well aware of the challenges posed by adhering to the headscarf norm in a Western country like Spain. For these women wearing the hijab seems to become something quite profound and of far reaching consequences. It should, therefore, be a conscious and thought through decision. The headscarf is intended to provide protection for a woman, while at the same time it offers a guarantee that she will be heard for whom she is, not for her appearance. Nevertheless, in a country like Spain hijab is likely to create controversy and attract attention from the wider society thereby defeating its primary purpose of diverting attention:

*'Some women wear it because of culture or to avoid criticism from others or family members ... [...] But Islam says that you wear the headscarf when you feel ready [...] wearing the headscarf takes courage, you are going to have to defend it. In the West, you know you are going to face problems such as "look at this submissive woman, her father or husband forces her to wear it and she consents" ...'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

The same interviewee does not agree with the idea that wearing the scarf should be the result of social pressure. In other words, to wear it or not should be the result of free personal choice and how important the headscarf is (or is not) to one's religious identity, to 'who you are'; in this sense, personal choice should not be influenced by family or social context.

*'The point [of the headscarf] is that a woman can be confident that no one is going to bother her, also that she can distinguish herself from other women, that people know you are a Muslim. If you wear a headscarf you know what you should and should not do. [...] In a way the headscarf is a reminder of who you are, wearing it is important for your behaviour. A Muslim should never scream, insult, lie, disrespect others and so forth. [...] In a way, it [the headscarf] corrects you [...] controls you so that you don't do things that you know are bad. [...] I do not wear the headscarf because I do not feel ready. Some women wear it but they clearly are not ready and then I wonder "why does she wear it? She is disrespectful and rude ...".'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

The citation above suggests that the headscarf is used as a tool or mechanism for self-control, but also as a tool in the practical, every day following of the path of Islam - reminding her of the religious prescriptions she feels she must follow. In the social psychological literature the link attitude-behaviour has been proven to be two-directional and this is a magnificent example. In other words, a woman wears the headscarf because she believes she should (belief→behaviour), but also and interestingly, the actual wearing of the headscarf (behaviour) shapes her initial belief making it stronger. The headscarf acts as a reminder of who she has chosen and therefore wants to be. The behaviour is both a product of and an intensifier of such beliefs.

Traditionally attitudes have been thought to shape behaviour. For example, I believe something thus I act accordingly. In this sense attitudes are considered predictors of behaviour. But social psychology has demonstrated that the attitude-behaviour link is not so simple. Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) proved that when human actions are not sufficiently explained by external rewards or coercion, individuals experience dissonance, which can be reduced by increasing belief in our intrinsic motivations for a given action. In other words, out of personal choice, this Sunni woman decides to wear the headscarf but at times her behaviour could contradict what the headscarf implies. Then she will experience discomfort or 'cognitive dissonance' - harmony

between what her cognitions and actions is eroded. Such feeling is reduced when she shows greater belief in her choice (i.e. reasons for wearing the headscarf) and, consequently, modifies the behaviour.

This participant explains:

*'But my family is not at all extremist. It's never occurred that women were forced to wear a headscarf, in fact, the opposite is common, that the woman wants to wear it and the man doesn't want her to ... because he doesn't feel like it and wants to see her look more beautiful. [...] My aunt wanted to wear the headscarf and my uncle didn't want her to, after some years my aunt started to wear it and my uncle gave up. [...] I have cousins who went to co-ed American schools and out of their own will they decided to wear the headscarf, and my aunt and uncle, her mother and father, didn't want her to go out like that ... in the end she [the cousin] got what she wanted.'*

(Min\_Min\_05)

The account above confirms that even though non-Muslims often view the hijab as a sign of female oppression, it is usually the case that women themselves make this free decision; a decision that does not respond to impact of the social context (i.e. cousins went American school) or family pressure (i.e. parents urged women not to wear the headscarf).

More traditional views expressed by some of our interviews emphasise how it is not just a matter of wearing the headscarf or not, but rather about why you wear it and how. Wearing the headscarf does not automatically make things right. Details such as fabric, colour and so forth are important as well. The main point is to pass oneself 'unnoticed'. Some headscarves are seen as more provocative and sexy than wearing nothing at all, which defeats the original purpose:

*'To me, as a Muslim, you have seen how some women dress at the Mosque ... One wears a skirt, the other a chilaba, it doesn't matter. But the most important thing is that your dress should not attract attention or be provocative. For example, I wear this long dress or robe in this fabric. There are other women who wear the same, same length but in different fabric, silk or see-through. It's not the same. [...] It doesn't matter what you wear, skirt or pants, but it should not be provocative or flashy in colour or fabric.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

As mentioned earlier, this is also a paradox because wearing the headscarf makes you more noticeable in Spain as your outfit differs markedly from that worn by the

majority. Thus, the only explanation is that some of these Sunni women compare themselves against their peers (i.e. other Muslim women as opposed to all women).

Another recurring theme was one of frustration with the notion that non-Muslims seem to believe Muslim women are forced to wear the headscarf and cannot understand it is the result of their own free choice.

*'The mailman asks what or who is forcing me to wear the headscarf in such hot weather. Nobody. It is part of my principles. He says "your husband?" I said my husband has nothing to do with that. He asks, "your father?" Neither. He adds, "who?" It is just myself.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

In fact some Sunni interviewees view women in general as suffering a kind of slavery:

*'Today women are slaves ... slaves of many things, especially the mirror, the way they look before going out ... It is not about religion or the headscarf it is about elegance. Some women who wear the headscarf are even more ridiculous that those who do not.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

The idea that the headscarf is something that immediately makes others label you is quite evident from the quote below. The interviewee quoted below conveys disagreement with two forms of simplification. First, all women wear the headscarf for similar reasons. Second, all or most Muslims are immigrants:

*'Up until recently, every time there was talk about Muslims, the preferred topic was Muslim women, why? Well because you're walking down the street ... and how can you tell a Muslim? You can't guess a Muslim man but a woman ... you see a headscarf and you know she is Muslim. Maybe she wears it because she is used to it, it's her tradition [...] they don't know what that is ... So all of us were chosen to talk about that. And especially to show on TV and the press that Islam is connected to Moroccan immigration.'*

(Maj\_Min\_04)

The same interviewee expresses irritation with society's reaction to the headscarf and the idea that your presumed Muslim identity takes over the rest of who you are, your qualification, your skills and knowledge. This clearly indicates that this Sunni participant feels she is discriminated against in important settings such as job-related contexts.

*'One can tell that he/she is looked at funny, right? Instead of looking at your eyes people look at your headscarf, right? Any job related situation, well, really, all other capacities and skills, all of somebody's knowledge, is ignored because we wear a headscarf, right? Wearing a headscarf is difficult for us women. Although, my understanding is that there are men who also face difficulty for growing a beard.'*

(Maj\_Min\_04)

In sum, to the extent that clothing makes others immediately label you as Muslim, the headscarf becomes a straightforward identifier for outsiders. Despite the fact that Muslims may have a nuanced view of what the headscarf means, non-Muslims have a universal understanding of it, often confusing choice with oppression. In choosing to wear it or not, Muslims in Spain must also consider the impact that their choice will have on their fellow citizens. In Islam, the headscarf is used as means of passing oneself unnoticed but in Spain wearing the headscarf makes you stand out.

### ***Motherhood/childcare, paid labour, work-life balance***

Motherhood and childcare are typically discussed in connection to paid labour. In some cases, these two roles are seen in opposition to each other. When asked about the ideal role of a woman, a Sunni interviewee replies:

*'She should be a working woman, same as for a man, who works outside the home or wherever, but a working woman. She must have her own source of income, her own money. She can't depend on anyone. Well, she must take care of her children; I am not saying she shouldn't ... So ... she should work but also take care of the home, the children, her husband ...'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

The citation above is interesting because the first fragment is all about how women should strive for financial independence. But then the interviewee talks as if she had left something behind: motherhood. So the solution is to just add that to what women should do, thus giving women quite a burdensome set of responsibilities. In a way, this interviewee is advocating the notion that women should work 'triple shifts'; namely work outside the home, care for the children and husband, plus do the housework.

It appears harder for younger interviewees from all religious groups to see these roles as conflicting in any way. While it is true that such roles need not conflict - a pregnant woman can physically work, and maternal leave due to breastfeeding is

only a few months long - the gender literature shows that we socially construct motherhood and paid labour as incompatible. Motherhood affects perceptions of competence and work commitment because contradictory schemas govern conceptions of 'family devotion' and 'work devotion' (Blair-Loy, 2003).

*'Contemporary cultural beliefs about the mother role include a normative expectation that mothers will and should engage in "intensive" mothering that prioritises meeting the needs of dependent children above all other activities. The cultural norm that mothers should always be on call for their children coexists in tension with another widely held normative belief in our society: the 'ideal worker' should always 'be there' for his or her employer (Acker, 1990; Hays, 1996; Williams, 2001; Blair-Loy, 2003). Normative conceptions of the 'ideal worker' and the 'good mother' create a cultural tension between the enactment of the motherhood role and the enactment of the committed worker role.'*

(Correll, 2007: 1306)

By this cultural definition, then, a good mother must give less effort and priority to work demands and therefore be a less committed worker (ibid.). Thus, it is quite interesting that for some interviewees, particularly younger ones, such roles (worker versus mother) can simply be added up. So these participants agree that women should be independent and work outside the home, but are quick to further state that this does not exempt women from living up to their other roles as mothers and caretakers.

Also, some interviewees see themselves as responsible for childcare and are critical of their own upbringing if the mother (not the father) wasn't around. Children's education is clearly viewed as the woman's responsibility by some interviewees:

*'With my child, I want to explain religion to him from the start, the way they [parents] didn't do it with me. Because my mother, who I don't blame, she worked a lot, so she wasn't at home much and was not paying attention all the time. She didn't have time to explain things to me [...] I have learned things too late [...] I will be responsible for his [her unborn child] upbringing as much as I can, if I have to work I will take him to kindergarten and all that.'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

An older Sunni interviewee regards this 'double shift' or 'double burden' as detrimental to women and blame women for having brought this onto themselves.

For these more traditional Sunni Muslim women, paid employment is something that women should do only in case of financial need:

*'For now, I work because my husband ... it's an obligation. For the time being my husband is unemployed. I have to work to be able to pay the rent and live with dignity.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

Evangelical, Catholic, and Shia interviewees seem to view these issues a bit differently, adopting a relatively more progressive set of beliefs about what women should do. Emphasis is put on pursuing an education, getting a university degree - something much less mentioned among the Sunni group - and discuss working outside the home in terms of and as a source of satisfaction and realisation for a woman not only in terms of economic necessity or obligation.

For example, the citation below shows the views of a modern Catholic participant:

*'Getting a university degree, becoming a nun ... Each woman has to find her independence within society [...] So, this thing about being a housewife, being submissive and all those concepts sometimes conveyed by Catholicism are completely dated. I mean, a woman needs to decide where she wants to be in society, whether she wants a partner or not, whether she wants to have children or not, right?'*

(Maj\_Maj\_04)

The testimony of this woman illustrates how endorsing more progressive views is incompatible with rigid interpretations of Catholicism in this case. This interviewee supports the notion of individual choice above all; it should all depend on personal preference.

Regarding children, non-Muslim interviewees see it more as the woman's choice and as such it really depends on particular women rather than on something prescribed by their gender. However, one Sunni respondent expressed similar views in this way:

*'I think it [having children] is something each woman must experience. If she doesn't want to have them because she doesn't see herself as a mother then she shouldn't have them. Not all women are born with that impulse. [...] Perhaps some women say "I want to start a company or I want to travel, I want to do what they please and don't want to have children".'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)



Interestingly this very interviewee was attracted to Islam when she envisioned the possibility that her children may not have a guiding set of standards since her boyfriend was Catholic and she was agnostic. This suggests that personally and emotionally she prioritises motherhood and childcare but rationally she accepts and understands that other women may not think or feel likewise. In other words, rather than voicing exclusively her personal orientations, the fragment above may reflect the broader views of Spanish culture regarding this issue.

This might be so because when generalised beliefs exist, individuals are likely to be subconsciously aware of and influenced by them - to the extent that they assume most other people hold and act on such beliefs - even when even when they do not personally endorse their content. Ridgeway and Correll (2004) persuasively argued along these lines in the case of gender and asserted:

*'Abstracted, hegemonic understandings of men and women are roughly consensual in that virtually everyone in the society knows what they are (Eagly, Wood, and Dickman, 2000; Fiske et al., 2002) and likely expects that most others hold these beliefs. Therefore, as individuals enter public settings that require them to define themselves in relation to others their default expectation is that others will treat them according to hegemonic gender beliefs. In this way, these hegemonic beliefs act as the implicit rules of the gender game in public contexts.'*

(Ridgeway & Correll, 2004: 513)

Thus, Ridgeway and Correll (2004) conclude:

*'Given the wide availability of hegemonic beliefs, however, even individuals who live in a community that shares alternative gender beliefs and or who are personally committed to alternative gender beliefs are still likely to be aware of hegemonic beliefs. They are also likely to expect to be treated according to those hegemonic beliefs as they move into more public or more uncertain settings.'*

(ibid: 514)

A similar argument is made here in the sense that that non-majority religious women will, in their testimony, be partly voicing views that may not be theirs but rather those of the broader Spanish (and/or Western) society, especially when being interviewed by a member of the majority group, which causes distance and distinctions to be more salient or obvious - i.e. in this sense, this would be the equivalent of 'as they move into more public or uncertain settings' above.

More conservative Islamic views, expressed by some of our interviewees, conceive all roles outside marriage and motherhood are the result of women acting selfishly. One Sunni interviewee was particularly argumentative on this topic. To be thinking about her own personal needs and wants, and pursuing non-traditional gender roles (such as working outside the home), was viewed as a selfish act and something with very negative social implications. In addition, such beliefs apply to all women, irrespective of their religious adherence, thereby displaying an interesting ecumenical view of religion and signalling all women are equal before God.

*'Muslim, Christian, Jewish ... it's all the same. There are women who behave like they should. A mother when a mother is needed, a sister when a sister is needed, a housewife when required [...] And there are other women who have forgotten about everything. They are selfish and don't see beyond themselves. Today the selfish type predominates.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

The views expressed above are perhaps the most traditional, especially because all the blame falls on women and their own selfishness. There is no alternative analysis except for the assertion that these women chose the wrong path. In reference to independence and going out with friends, the same respondent regards it as breaking social norms and social expectations for a woman:

*'Think about it, with four, three, or even one child ... and she goes out with her friends until 11pm or whatever! At home she has a babysitter, but that girl is not the mother [...] work is an excuse that can be forgiven but I am not going to leave my children with another person so that I can go out, I don't think it is fair.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

Although she focuses on women, this respondent also mentions men at some point. To her, parents are important to the extent that they are role models to their children, thereby implying that children will learn through imitating parental behaviour:

*'The same goes for men, they come home from work and lock themselves in their room with the TV or football and it's over. Life ends there; it's just work, football and TV. [...] Then they [parents] wonder why did my child turn out like this and don't behave like he should. Well because you are giving him advice but he doesn't see you. He doesn't see how you behave.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

*'Working women bear a double burden, they have a double life and a double personality ... in the street she is not a woman she is half woman - half man. Inside the home she is a complete woman but only sometimes ... because, even at home, in her mind she might wonder "why does he treat me like this if I am working and contributing same as he is? Then here (in the home) he (the man) must bear the same responsibility as I do [...] but men do not accept this".'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

The last citation above suggests that since women are associated with the household and men are associated with everything outside the home, a working woman is per force behaving in a manly way. According to this participant, this is negative not merely because it contradicts traditional gender prescriptions but also because it is futile, even frustrating. When women gain independent financial status they are more likely to make demands on their husbands. When women gain autonomy they tend to challenge conventional household/gender arrangements. According to this interviewee women who do that are only 'half women'; their fight and resulting sense of entitlement leads nowhere in the end, since, according to what she says, husbands will not accept these terms no matter how coherent and justified they are. The implication is that gender roles and norms within the household are harder to change, especially when the change involves adjustments for the male counterpart.

Some interviewees from the Catholic group express similar concerns but with a different language and approach - i.e. not all the blame falls on women.

*'[Changes] should have been for the better but my feeling is that this is not the case [...] we come to be convinced that one also has the right to this and the right to that [...] we no longer know how to suffer [i.e. making sacrifices for one another] ... if we [couples, men and women] cannot understand one another, we are not going down the right path ...'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

This interviewee is talking about sacrifice, an allegedly 'Catholic attribute', and blames poor outcomes on missing right attitudes in life, namely the willingness to make sacrifices for the greater good; in this case, the marriage or the family.

*'Well [the ideal role for a woman] ... she has to be a woman dedicated to ... I don't know, if she is married, devoted to her children ... it's not that she shouldn't work, nothing like this ... but, for example, if you have children you need to balance work and spend time with them, instead of leaving them [with*

*someone] and seeing them a little while at night. I don't agree with this idea of quality versus quantity ... if quality means half an hour at night, then not really.'*

(Min\_Maj\_01)

The fragment above illustrates some ideas mentioned earlier but, interestingly, adds a practical note by bringing up the quality versus quantity. This discussion shows that this Sunni woman is 'in the world' and refers to (and challenges) typical arguments used by 'busy people'. So, this participant does not use religious arguments but rather common sense, exposing how ridiculous some rationalisations sound (to her).

This Shia participant emphasises the educational and professional dimensions but interestingly adds that women should never leave her family unattended:

*'She should have a degree, a decent job, never, that is never, leave her family unattended especially if she chooses to have children ... do everything, first take care of herself, have an education, a profession, and then attend what is hers ... it is very complicated, very complicated, and especially so here [in Spain].'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

The Shia respondent below reflects on the women's double burden, to be someone independent and educated but without forgetting her role as a mother:

*'Well ... yeah ... perhaps it is more demanding in the sense that women ought to be mothers, right? She needs to get married, have children, educated them well, that is essential. [...] The pressure to get married and have children is very noticeable.'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

### **Abortion, contraception, divorce, pre-marital sex**

Issues such as abortion, contraception, and pre-marital sex were more commonly discussed among non-Sunni interviewees.

Sometimes it was difficult for interviewees to discuss these issues openly. Instead they talk about them in more indirect ways, thereby implying that these topics are still taboo in Spanish society.

*'Those issues, rather than discussing them directly [...] the Catholic Church can't say yes to some of them ... can't endorse the idea that women are too*

*busy with work and have no time to have children. We know we have to reproduce and that we have to have children. Now, the Church accepts that people don't have many kids if you can't provide for them. Well this is distant from directly saying that women have freedom in certain areas. Let's say they [the Church] can't directly approve of certain things.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

The participant just quoted is making an indirect reference to abortion and contraception: 'they [the Church] can't directly approve of certain things', meaning the Catholic Church cannot explicitly endorse contraception. Also, she views the issue of reproduction as a moral and rational responsibility; the role of religion, of the Catholic Church in particular, is to be coherent with itself and with morality. In other words, reproduction is a biological necessity, there is no direct association with religion, and the Church simply supports this by not supporting contraception or abortion.

One Evangelical woman offered a more direct examination of the issue of abortion:

*'Well, what God mentions in the Bible ... we try to make it a reality, right? In our lives ... I would not sentence a woman who had an abortion, but I am against abortion law, because you need to study the specific situation of the woman, there are some difficult situations ... these are difficult moments and I am speaking from experience. So, I would not sentence her but because God is love, God forgives the person who sins; I have experienced it in my life. [...] All of us are God's creatures and so he is the only one with power and authority, man cannot decide whether the foetus is a human being in this week that week ...'*

(Min\_Maj\_02)

The quote above illustrates how religiously based opposition to abortion comes from the notion that only God has the power to decide somebody's life. It is not so much that abortion is always right or wrong, but rather disapproval comes from the idea that it is not possible or ethical to establish clear-cut and absolute rules as conveyed by the reference to when and how a foetus becomes a human being. So, the opposition is not so much to abortion - which the interviewee acknowledges could be justified - but to leave that decision to judges, laws, and reduce the issue to a set of guidelines and rules while it's really up to God to decide who lives and dies.

A Shia woman brings up the issue of relationships and pre-marital sex introducing an interesting concept, 'pleasure marriage', which is a tool for obtaining sexual

satisfaction even when one is not in a committed marriage but still cannot be considered pre-marital sex which is socially condemned.

*'There is a lot of talk about sexual relations, boyfriends ... I suppose married women talk about what they're going to cook tomorrow. There are many [issues] of course, yes, yes ... about premarital sex, about marriage, about pleasure marriage, which is like a deal you make, a free marriage, a concept that was created ... well it is very controversial, there are people in favour and people against. It is a pact two people make in order to have sex without the need of a serious marriage.'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

Another participant brings up the issue that talking (not only having) about sex is taboo and explains why:

*'Sex for example ... sex has always been taboo. [...] a while ago, I think in Al Jazeera, or some media channel like that, which broadcasts to all the Middle East, there was a woman, I don't remember if she wore a headscarf or not, talking about sexuality, sex, and how women can enjoy sex with their husbands [...] In fact in Islam, women are more or less ... rewarded ... well there is a kind of "bonus" and "malus" right? So if you do something right you earn a "bonus" and if you do something bad you earn a "malus" and these accumulate for the afterlife. And ... it is like a bonus for women to enjoy [sex] with their husbands, that he gives her pleasure, but this is not something that is talked about, it is very taboo, you can't talk about sex so it becomes important that women ignore everything about it because, theoretically, they are virgins when they get married, and they are not supposed to know what they have to do [...] I think it would be very interesting to open that [i.e. discuss that] when there is a ban on pre-marital sex. She [the Al Jazeera woman] was obviously very criticised and some people wanted to censor her, but she is still there conducting this TV program and I think it is very interesting.'*

(Min\_Min\_05)

The testimony above is interesting because it suggests a rational and social control explanation for why discussing sex, even sexual education, is taboo. Women are supposed to know nothing about sex before getting married. Not knowing somehow proves not having experienced pre-marital sex. Ignorance could be seen as a mechanism for husbands to verify that their wives are virgins and sexually inexperienced. But if sex is discussed openly and there exist a proper sex education, it is plausible that women know certain things, not from experience, but from study. It would then be harder to tell whether wives are simply knowledgeable or experienced.

The following testimony further supports the idea of social control:

*'An issue that is discussed frequently ... [...] when a woman has lived abroad for several years there is always the question of whether or not she had pre-marital relations [...] it is seen as strange that a woman has lived abroad and has not been with anybody, which is key in order to get married [in Lebanon].'*

(Min\_Min\_05)

The fragment above suggests that women are better off not engaging in behaviour (e.g., living abroad) that may raise questions. Also, these views imply that women can't be trusted; if left on their own, if mechanisms for control are missing - as they would be abroad or in a more permissive environment - women would undoubtedly succumb to temptation.

In addition to all the topics examined above - dress code, motherhood, and sexuality - other miscellaneous issues brought up by some participants were the role of women in the church and matters such as inheritance.

*'Well the thing is, I don't understand why women still don't have a more relevant role ... a more representative role in the church, yes sir. [...] In fact, she does have a significant role, but not formally.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

This Catholic woman complains that while women are very much engaged in Church activities, they still don't have formal titles like men do. This topic was discussed especially among Catholic participants.

Another Shia woman brought up the issue of inheritance and explained that Shias differ from Sunnis in this regard. She argued that such difference is a reason for Sunni Muslims to become Shia.

*'Inheritance is something much discussed, it is already solved because the community law is that ... well, I am Shia, and each community has its own religious law so to speak, but then there is a civil code that is common to everybody in Lebanon ... But for personal issues such as marriage, inheritance, you follow religious law, and then for other issues you adhere to the civil code which is almost identical to the French code. [...] Now women inherit like men and those rights are very good ... because I think for Sunnis women cannot inherit so there are lots of people who become Shia precisely because they have a daughter not a son.'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

### ***Gender roles***

Individualist approaches to the study of gender claim that maleness and femaleness are or become properties of individuals and that by adulthood women have become nurturing, communal, and child-centred and men have become competitive and work-oriented. Within this perspective, theories vary considerably depending on where gender differences ultimately stem or originate from.

Some scholars continue to explain gender in terms of biological differences between men and women. Connell argues that sociobiology still finds an audience because it resonates with people's beliefs, and justifies the status quo (Connell, 1999).

Gender role and socialisation models are now dated since they characterise individuals as passive recipients of social stimuli; in fact, one of the most important contributions of psychoanalytic theory into the study of gender identity was that it offered a view of gender identity as an accomplishment rather than something fixed and attached to biological sex.

Feminist psychoanalysis went a step further by bridging the private and public spheres thereby politicising differences and inequality; specifically, domination and oppression are seen as by-products of the nuclear family (Williams, 1993); instead of discrimination relegating women to the home by hindering their access to employment, feminist theory suggested that inequalities within the household caused discrimination in public settings.

Currently, gender is conceptualised as a stratification system where special attention needs to be paid at the social interaction level (Risman, 1998).

Next, we offer a discussion of participants' views of gender and gender relations as well as the ideal roles of men and women.

### ***Essentialist accounts***

Another recurring theme was that it is somewhat useless or a lost cause to insist on proving that both men and women could do the same things. A number of interviewees showed no doubt that this may indeed be the case but pointed out that



life should not be about proving things for the sake of being right, but rather about taking advantage of one's natural abilities and skills:

*'God tells each of us (men and women) one thing, do you understand?'*  
(Maj\_Min\_02)

*'It's like you are good at tennis and can't play football but you sign up for a football team. How are you going to manage? How are you going to behave? How are you going to kick the ball? What's the problem? The rules [...] when women want to live by men's rules they feel lost ... it's not that they feel lost, they are indeed lost.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

These fragments illustrate that it is pointless to want to engage in activities that you're not naturally good at. This participant holds a clearly essentialist view of men and women; each gender is born with a set of skills and abilities and these determine the activities they choose to undertake. When there is a mismatch, individuals are incompetent. It is interesting how this woman emphasises that such ineptitude is real, not a feeling or a perception, but actual inability to perform properly: 'it's not that they [women] feel lost, they are indeed lost'.

The same Sunni participant describes an interesting concept; the notion of half woman/half man signals a very essentialist view of women's and men's natures and social roles.

*'Before, people behaved like they were supposed to [...] now it is not the case, especially when women have made the decision to enjoy their freedom, and work, earn their own money, lead her life the way she likes [...] Now women are half men and men are half women. The relation between men and women has lost its charm. A man is a man and a woman is a woman. To us [Muslims] women are incredible ... like a treasure, not only to her husband but also to all Muslim society. She should be treated as something valuable, delicate, and sensitive [...] When they no longer treat you like that all has lost its meaning for women, but also for men.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

According to the paragraph above women who engage in traditionally male activities (e.g. paid labour) are acting in a manly way. Furthermore, by choosing to become half men, women share greater responsibility for the fact that 'the relation between men and women has lost its charm.' This interviewee endorses a view of women as delicate and in need of protection. A working woman is also an independent and

powerful woman - not precisely in need of shelter - evidently, this radically turns gender arrangements upside down. The participant above complains that when this happens things no longer make sense. These views suggest that some Muslims partially view and treat women as if they were children more than adults which is conveyed by the words 'sensitive', 'delicate', 'a treasure' - terms that would typically be used describe a baby.

The discussion above is connected to the framework proposed by Glick and Fiske (Glick and Fiske, 1996) explaining the interrelationship between the psychology and the structural realities of gender relations, thus providing a link between structures (the sex-segregated division of labour, patriarchy, etc.), social ideologies (hostile and benevolent sexism), and the psychology of everyday social interactions between individual men and women. The authors argue that there are two related sets of gender ideologies: hostile and benevolent sexism, which provide the carrot and the stick by which sexist men attempt to keep women in their place and preserve the structure of male dominance.

The next citation also implies that men and women have different roles because women are naturally more attached to their children than fathers are. Thus, women should be the greatest source of affection for their children relative to fathers. There is no mentioning of the fact that when a woman is more involved in childcare she will develop greater attachment to children not necessarily because she is naturally more predisposed but because it is expected of her (i.e. prescriptive stereotypes), and also childcare becomes her routine (i.e. behaviour→attitudes):

*'As liberal and modern a woman as you may be, there's always a stronger link of mothers to children than of fathers. I think love must come more from the mother than the father. Outside that, I don't think there are differences.'*

(Min\_Min\_03)

The views of this Muslim participant are interesting:

*'Well, the ideal role is that of the woman's own choosing. If she decides to stay home, she can happily stay home. If she decides to work outside, then she can happily go out and work and it's ok. I think Islam defines that ideal role very well. A woman must always be a woman and a woman depending on the circumstances. She is not more of a woman if she adopts a closer way of interacting with others, almost seductive, toward her colleagues*

*... she doesn't have to make her beauty more relevant, whether she is attractive or not [...] there is a lack of understanding of very natural things such as the right to be moderate and reserved [...].'*

(Maj\_Min\_04)

*'Then each one, depending on their skills and natural characteristics has different abilities [...] understanding differences and compatibilities, those differences are what make us compatible, need to find their way of fitting, each of them [men and women] preserving their particular roles.'*

(Maj\_Min\_04)

While the last citation shows an essentialist view of men and women and the notion that men and women are different so that they fit (i.e. complementary), the first paragraph offers a view of women as more gender-neutral. The interviewee does not support the view that a woman is more feminine if she is warmer toward other people, a behaviour that could be viewed as seductive or flirtatious.

### ***Men and women are complementary***

More traditional views are illustrated by the testimony quoted below. According to this Evangelical interviewee, men and women are complementary, thus their roles must naturally be different.

*'The role of men is very important within the household because he is the breadwinner, the head of the family and that's what God says in the Bible. It's not so that he [the man] abuses his authority, rather it is so he and his wife exercise it together ... Now she has a role and he has a role, right? Like the Bible says.'*

(Min\_Maj\_02)

Although the participant above doesn't mention it explicitly, the fact that men and women have separate roles, are complementary, and men are breadwinners implies that women are homemakers. This participant sees this as an illustration of how a marriage shares authority. Such view, however, neglects that power is necessary for authority and that economic autonomy is essential for power. Since homemaking is unpaid, women are objectively disadvantaged in this arrangement although apparently this participant does not seem to think such an agreement can lead to inequality and abuse of the 'stronger' partner, in this case the man.

### **Other views**

Shia interviewees expressed relatively more progressive views perhaps because more Shia respondents described themselves as believers but not practitioners of religion, specifically Islam. For example, the respondent quoted below points out how gender views and relations depend much on education, which is a broadly accepted notion: the more educated one is, the more likely it is this person will hold egalitarian beliefs, including egalitarian gender beliefs.

*'Well, [Lebanon] is a melting pot of religions but not everybody is religious. [...] In the end it all depends on each person's family tradition. In our specific case ... a more or less traditional family but not extremist. So, women have an important role. In my family women go in, go out, studies, works, participates in everything. [...] But men are always going to have more relevance ... but that is [commonplace]. [...] It is not that women have a secondary role, it's just assumed that ... a woman realises when she comes from abroad that situations where they're both sitting down and if the man wants something it is the woman who gets up and gets it ... [...] This, I am telling you, can also occur among Lebanese Christians, I think all this [this dimension of gender roles] is determined by the Arabic more than the Muslim mentality.'*

(Min\_Min\_05)

Similarly:

*'I don't know [if gender roles are changing], I don't know what to say ... it's a broad issue, right? There isn't a trend that is more noticeable than others [...] it depends more on your educational level than on any other factor.'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

*'That [stay at home mom, childcare] is discussed everywhere ... I don't think it is different for Shias ... There is no [single belief] because in Lebanon women work ... Lebanon is a special case ... women work and are more or less liberated ... there are many working mothers ...'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

However, when asked about the role of women, the same Shia respondent offers a somewhat stereotyped view of women:

*'Very simply put, and perhaps it is a bit naive for me to say, but [the role of women] is to bring more beauty to the world ... to me, it is as simple as that. Fulfill her role as a mother or a worker or the two simultaneously. Live well, with her rights, but also a woman should know how to demand things to society without a discourse that is too feminist.'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

The quote above emphasises a view of femininity apparently based on a combination of physical attributes and the ability to make demands without appearing aggressive and therefore not feminine. When asked why, the same respondent offers a viewpoint that suggests feminism is associated with man hatred:

*'So that it doesn't become the opposite of machismo. This thing about violence, gender wars, domestic violence ... such discourses, I am not in favour of. I don't think they are [as productive]. The ideal role is to feel realised as a person first, and then as a woman well it consists on using her beautiful side, caring, love, giving, her role as a mother of course, because a woman is a mother, but if she doesn't want to be one well, she does not have to be one compulsorily.'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

As can be seen above, this Shia woman brings up an additional set of traditionally feminine attributes; women are supposed to be caring, loving, generous and so forth. It's interesting to note that this participant believes these traits should be used, which suggests an instrumental view of feminine attributes. The broader point is that feminism is an ideology perceived as violent, extreme, and very much the opposite of machismo and in this sense directly at odds with feminine characteristics.

Regarding men's roles the same Shia woman adds:

*'Well, the same thing [men's roles] but about the things he's better at, I don't know, politics. These are prejudices but I still think men are better at politics, or perhaps we are historically and socially influenced to believe so, right? Throughout history it's almost always been like that ... There have been matriarchal societies where women governed ... Cleopatra for instance. Talking about women's and men's roles like this is a bit too abstract for me.'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

Her rationale is interesting because she admits her views may simply reflect stereotypes but still she reaffirms her beliefs and uses confirming evidence (i.e. throughout history it's almost always been like that). One would think that this argumentation begs a series of additional questions. For example, if most individuals (including women) think men are naturally better at politics, what woman would want to become a politician? This participant raises thought-provoking questions acknowledging that perhaps we are prejudiced or conditioned by history but she does not take the next and final leap which, simply put, is about the subtle power of generalised gender beliefs.

### **Questioning assumptions**

According to the interviewee below, women can work and be in a leading position in the workplace. Thus leadership is not perceived to conflict with femininity:

*'I think it is a bit misguided to believe that the Church is against many things women do. I don't think so. Women today have a very relevant role in many areas because ... especially in the labour market of course. The Church is in no way against that. Quite the opposite, the fact that women can be in top positions ... [...] Before, the role of women was limited to the household, cooking and taking care of the children. As for the rest, well, you couldn't do much else. [...] But the Church would like it if women wouldn't cross certain limits ... [...] If the woman works then she can't get pregnant [...] because she has to place herself first.'*

(Min\_Maj\_02)

This participant defends the idea that the church (the Evangelical Church) is in favour of revisiting the role of women in society. She acknowledges that things used to be different for women in the past but believes that the situation has changed and that the Church very much supports the transformation of women's roles. The last line is interesting because, the way it is worded, it suggests that working women should place their professional interests before any other. The fact is the sentence is a bit ambiguous so it could in fact imply that motherhood is incompatible with paid labour. However, judging from the entire fragment, it seems more likely that this participant is supporting professional women by endorsing their 'release' from their traditional role as mothers and caretakers.

One Catholic woman raises a very logical question that disputes traditional gender assumptions:

*'Some people think that men should be the breadwinners, the family head ... but here's what I say; how many male breadwinners have done things poorly?'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

It is interesting how she tries to take the argument to her experiential level, in an almost empirical fashion. Her words suggest that traditional views may not have been measured or compared with actual stories, real people, even though in principle, it should be possible to do so.

## **Gender equality**

This section explores participants' views on gender equality. Next we offer an analysis from where less optimistic approaches are presented first.

### **Equality is a mirage**

When asked about gender equality, some women argue that full equality between women and men is both unrealistic and unachievable. In addition, the quote below signals that sharing work within the household is more contested than women working outside the home:

*'Equality is not achievable especially inside the home.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

*'Men and women should be equal about everything, have the same rights and obligations ... But no matter how much time passes, there is always going to be conflict.'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

The fragment above is also pessimistic about the idea that complete equality is within reach. It is interesting to point out that, according to this woman, time will not change this outcome. While it is rather gloomy, this approach might be more accurate than that of individuals who believe gender relations will naturally or spontaneously tend to equality given sufficient time. While the former account sounds somewhat hopeless, the later is simply naïve.

One Sunni participant argued:

*'Equality is a mirage, a figment of the imagination. No matter how hard you try.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

This metaphor is interesting, equality is not merely unreachable but simply imaginary; it really doesn't exist.

The same participant asserts:

*'We are equal regarding one thing: God. He put each of us in one place. God gave each of us our tasks in life. Outside that, there is no equality and women are the worst off [...] she is stubborn about that equality that she believes in but it doesn't exist and she is never going to achieve it [...] She is going to get*

*tired, that happened to a lot of them. Women who lock themselves in their world are better off ...'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

This woman appears to be saying that men and women are equal in that God determines their roles. Thus, women and men have different roles but presumably equal worth. She notes how the equality fallacy is hurting women because since it really is a mirage, women will only get frustrated. Thus, women who are more accepting of traditional views and don't obsess about equality - i.e. 'women who lock themselves in their world' - will be better off, more satisfied, and content than women who 'fight'.

### ***Equality? Not worth it***

The notion that equality comes at a great loss is a recurring theme among women from all religious groups. For example, the Catholic woman below points out that women work harder than men, presumably because she is both in paid employment and a homemaker. The interviewee argues that today's woman 'has lost things', presumably because of this double shift.

*'Well I think men and women need to be equal. [...] I always tell my sons to help around the house. Today's woman has lost things. Women work harder than men. The one taking care of the household and the children is the woman, even if the husband helps ... you know what I mean.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_02)

The Evangelical woman quoted next also uses the term loss; specifically she refers to the idea that women have lost their 'special status', which they owe to their femininity. This participant seemingly says that the progress made in the legal and political realms does not make up for the losses. The conclusion is that it was not worth it. Interestingly she thinks this outcome is the result of women 'wanting to be like men' and signals that women could still get what they wanted using other (presumably more feminine) resources like 'tact' and, probably the whole set of stereotypical female traits such as looks, warmth, empathy and so forth.

*'I think we [women] lost something. Well I think there were achievements, many laws, much help ... but they have also lost something too. [...] As a woman you like it when you feel taken care of, when they open the door for you ... it seems silly but ... then you can really do what you want with a bit of tact ... but you like to feel protected, without being humiliated of course or*



*making you feel less in any way of course. I think that wanting to be like men we have lost something.'*

(Min\_Maj\_04)

Along the same lines, the woman below suggests that the fight for equality is tiring and pointless.

*'Gender equality is something that people stubbornly fight for ... and it is not worth it. It makes no sense to me [...] I orient myself guided by the word of Jesus Christ who said the most important thing is love and that each of us has a role. Yes, we are all equal. I know I can do the same work a man can do but I am not going to kill myself fighting and so that he sees that I can do it, that I can do something better than him. I don't live my life focusing on that ... equality, equality, equality. Quite the opposite, there are things that I prefer to leave to men ...'*

(Min\_Maj\_03)

She implies the struggle for equality is grounded on competition (women compete with men, women want to prove they are as good as men, make the point, etc.) and goes against religious prescriptions (i.e. focus on love). Her discourse also indicates some degree of laziness or accommodation: 'I am not going to kill myself' or 'there are things that I want to leave to men.'

The following fragment is quite intriguing. For this Sunni woman equality is not pointless, hard to achieve, or carries losses. It is not so much that equality isn't worth it, as it is that equality is not the priority. This interviewee explicitly says that maintaining gender differences ensures the net success of the community. It is important to protect gender differences because therein lays the compatibility among men and women:

*'Men and women have a different nature; the two belong to the same species, but have different natures. And we must preserve that difference because it is precisely that that makes us compatible, attracted to one another. Therein lies the success of a community or group. [...] I think we must encourage those characteristics of men and women. It's not that gender equality isn't important, but I believe it's not the most important thing. The most important thing is to encourage the natural abilities each of us possess. It is not worse that a woman is more affectionate or emotional and that men are rougher.'*

(Maj\_Min\_04)

### ***Destined for equality***

Some interviewees share the view that gender relations are slowly changing. Several participants thought it was a matter of time. Others thought the socio-cultural context triggers change within migrant communities:

*'All is more liberal here (Spain) [...] Moroccan people are forced to change, they can't be against certain things.'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

The interviewee quoted above implies that positive change toward greater equality is assured since Spanish society is more progressive, and that will drive change within more traditional communities such as the Muslim community. This resonates with ideas put forward by Jackson (1998) in 'Destined for Equality: The Inevitable Rise of Women's Status'.

### ***Equality in the workplace***

Some interviewees emphasise that women and men are different but are of equal worth; thus, equality at work and regarding economic conditions is regarded as essential.

*'Well ... equality between men and women ... they are not the same, right? Psychologically ... men have a set of characteristics and women another; now, neither should be below the other. For example, at work, same thing, equality on all conditions, then yes.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

The same Catholic participant adds:

*'We should be equal in all ... Many things are poorly done ... it is wrong that a woman, for the same job does not have the same salary. It is wrong that even today a man can say "I can do what I please because I am the man". [...] Freedom undoubtedly should be the same for men and women.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

There are some sophisticated arguments such as the one below where an interviewee claims that men and women are different from one another in the same way that men are different from men and women from women. In other words, inter-gender difference is much like intra-gender difference:

*'It [equality] should be achieved not because we are equal like Xerox copies ... All people are different from one another; men and women are then*

*necessarily different. But the foundation, laws, justice, opportunities should be the same to men and women and not depend on sex.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_02)

One Shia woman finds the notion of equality too abstract; she prefers to talk about the specific areas where equality should be achieved:

*'Well that [gender equality] I don't believe in, I believe in equality of rights, but equality among men and women is too ambiguous a concept for me ... it escapes me. [...] Gender equality, I don't even know what it is.'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

She adds:

*'I can talk about equality of rights, salaries, etc. Specific things. Why do men earn more than women? Why are these jobs reserved for men not women? But just gender equality? Equality on what? Does that mean men ought to get pregnant or what? I don't see it like that.'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

This woman demands that debates on equality become more concrete - 'equality on what?'. If left unspecified, the gender equality goal signals (in her mind) that men and women should have identical experiences - e.g., 'does that mean that men ought to get pregnant or what?' - which she doesn't agree with.

Another participant says:

*'I am not feminist at all, quite the opposite ... to me gender equality is not that men have to wash the dishes for no reason ... or women have to do it. To me equality is simply that women are not inferior, that's all, or is not considered inferior, or that she is not banned from doing certain tasks or be in predominantly male contexts [...] There are sectors almost inaccessible to women but, I don't know, it is also true that women do not want to go into those sectors. You are not going to see a female mechanic, there might be some, but I don't see that she should be discriminated against nor say it's not a job for a woman, simply that women can choose and that she has the possibility of doing it.'*

(Min\_Min\_05)

This participant insists not on equal salaries but on equal employment opportunities irrespective of sector, traditionally male or traditionally female. She brings up an interesting debate regarding men and women's preferences for jobs. Research shows that women's preferences are constrained by hegemonic gender beliefs. In short, when women perceive most other people regard men as naturally better at a

task or job, this will shape women's self perception of ability (regardless of their actual ability) which will in turn affect her final decision. The assumption is that individuals need to be and, more importantly, feel competent in the areas required for a job or position before they decide to go into that job. Thus, generalised beliefs about what men and women are good at affect specific men and women by shaping their self-perception and ultimately their choices.

A Shia participant agrees that jobs should not be restricted to men and that men ought to contribute to household tasks. However, she also signals that perhaps too much equality leads to too much blurring of the borders that define men and women. She expresses concern that women lose their femininity by assuming traditionally male jobs. The interviewee does not show concern that men lose their masculinity by doing, for example, household work.

*'To me equality means that women and men have to work the same and avoiding this thing about how women can't work because it is not allowed, which some say following my religion [...] Also, men can help around the house the same as women. They can change diapers, clean [...] But, to myself, I do sometimes like that men and women don't share everything so that women don't lose their femininity, so that she doesn't become a man in some aspects, I am not sure that I am explaining myself.'*

(Min\_Min\_03)

### **Flexible interpretations**

When discussing gender roles and gender equality some interviewees made specific references to Bible and the Qur'an, and to the role of culture vis-a-vis that of religion.

*'I think that [gender equality] ... well, I don't know, we all think our own way but, the way I see it, at times the Bible has been interpreted wrong. If you study the bible in-depth, there aren't as many differences [between men and women] and women should not be subordinated to men at all.'*

(Min\_Maj\_01)

The Catholic interviewee quoted above asserts that a careful examination of the Bible would debunk certain stereotypes and a view of Catholicism as male-centered. She argues that the Bible was interpreted erroneously.

Younger interviewees are aware of the conflicts of being Muslim in western countries. They see it as requiring negotiation and adaptation and flexible interpretation of the Qur'an. According to some Muslim interviewees, culture, and not religion, is to blame for the oppression of women. The testimony of this Sunni woman signals that different cultures practice religion differently, while religion itself is something quite stable:

*'Covering yourself has a religion foundation but going out does not, men and women are equals in that regard [...] it depends on the country and the culture ... Each interprets freely from the Qur'an [...] For example, stoning is in the Qur'an [...] it is there so that they [women] are scared and don't cheat on their husbands, but it also concerns men [...] cheating is a sin but to conduct a stoning four individuals must have witnessed it [the infidelity] [...] but then people have interpreted this in their own way, taking what they want, forgetting what they don't want and it's got to do more with culture than religion.'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

The implication is that, since it is so difficult to meet certain Qur'an requirement (e.g. four witnesses to prove infidelity), certain norms and rules exist mostly as deterrents. However, individuals have interpreted the Qur'an in a fragmented (e.g. 'taking what you want, forgetting what you don't want') ways often leading to disadvantages for women.

The same Sunni interviewee adds:

*'I respect my religion; things should be the way religion says. But in the world we live, things have changed, one has to adapt more [...] otherwise it is going against society. I am not saying one should go out to drink but a woman needs not avoid male or female friends and necessarily stay at home [...] from my point of view, things should not be as strict [...] as long as you are not committing a sin you need not stop talking to a man or have male friends ...'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

Orthodox views and interpretations of Islam and the Qur'an suggest that inter-gender interaction is often viewed a temptation. This is why the norm is that a man should not be alone with a woman and vice-versa. However, the participant above believes rules of this kind are too strict and need not be followed rigorously. This woman in particular believes it is possible to extract from it a lesson (e.g. you should not have a physical or flirtatious relation with a member of the opposite sex) while engaging in healthy, and natural social interaction (e.g. having male friends).

### ***The Women's Movement and feminism***

The views about feminism reflected in the interviews are quite diverse. The majority of interviewees do not see themselves as feminists at all. Some women appeared uncomfortable even discussing the issue. As if, by being asked, they felt accused and wondered whether there was something they had said or done that prompted your question. Their answers initially were elusive and not very thorough as if they wanted to avoid the topic altogether, as if they didn't want to be identified at all with it. When asked about whether or not feminism shaped them, many respondents answered evasively and as if they wanted no business with it. Responses such as 'I respect it, they (feminists) can do what they want' were quite frequent.

The reasons for being against feminism are diverse. For example, a number of interviewees identify feminism with female superiority and think it is just as bad as male dominance:

*'Feminism ... I don't think it is good ... it sounds to me ... well, women are now asking for too much, do you know what I mean? [...] It's one thing to want to be equal and another thing to want to be superior to men [...] God tells each of us [men and women] to do one thing. I don't agree with feminism least with machismo.'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

At other times the reasons underlying opposition to feminism have to do with gender roles. Feminism is sometimes seen as an effort to step out of a natural role unnecessarily. It is then viewed as a futile effort and a desire to attract attention.

*'I don't see them [women's movements] as positive. I do not think any extremist movement is good because there are no reasons for it. A person does not need to be someone that she doesn't need to be.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

Some women blame it on feminism that, for example, some gender advantages have been lost, a topic that was also brought up when discussing gender roles and relations. It is interesting how this interviewee points out that losses are apparently small (e.g. 'it seems silly') but then they truly are not. The implication is that yes, there were accomplishments but it is questionable whether the gains outweigh the losses experienced by women. In sum, this participant has conflicting views of the

women's movement because she feels women are winning and losing at the same time.

*'I think [with feminist movements] we lost something. Well I think there were achievements, many laws, much help ... but they have also lost something too. [...] As a woman you like it when you feel taken care of, when they open the door for you ... it seems silly but ... then you can really do what you want with a bit of tact ... but you like to feel protected, without being humiliated of course or making you feel less in any way of course. I think that wanting to be like men we have lost something. Before you would go out with your boyfriend and he would buy tickets for the movies and a soda. Now boyfriends and girlfriends they each take their wallets out ...'*

(Min\_Maj\_04)

The same Evangelical woman adds:

*'Well it is infuriating when you watch TV and see these men who beat up women ... then I do feel a bit ... well ... but then I go on with my life as usual.'*

(Min\_Maj\_04)

Her testimony signals a bit of a passive attitude. She describes how she rebels inside against certain unfair situations (e.g. violence against women) but then she admits she does not do anything to attempt to change things.

An interviewee from the Sunni group expressed similar views:

*'I think it [the feminist movement] is good. It is good when women try to defend their rights as women. [Defend] what we have lost really. Especially Muslim women.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

This participant regrets that women have lost their 'original status', namely the special status they enjoy by traditional Islam - i.e. women are a treasure, need to be protected, taken care of, etc. To this participant feminism is about recovering all that.

Feminism is sometimes felt as an imposition and a radical way of proving a point that could be been proven in more peaceful and moderate, ways.

*'All accomplishments [of feminism] are a bit forced; I don't see them as a product of freedom. I am not in favour of feminism. [...] To me feminism means a bit like the extreme. Wanting to take things to the limit. A woman can perfectly be a woman and demonstrate what she is and her worth and*

*that she knows what to think without anyone telling her what to do ... there is no need to start groups like this [referring to feminist groups].'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

This Catholic woman associates feminism with violence, rioting and extreme behaviours. Some interviewees connect it with issues like abortion and homosexuality, putting topics like Gay Pride Day and abortion rights at the same level.

As exemplified by the quote below, more emphasis is placed on external symbols than actual accomplishments. For example, a Catholic respondent acknowledges there are some aspects that she agrees with, but immediately focuses on issues that she is not in favour of. Also, instead of talking about homosexuality broadly she focuses on Gay Pride Day; that is, a small symbolic aspect of a major social issue.

*'There are some [feminisms] that I agree with and others that I do not. Movements in favour of abortion or homosexuality I don't agree with as a Christian. I accept it because if you get pregnant unexpectedly ... But I don't accept things like Gay Pride Day ... does one need to do a demonstration like that to show you have certain beliefs? Well, no. I think that's just wanting to be the focus of attention.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

The fragment above suggests that religious values are constructed as being in opposition to feminist values.

Some interviewees have a more 'mature' view of feminism as a social movement that served a purpose at a given point in time to 'shake up' society's assumptions. The Catholic respondent below displays a more nuanced and contextualised understanding of feminism when she points out that it is not about female superiority but rather about turning things upside down to foster thought and reflection. Then she points at the social accomplishments that resulted from those coordinated actions:

*'Well feminist movements set in motion a machinery that ... well, revolutions never arrived anywhere but in this case they set in motion something and shook up the collective conscience. It's not about women being above men but rather about making you think about why in a way women were below men when there were no reasons. The fight for justice and equality has achieved improvements on social services, improvements in many areas ...'*



*before a woman would go ask for something somewhere and she would be ignored, now she is also paid attention to.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_04)

Thus, this testimony illustrates the realisation that that feminism is not about women being superior, but about questioning why women should be subordinate to men.

Interestingly, the same respondent claims she was never influenced by feminism despite the depth of understanding her prior answer shows - at least relative to other participants' answers. Her response (see quote below) suggests that she understands being influenced as feeling compelled to act. In this sense her answer should be interpreted as meaning she was never actively involved but presumably somewhat influenced - otherwise she would not have attended meetings at all:

*'I haven't been [influenced by feminism]. When this started I was very young and I merely attended [meetings] and got a few 'bites' ... I never felt like a feminist but I think they had a role.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_04)

Other interviewees see a distinction between the social accomplishments of feminism and more extreme ideas associated with the movement. The Evangelical woman quoted below, sees the social value of feminism but apparently believed it served a purpose in the past and is now 'past its sell-by date'. She discusses and positions herself against abortion, divorce rates, sexual behaviour, and promiscuity, implying that these social phenomena have got something to do with feminist claims and the feminist movement:

*'Well, they [feminist movements] have been important because they are there ... They had a lot to do with, for example, women achieving a series of rights they did not have centuries ago. So, that's good. However, what goes on today, I do not think it is good for women. [...] for example, abortion. To me abortion is not a right. I do what I want with my body. Well excuse me! You can do what you want with your body but not with that of the person inside of you. [...] If you get married you don't have to tolerate it if your husband beats you and treats you badly ... But now I get married, because tomorrow I can get divorced, tomorrow I marry someone else because I can divorce again. Well, no. Today I have sex with so and so and tomorrow with someone else. It's women's rights and freedom. Well, no. I don't agree with that, not now, not when I was 20. Meaning, I have always thought like this.'*

(Min\_Maj\_01)

The same respondent shows disbelief in some feminist claims by suggesting feminism didn't really translate into freedom for women in aspects such as the stereotyped view of them as objects. The implication is that women are deluding themselves if they actually think this has changed:

*'Socially [feminist vindications] have been positive but at a personal level they haven't. For example ... the idea that women should not be objects ... well, they completely are objects. It is wrong to think we are liberated we are not. That a 14 or 16-year-old girl can have an abortion is a total aberration to me.'*  
(Min\_Maj\_01)

One interviewee from the Evangelical group drew an interesting distinction between women's movements and feminist movements - in FEMCIT we are also making this distinction (see McBride and Mazur, 2008). She talks about the former quite passionately and showing great admiration. She tells the story of women's movements referring to her home country and the story seems surrounded by a halo of an epic tale. However when asked about feminism (second quote below) she boldly claims feminism has not influenced her at all. To this participant women's movements were more about political claims, and women who were beautiful and strong, like superheroes. Feminism however is depicted in more narrow ways, and becomes associated with the idea of an aimless fight against the men and women's natural roles.

*'Well to me they (feminist movements) are important. For example, back where I am from, it was something important. The government there was similar to that of Cuba [...] there were the Mirabal Women who were the first to fight against that political oppression, that slavery from a president named Trujillo. Well the man was a tyrant and fell in love with one of those three women, they were very beautiful and strong women, and she was the only woman who ever resisted him. [...] So she fought ... in fact one of them got a university degree in law, in the time women did not study ... So, what I want to convey is that, to me, all that was very important.'*  
(Min\_Maj\_03)

*'Feminism has not influenced me at all. To me it's fighting against nothing really. It's fighting for the sake of fighting ... because we all have a role and a purpose here. So if we want to force other to see "look what I can do" ... I mean, everybody knows that anyone, if he/she sets out to do something, they can do it ... so to me, feminism is nothing special and has not influenced me at all.'*  
(Min\_Maj\_03)

It seems that participants are more in favour of feminist ideals and claims when they can establish a personal connection with them. The interviewee quoted above identified with such ideals when put in the context of her country, the political problems at the time and so forth. Similarly, a young Muslim expressed quite liberal views and spent quite a bit of time describing how she dealt with gender inequality at home and how she set out to change it. She was aware that she behaved 'like a feminist'. Her understanding of feminism is, then again, subtler than other interviewees, which suggests that such a view is connected to her context and personal experience.

*'Feminism, as it is defined in the dictionary, is like machismo, in a way, women are superior to men, but today feminism can't be understood like that, it's understood as the fight for equality. [...] It has influenced me a lot because my family, even though they've lived here for 40 years, they still have a Moroccan mentality. We come from a rural area with a deeply ingrained culture where women stay home and men work and that's their image that predominates. So, I had a lot of Rights with my uncles, especially when I was young, cooking at home and such ... we finished lunch and my uncle used to say "you and you, clean up" (to my cousin and me) and I would stare at him and looked at my brothers and male cousins who were the same age as me and then would say "no, I don't mind cleaning up but we're all going to do it ... my brothers and male cousins are also going to do it". My uncle would say "who do you think you are?" and there were big fights, one time he kicked me out of his home. My mother used to say "don't answer back" ... So, I was very feminist. I was a bit crazy ... so, if my brother could come at 11pm then I could come home at 11pm. I had a lot of problems with my father in this area.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

This participant sees feminism as the struggle for equality although she mentions the formal definition is female superiority. However, she believes the latter doesn't really apply and that feminism is about equality not superiority.

The same interviewee complains that she, unlike her brother, would get in big trouble when she got home late:

*"Why is it so bad when I do it and not when he does it?" "You are a woman" ... and that answer really hurt. "Yes I am, so what?" He would tell me that I could get pregnant, that I was physically more vulnerable than a man ... something could happen to you when you are out. [...] So it was a matter of protecting me.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

In this example she did not demand arriving home later than her brother (i.e. ‘female superiority’) but rather, be treated just like her brother, that is, she demands equality. She then describes how her father changed and how this change is associated with trust. Sometimes ideologies like benevolent sexism appear harmless because they are perceived to originate in positive feelings of protection, care, affection. But often, these attitudes are patronising and also contain a view of women as defenceless children. Also, this view sometimes hides condescending attitudes such as the idea that women can’t be trusted or don’t know what they want. According to this Sunni participant, she won the struggle for equality at home when her father saw her as a responsible, mature adult thereby suggesting that behind apparently benevolent feelings sometimes conceal or contain a condescending view of women.

*‘In the end my father somehow understood things and tried to get my brothers involved and even urged them to get up and clean. [...] I have changed my father quite a lot [...] finally he understood that I was just as responsible as my brothers, trusted me, he understood nothing was going to happen to me in the sense that I would go out with some boy, take drugs, etc. [...] My father now understands things ... I am now the one who did not quit school. My brothers were more influenced, for example, they smoke pot, etc. [...] being a woman doesn’t mean you are more vulnerable, quite the contrary, I am a lot stronger than my brothers.’*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

This Shia participant views feminism positively and, most importantly, still necessary today, particularly in some countries with unequal laws:

*‘I think they [women’s movements] are very important to the extent that they can achieve change in aspects that can be considered rightly unfair. [...] There are unfair laws in many countries ... In Saudi Arabia women can’t drive ... can’t go out on their own ... there are jobs that they can’t have.’*

(Min\_Min\_02)

However, the same respondent argues she has not been influenced by feminism - outside the fact that sometimes feminist messages make her think or reflect about issues facing women today. So, feminism serves the purpose of raising some level of awareness on current issues affecting women.

*‘I don’t have a lot of information about all that, those movements. I can’t say I have been influenced by them because I have not changed my mind about anything in particular. Perhaps they remind you of things you had forgotten, or put emphasis on things so that you say “look at this!”, help you see things*

*that are happening in the world ... injustices in some parts of the world ... as an ideology I don't know much about them [women's movements].'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

She also mentions:

*'[Feminism] suggests courses that I took at university where we were explained the feminist movement, I don't even remember names or anything, but they originated in the United States, Canada, France, I don't know where, throughout history, to change, to achieve rights, give women more rights ... It also suggests extremes ... for example, I remember there was a class about a feminist movement dedicated to changing "he" to "she" in books, for example, instead of "history", they wrote "shistory" and things like that. [...] I thought it was funny. It is a bit too much. All is good to me as long as ... I don't know ... things don't become radical, you know? Impulsive, revengeful ...'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

Sometimes feminism connotes hatred or bitterness, which most participants dislike. In this instance, feminism is associated with radicalism, violence, and acting outside the established normative framework unnecessarily.

Another woman says:

*'I think there are many women circles that have tried to improve things such as the Woman's Institute, although there are a lot of feminists there, I agree but ... helping women ... entrepreneurial women, immigrant women [...] I think all that is good because women have fallen quite behind because of ... well, the history, the historical development [of the country] ... so, to me, that in particular is good, I think they [women at the Spanish Woman's Institute or Instituto de la Mujer] have accomplished a lot. Now I don't know if we need to talk about feminist women or it is a separate question but I am against that, I insist, to me they are too extremist, they are always looking for things "this is sexist, that is sexist", in all commercials. There are adds that I was against too. [...] Buy I am not at all in favour or feminist circles, I think they are hurt more than help.'*

(Min\_Min\_05)

One Shia participant holds positive views on the women's movements but has no formed opinion on feminism although she does not view it as negative.

*'The truth is, I admire these groups [referring to women's movements] but are a bit far from me because I never participated.'*

(Min\_Min\_03)

*'I don't know ... the truth is I don't know what to think about feminism [...] I don't see it as negative but haven't really thought about it.'*

(Min\_Min\_03)

Another participant defines feminism as a tendency toward femininity or pro-woman worldview but admits she does not go 'further than that', suggesting that she does not embrace a more radical agenda. In fact, the second fragment below indicates that this participant does not want to be associated with feminists or feminism at all.

*'To me feminism is a tendency toward all feminine things, just that. It's femininity and all that represents femininity, pro-feminine ... I don't go beyond that meaning.'*

(Min\_Min\_05)

*'No, no. I don't pay attention to them. I had contact with many of them, as I mentioned to you I have met a lot of people from the gay and lesbian scene and there I met a lot of feminists and ... quite the opposite, it's people I even avoided.'*

(Min\_Min\_05)

#### **4.3.2 Concluding remarks: Section 4.3**

Section 4.4 examined participants' perceptions of gender roles, gender equality, as well as the women's movements and feminism. The religious women who participated in our study still hold largely traditional views of men and women, of who they are, want to be and should be. While most participants see the value of equal rights for men and women none of the women interviewed endorses a feminist agenda least is active in feminism. Quite the opposite, on average, views of feminism are negative and associated with radicalism and ultimately purposeless struggle. However, it is also true that many women did not know much about feminism, which also suggests an opportunity for feminists to engage in a more direct dialogue and negotiation with men and women from different religious faiths.

#### **4.4 Religion and Citizenship**

Participants aligned along three major lines when discussing citizenship. First, many of the women interviewed thought of and discussed citizenship in terms of civic behaviour, and ethical values such as selflessness, as well as caring for and contributing to the common good. The notion that citizenship, particularly good/active citizenship, must be based on empathy and altruism was typically

evoked by devout Christian women, which suggests a strong connection with their religious values even though participants did not always establish such link explicitly.

Second, a number of Muslim participants viewed good/active citizenship in a similar light, with the important exception that many of them clearly associated such views with Islamic teachings. In fact, as will be shown later, many Muslim respondents could not dissociate being a good a Muslim from being a good citizen.

A third group of respondents, viewed citizenship as progress thereby suggesting a more rational and less religiously based approach. For these participants, ethics, and values such as tolerance, involvement, and patriotic sentiments constitute the foundation of social progress and community growth.

It should be noted that some interviewees were not sure about what citizenship meant. They even appeared to feel a bit threatened by the question, as if it they were being subjected to some kind of test or asked to answer a right/wrong type of question.

As a last and general observation, participants made very few references to the political and legal dimensions of citizenship. However, some interviewees did refer to voting as a citizenship and democratic duty. However, outside remarks on voting, which were sometimes elicited, there was a surprising absence of allusions to citizenship as legal status to which social and political advantages are attached. While this could be expected from Spanish participants with no migrant background insofar as they may take their Spanish citizenship status for granted, it is a bit puzzling for the rest of the interviewees. A plausible explanation is that most participants in this category (i.e. with a migrant background) have long been living in Spain - even born in Spain - and as such they also take such status for granted.

The perspectives summarised above will be illustrated and discussed in the next paragraphs.

#### 4.4.1 A good citizen is a decent person

The majority of Christian interviewees connected citizenship to notions of civic duty and responsibility, sharing, and basic social norms. For this group citizenship is related to commitment, generosity, civic obligations, and respect/tolerance:

*'To be a good citizen is to commit yourself to all you live and share around you; [...] to put other people before yourself, to realise that all you possess is also other people's possessions. To me being a good citizen is living with everybody else ... give yourself to others, be with others, help, and talk to people. Feel things as yours without anyone having to say "this lot is yours". You need to take care of streets you walk on because they are yours. You are going to walk on them every day.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

The fragment above emphasises at least two interesting ideas. One is that of selflessness, e.g. 'put other people[s interests] before yourself [your own interests]', which is expressed in somewhat idealised terms. Second, this interviewee emphasises how common property should be cared for individually as if it was a private possession but simultaneously shared as a communal resource. It is interesting because a more rational perspective would suggest that greater effort needs to be put into one's exclusive property - since when a good belongs to everybody, responsibility can be easily avoided or defused. This constitutes a simple illustration of the well-known free-rider problem. In collective bargaining and social/political science free riders consume more than their fair share of a public resource, or shoulder less than a fair share of the costs of its production or maintenance. They (free riders) do so because they rely on the idea that the system will still work even if some individuals (i.e. free riders) don't contribute. The rationale put forward by the participant above advocates a view of the world that would prevent such problem from ever arising although, as mentioned earlier, such articulation could be seen as naïve.

Another Catholic woman argued:

*'It is hard for me to distinguish the two (being a good Catholic and a good citizen) ... but to be a good person you don't have to be a Christian. There are very good people who aren't Christian.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_02)



Even though she admits it is difficult for her to differentiate a good Catholic from a good citizen, thereby suggesting that all good Catholics are also good citizens, she also understands citizenship is not necessarily connected to a specific faith or set of religious beliefs.

Citizenship is commonly talked about in terms of respect and politeness, emphasising ethical and normative considerations:

*'Citizenship means respect, politeness, civilization in one word. A good citizen is one who behaves respectfully and politely toward others. As simple as that. If you apply that to all contexts and situations then things would really work.'*

(Min\_Maj\_01)

While the first testimony (Maj\_Maj\_01) resonates with religiously based ethics - e.g., selflessness, generosity - the fragment above seemingly has a more practical tone as illustrated by the 'things would really work' wording and the allusion to 'civilisation'. The quote suggests that you can't go wrong with respect and politeness and that these two principles are the foundations of successful social interaction.

The following fragment reflects the views of another Catholic participant:

*'A good citizen is an active citizen. A good citizen obviously respects laws, social arrangements, sometimes these are written laws ... Anyone can be a good active citizen but there are people who have a more participative orientation ... I think it is admirable although I can't include myself among such people.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_04)

The first part of her testimony places stress on respect but there is also a clear reference to participation, generosity and ethical values. It is interesting to note how the fragment conveys a sense of scarcity; good citizens are rare and, for these reasons, also worthy of admiration. Also, it's worth commenting on the implication that active citizenship depends on individual traits and orientations. It almost implies that some individuals are naturally better citizens. It's somewhat contradictory to say anyone can be a good citizen but that adequate citizenship practice is based on elusive traits. In sum, being an active citizen is within everybody's reach, yet not common, and somewhat based on innate predispositions. A plausible explanation is

that she means such natural trait (i.e. participative orientation) crosscut social class, religious adherence, as well as other major social attributes.

Finally, the insights of this Sunni woman are right on point. She puts forward the notion of citizenship in historical perspective and explains that it is a modern concept:

*'The concept of citizenship is something that did not exist in Spain. Citizenship is a recently introduced term [...] I mean, Spanish people were "good people", right? And that's it. But the concept of civic responsibility did not exist, right? The idea that "together we can do it." Now is the first time that we're seeing this with the economic crisis ... in the media, channels like La Sexta, I believe it is, with slogans like "together we can make it". [...] The concept of belonging, the idea that we all matter, that we are all needed, this is not common in Spain ... that integrative vision is missing ... So, what's going to worry us? What are we going to talk about? Well if that unity does not exist then we all worry about different things. What do Moroccan and Spanish people share? Well, religion, nothing else.'*

(Maj\_Min\_05)

The fragment above suggests an extraordinary analysis of a number of topics. First, as described earlier, testimonies of Catholic participants confirm this Sunni woman's views, namely Spanish citizenship and national identity lacks character: 'Spanish people were "good people", right? And that's it.'

Second, she detects change due to the current economic situation and how the concept of citizenship should be grounded on the value of collective effort: 'We all matter, we are all needed'. Third, she advocates the notion that citizenship should become the main bonding element and explains how the absence of such ingredient drives people to establish ties based on other commonalities such as religion, which are not, however, all-inclusive: 'Well if that unity [citizenship] does not exist then [...] What do Moroccan and Spanish people share? Well, religion ... nothing else.'

#### 4.4.2 A good Muslim is a good citizen

Muslim respondents emphasise how the essence of Islam is precisely its social dimension. In this sense, being 'a good Muslim' necessarily entails being a good citizen. Thus, Islam can be viewed as a resource or tool to active citizenship:

*'Of course they are related (citizenship and Islam). [...] You have to be a good citizen to be a good Muslim. Otherwise you are not doing anything. You can do Ramadan, pray all you want, but if you are not a good person ... all you are doing is useless. [...] [Empathy] it is your obligation toward others.'*  
(Maj\_Min\_01)

The citation above illustrates how Muslim interviewees connect Islam and citizenship. Notions such as empathy and obligations to others are viewed as necessity in Islam. The implication is that an important part of being a good Muslim is measured in terms of one's behaviour toward others. Individual religious acts are not enough, not even essential according to some interviewees. What makes a Muslim a true Muslim is precisely how he/she carries himself/herself in relation to fellow human beings. This explicit connection was quite unique to Muslim respondents, especially Sunni Muslims although the Sunni Muslim group was, on average, more religious than Shia Muslim participants.

The discussion above is interesting because what non-Muslims sometimes perceive as key - wearing the veil, adhering to Ramadan, praying five times a day - does not appear to carry the same weight for actual Muslims, at least according to the participants in this study. It is paradoxical that such external symbols and behaviours are regarded as sufficient, even imperative, by non-Muslims simply because they can be more easily identified (e.g., they are external), while, for real Muslims, individualistic religious displays are in fact secondary.

Another Sunni participant asserts:

*'There is no way you can be a Muslim without being a [good] citizen. [...] I will tell you one thing ... an example, our prophet, his neighbour was Jewish. But they were good neighbours, respected each other, each in their religion, but respected each other and got along well ... to the point that, the Jew had to sell his house and he put it out for a very high prize [...] People thought the house was not worth that much. He [the prophet] said, I am not selling the house, I am selling my neighbour.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

The story illustrates the importance of tolerance in Islam and how respect can drive friendship even among individuals who share different religious views such as a Muslim and a Jew. The same participant adds:

*'So, to us it is the same thing ... wherever you go you need to accept the way things are in that place.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

It is interesting how she connects Muhammad's story to the idea of adapting to the norms of the place you live in. Strictly speaking, the association is not evident but the specific lesson that this woman gets is that one needs to show respect no matter who our 'neighbours' are. She apparently understands the term neighbour figuratively; in her context, Spanish people, most likely Catholic, are neighbours and, like Muhammad, who respected and befriended his Jew neighbour, she must respect and accept her fellow Spanish citizens. Interestingly, she adopts a more conforming attitude conveyed by the use of the word 'accept' which connotes less willingness than the term befriend or 'get along well' like in the prophet's parable.

Given the universalistic orientation of Islam it is important that there are explicit norms about accepting cultural differences. Although the previous quote points to that direction, other participants were even more explicit:

*'Islam, in a way, tells you that you need to respect the laws of the country where you live [...] If you move to a country that is not your own and has laws different to the ones you are used to, you need to respect such laws above anything else. Qur'an has all kinds of laws, so it refers to all kinds of laws, as long as they don't conflict with your religion. For example if such law forbids praying or going to the mosque, then it is affecting you and your religion ... but anything that has to do with social and political laws you need to respect.'*

(Maj\_Min\_03)

The understanding of law is quite broad according to the interviewee quoted above. It includes cultural and social norms as well as religious laws. The fragment above clearly states that a country's laws must be respected and followed so long as they don't interfere with essential religious rights such as the right to pray. It is possible that, in addition to being stated explicitly in the Qur'an, this Sunni respondent offered this answer as a result of being more aware of her migrant background and need for adaptation to a different culture and context. In this sense, the Qur'an appears

instrumental to some of these women in that it seems susceptible to interpretation so as to facilitate social and cultural adjustment.

In the same vein:

*'Precisely, Islam makes an emphasis on citizenship notions because many of us come to Islam from diverse origins. Not just geographical origins but people who perhaps had a life that was far from religion. Perhaps a not very spiritual life, perhaps a life focused on material aspects ... And you find Islam where none asks questions or demands explanations about what you did before.'*

(Maj\_Min\_05)

Again Islamic teachings are viewed as instrumental for social harmony in diversity: 'many of us come to Islam from different origins'. As the participant further explains, the word 'origin' has a broad meaning. First, it may refer to geographical origin but, importantly, it also stands for personal history and past experiences. This interviewee suggests that Islam enables you to be born again. The principle no-questions-asked is precisely the mechanism that facilitates this process.

#### **4.4.3 Citizenship as instrumental to social progress**

A third category of participants understands citizenship in slightly different terms. Rather than speaking about good (bad) citizens, the discourse is more about active versus passive participation, about making a contribution by bettering yourself and, by force, bettering society. For this group active citizenship translates into helping your social context move to the next stage. In other words, active involvement drives progress:

*'An active citizen is one who contributes to the city [...] Well, a person who loves his/her country, his/her city, wants it to progress, and that person studies, does things ... to me that person is a good citizen.'*

(Min\_Maj\_03)

It is interesting how this woman identifies two levels of action; you improve the net social capital of a place by improving yourself first (e.g., studying) which positions you at a level where you can 'do things'. Although the last part is a bit vague, it does convey that once an individual has gained social and educational capital then he/she is equipped to being useful to others within a society. This can be considered an individualistic approach. It is not so much that citizenship should guarantee access

to resources that eventually enable individuals to acquire skills but rather that the sum of skilled individuals who also contribute their skills to the community is what ultimately makes a capable society. This testimony neglects the existence of subtle and not so subtle barriers to traditionally discriminated against groups. Such barriers may prevent equal access to resources and opportunities, which nation states (as well as individuals) must safeguard and enforce. In other words, if an accomplished society is made up of accomplished citizens then there need to be proper mechanisms at the institutional level that guarantee equal access to opportunities.

Similarly, this Shia woman argues:

*'It [citizenship] starts with basic things: not littering the streets, respecting laws [...] if you are a father or a mother, it also means to offer your children a good education [...] to me it's about basic obligations, respecting the context where you live, the environment ...'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

It is interesting how she views offering your children a fair chance at obtaining a good education as a part of a citizen's (and a parent's) obligation. Again, the indirect implication is that it is individuals that control access to resources not institutions. While this might be partly true, it assumes that resources such as a good education are, in principle, equally available to everybody while, the fact is, inequalities and subtle barriers shape individual prospects and choice in powerful ways.

According to another participant:

*'Citizenship? Well, [it] means you live in a city and need to respect it, do your obligations, and live as good as you can. You need to be very proud of that ... To me a person who is critical of the place he/she was born is a despicable person; even if it is a shack in the middle of a mountain. It is your place, you were born there.'*

(Min\_Maj\_04)

Notions of respect as well as rights and obligations are, in addition, related to patriotic feelings, and the belief that one needs to be proud of his/her roots, no matter what these are. It is interesting that feelings of belonging are particularly strong among interviewees with a migrant background. This could be explained by a feeling of gratitude toward the receiving country and also suggests that, for the most part, the predominant sentiment is one of feeling accepted or socially integrated.

Our interviews include very few references to the political and legal dimensions of citizenship. However, some participants did mention that voting is a citizenship and democratic duty:

*'Nobody has the right to complain about anything in a democracy when you have the right to vote and give your opinion.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

A Shia woman (below) argues that citizenship is also about 'creativity'. This contrasts markedly with the previous fragment on voting, which suggests that citizenship is more about deciding than about acting. For the following participant supports the view that it is not only about acting but also about doing so in original ways. The implication may be that perhaps making a contribution is not always easy or straightforward so, how one contributes is a creative act therefore requiring inspiration and innovation:

*'An active citizen is someone who more or less cares about what happens around and who is creative and can do things for others. Someone who asks him/herself "what can I do to improve something?"'*

(Min\_Min\_03)

#### **4.4.4 Citizenship as complex**

A Sunni Muslim participant born in Spain (no migrant background whatsoever) feels:

*'You are associated with being Arab because you wear a headscarf, even Arabs themselves do this. This astonishment comes from both Spanish and Arab people. There is a lack of visual education, of getting used to seeing others as people, right? Identity is being reduced to very trivial things.'*

(Maj\_Min\_05)

Clearly, this participant shows disappointment and frustration with the idea that a person's outfit is considered a perfect reflection or prediction of who she/he is. She is seemingly advocating a more complex and nuanced view of citizenship and cultural identity. Her statement implies that this simplification is superficial and fixed, limiting a person's capacity to define and reinvent himself/herself. In the end, this view of citizenship and identity reduces a person's freedom and autonomy:

*'Spain, no matter how you slice it, is not a tolerant society, not at all. It is not tolerant about itself. I mean, here if someone dresses in a way that is unconventional or not dictated by fashion, it is something that ... attracts*

*attention. [...] I know Anglo-Saxon society well, English society, and ... there, there aren't any problems! A person is seen as a person not linked to a place of origin or a tradition.'*

(Maj\_Min\_05)

She is voicing how her citizenship, her origin, is perceived to conflict with her religious choice and, as a result, she feels somewhat stigmatised. To this woman her origin is a bit of burden insofar as she is unwilling to sacrifice her religious choice - related to concept of cognitive dissonance. Thus, it is her geographical origin that is to blame. She feels that her ties to a place translate into a lack of freedom in how she defines herself.

When asked about her citizenship and identity she offered an interesting answer:

*'From an administrative point of view? In general? Well in general, I feel I am a citizen of the world. At an administrative level I feel Spanish, evidently, in practical and administrative terms, because here is where I was born [...] and well, it's a circumstance that God gave me ... I was born here as I could have been born elsewhere.'*

(Maj\_Min\_05)

She accepts her citizenship insofar as she views it as determined by God's will, however, she adds:

*'It would have been easier ... if my destiny was to become Muslim, it would have been easier if things had been different but God wanted things to be like this. So, I am satisfied to have been born in Spain and of what that means.'*

(Maj\_Min\_05)

Interestingly, and understandably, unlike other interviewees, she does not use words such as proud of your roots, love for your country ... rather, she uses the word, 'satisfied' which conveys a certain sense of disaffection probably caused by the lack of understanding she perceives stemming from the generalised assumption that birthplace is linked with religious choice.

A Shia participant, when asked about citizenship said:

*'It [citizenship] one of the hardest things to define, at least I think so. I have lived in many places, and Lebanon, in particular, is a place with an ambiguous identity, complex and multifaceted so ... That's why it [citizenship] has become a very special concept ... To be Lebanese is to be something else, it's like being in between ... it's not being Arab, it's Arab nationalism with*



*some western influence which comes from Christians, French, because they have been in Lebanon ... I am Lebanese and identify with my people but I sometimes wonder what is it to be a Lebanese Shia? What is it to be a Lebanese Muslim?'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

This Shia woman almost offers the reverse of our previous Sunni participant. First, when asked about citizenship there is no doubt in her mind that it is Lebanese citizenship that she wants to discuss. Second, it is interesting to note that, in general, non-Moroccan Muslims, including this Lebanese participant, discuss their origin at length and in a proud manner; conversely, Moroccans are not so keen to talk about their origins. Perhaps the Moroccan people we interviewed had simply been in Spain longer. It is also possible that Moroccan participants sense the negative stereotypes associated with Moroccan immigration and so, consciously or subconsciously, they avoid discussing their roots. The Shia woman quoted above talks about her citizenship as a unique and broad concept, one that includes cultural, historical, religious, and identity notions. She also views Lebanese citizenship and identity as complex and, in her own words, 'special'.

The language she uses suggests a positive view of such complexity and something she definitely embraces: 'I identify with my people'. She expresses more difficulty situating such identity in the broader picture - e.g., relative to the Arab and Christian worlds. In a way this view contrasts profoundly with the opinions expressed by the Spanish Sunni woman quoted before. While the Sunni woman argues that there is no such thing as a complex and diverse view of the Spanish national character (or citizenship), the Lebanese participant asserts that citizenship and identity in Lebanon are so fluid and varied that it can become confusing. However judging from the way these two participants discuss the issue, it seems that complexity offers freedom while fixed views restrict it; in the end it might be preferable to feel disconcerted at times than be constrained.

#### **4.4.5 Religious citizenship**

Regarding the link between religiosity and citizenship, some interviewees did not see them as closely connected, with the important exception of Muslim participants. Most interviewees seemed a bit puzzled by questions connecting religion and

citizenship and seemed unsure about how to address it. Other respondents did offer interesting insights that will be explored next.

When asked whether it made sense to talk about religious citizenship, a Catholic participant said:

*'No ... To be a good person a person needs not be Christian. I know a lot of good people who are not Christian.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_02)

Similarly, another Catholic woman says:

*'I think a non-religious person needs not be a bad citizen. It is the other way around, right? A good Catholic should also be a good citizen; if he/she is not a good citizen he is probably not a good Catholic either.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_04)

Similar views are expressed by this Evangelical woman:

*'You can be a good citizen without being Evangelical but not the other way round [...] An evangelical person is expected to be different ... as good evangelical people we act correctly. I think a good Evangelical is a good citizen.'*

(Min\_Maj\_03)

These two participants express that even though not all good citizens must be religious, following a religious code of conduct should definitely make you a good citizen as a result. An aspect worth commenting on is the notion that a good person is a good citizen. Participants don't explain this connection explicitly but it partly shows how citizenship is still viewed in very simple somewhat naïve terms. To these interviewees a good person is a good citizen and a good Catholic (or Evangelical) is a good person, therefore a good Catholic (or Evangelical) is a good citizen. So, it is through the simplification of citizenship that religion becomes relevant.

Muslim women in our study appear to have a slightly more sophisticated view of the connection citizenship-religion or religious citizenship.

*'Well, I'll tell you one thing, citizenship has such a broad sense in our religion [Islam] that it is hard to summarise. For example, I am a part of this group of people. Of course, if I am part of it, I should know their preferences, what acceptable behaviour consists of [within this group], and how to respect and*

*be respected. It is not about wanting to do this; it's your obligation. You can't do your own thing; no, it is your obligation.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

For this Muslim woman citizenship is deeply connected with Islam. Citizenship as involvement, tolerance, and adherence to social norms is not seen as voluntary in Islam. This interviewee insists that a good Muslim does not choose to behave as a good citizen, he/she is supposed to, is expected to, even obliged to be a good citizen. In this sense, Islam can be viewed as instrumental to social integration, especially for Muslims living in countries other than their original ones. She adds:

*'So, citizenship, here, even though I am not Spanish, I need to follow some rules, which are not my rules, but do not hurt me as a Muslim. It is one way of living with these people, who have a different culture, a different way of looking at life ... and well, of respecting and be respected.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

It is interesting how citizenship is represented as contextual: 'citizenship, here, even though I am not Spanish'. In a way this woman holds that, even though she is not a Spanish citizen (e.g., 'even though they [Spanish rules] are not my rules'), she must behave like one because citizenship is situational not fixed. In Spain, being a good citizen means behaving in accordance with Spanish laws so long as these do not interfere with Islamic Laws. This flexibility is obediently assumed insofar as Islam dictates it; however, it is interesting to note, in her discourse, the number of reference to 'they', 'them' (Spaniards) and 'us' (Moroccan/Muslim). Thus, it seems that Islam provides mechanisms for adaptation and integration but also, simultaneously, means for protecting the distinctiveness of Muslim (e.g., religious Islamic law comes first) thereby preventing socio-cultural assimilation.

One Evangelical participant expressed views that appear somewhat condescending. First she argues that citizenship is grounded on religious mandates such as loving God and his creation (i.e. other fellow human beings). Insofar as we're all God's creation we all deserve respect, and that is what good citizenship essentially is:

*'If each citizen applies what he/she has learned [...] if we take the two essential commandments as our basic principles ... God taught us, Jesus Christ taught us that we should love God with our hearts and minds, with all our strength and our fellow human beings we should love like we love ourselves [...] If you love God you also love his creation [...] when you see a*

*person, even if he/she did wrong to you, you can't see that person as before ... you realise that God [...] also loves that person and so, those who believe in God must act accordingly as citizens, there can't be ... there shouldn't be rejection. Now I can't share the lifestyle of people who have other religions, but that's no basis for rejecting them, I will still think God loves them and I will pray. I need to pray many times ... pray for those people so that one day God touches their hearts and, at some point, saves them.'*

(Min\_Maj\_02)

However, this participant argues at the end while she accepts other people and other views, deep down, she can't understand or approve of other lifestyles or religions. She then resorts to praying for non-believers hoping that they will embrace the right religion (i.e. hers, Evangelism) eventually. This is another example of how religion offers mechanisms for peaceful coexistence based on very general abstract concepts (e.g., we're all God's creatures) rather than a true understanding of other individuals' motivations.

#### **4.4.6 Multiculturalism**

In the last decade Spain has experienced a large inflow of immigrants but there is a general lack of awareness in Spanish society regarding racism and discrimination (see Chapter 1). In the last few years there have been a series of initiatives to address this issue. For example, in 2005 a national observatory against racism and xenophobia was created and in 2008 the National Plan for the Alliance of Civilizations<sup>34</sup> was launched.

This part of the study examines participants' views on multiculturalism, and, in general, participants' answers illustrate how the concept has yet to permeate some segments of Spanish society. Although the women interviewed cannot be considered representative of the broader Spanish population, it is worth stressing that the overwhelming majority of participants were hardly familiar with the concept and in-depth implications of a multicultural society. Many of the women interviewed, particularly Christian women, were not even sure how to define the term multiculturalism thereby showing an insufficient penetration of the concept at least

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<sup>34</sup> The Alliance of Civilizations was proposed by Spanish President Rodríguez Zapatero at the 59th General Assembly of the United Nations in 2005 and seeks to promote international action against extremism through the forging of international, inter-cultural, and interreligious dialogue and cooperation, particularly between the Western and Islamic worlds.

among the average citizen. Many respondents did not appear to have thought much about the concept and often gave very short and uncomplicated answers.

***Multiculturalism? 'Many cultures, right?'***

Many participants were quite unsure about how to answer the question 'what does the word multiculturalism mean to you?':

'What is that? [...] I accept everybody; we are all humans, right?' (Maj\_Maj\_02). Despite not knowing what multiculturalism means exactly, this woman's answer sounds a bit defensive and connotes a somewhat resigned attitude: since we are all humans, I have no choice but to accept everybody. She appeals to essential human rights but multiculturalism, according to some definitions is not just about acceptance but also about celebrating human diversity. Another Catholic woman says: 'I understand it [multiculturalism] stands for diversity of cultures ... [...] That's correct, right?' (Min\_Maj\_01). This participant is unable to elaborate further and appears worried that the question has a right or wrong answer.

Similarly, another Catholic woman asserts:

*'I don't know what to say to that question ... Evidently, there is so much immigration these days ... in any Spanish city ... is receiving people from other cultures, right?'*

(Maj\_Maj\_04)

First, there is confusion about the term and then it is immediately connected to immigrants. Her answer signals the idea that it is majority cultures that must 'receive' or accept incoming immigrants. This could mean it's their responsibility as the dominant group, therefore the group with real power. But also, it may suggest that it is a one-directional process rather than one of exchange whereby all individuals can potentially benefit from cultural diversity.

The following Catholic participant still isn't sure how to answer but provides a slightly more progressive view by explicitly acknowledging the notion of sharing and the goal of social integration:

*'How can I answer that? The question is a bit complicated, right? [...] To me it is about sharing diverse cultures ... and respect them so that they are fully integrated in society.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_05)

Still, integration is viewed as a process that minorities need to undergo, which contrasts to a view of multiculturalism as the mutual adaptation of minority and majority cultures.

### ***Multiculturalism is positive***

Non-Catholic respondents appear to have a more positive view of multiculturalism:

*'Well, I don't know ... it means many cultures? I don't know ... The closer you are to people who think different from you, from other religions, how should I put it? ... the more you learn in life.'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

Her testimony illustrates how she intuitively thinks being exposed to diversity is a positive thing not merely something that needs to be tolerated. Also, her understanding of culture reflects more breadth; she does not refer to immigrants or minorities but to people whose views differ from one's own.

Similarly, this woman has a favourable attitude towards the notion even though she acknowledges it is merely her impression and, in general, her testimony lacks elaboration:

*'My feeling, from what I understand, I sense it [multiculturalism] is good. I would like it if cultures united.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

Other respondents offered more informed and/or experience-based positive views:

*'In this city there are many cultures. And you learn a lot. I come from a small town, and left when I was very young, I went to study abroad and then I moved to another country, so that helped me open my mind, be more open-minded about things I didn't know ...'*

(Min\_Maj\_02)

This Evangelical woman seemingly holds constructive ideas on multiculturalism based on her own experience of having learned and changed from intercultural experiences.

A Sunni woman also draws from personal experience when discussing multiculturalism:

*'Well it [multiculturalism] is extremely important. That's one of the most positive things I have experienced here. When so many people from different cultures, different beliefs, and different ways of looking at life get together, you learn things from others ... So, it is very important for society. As long as each person respects others' beliefs. It has been an important and beautiful experience.'*

(Min\_Maj\_03)

According to the fragment above, multiculturalism is something to be cherished insofar as it can constitute a learning experience. She views multiculturalism as a societal asset that must be grounded on respect before it becomes, in her words, a 'beautiful experience'.

A Shia participant introduces the idea that multiculturalism should help eradicate prejudice:

*'Well, to be in a multicultural environment is when people are used to talking to Moroccan people, Chinese, Lebanese, people who celebrate Ramadan and Easter, and to be in an environment where there are no prejudices, in an environment where it doesn't matter if you pronounce "cerveza" with a "th" or an "s" sound, it's all the same, the same smiley face and you are treated the same.'*

(Min\_Min\_03)

It is interesting how the interviewee just quoted seeming implies that prejudice can arise from significant differences such as faith (e.g., celebrating Ramadan versus Easter) but also prejudice may be triggered in very trivial situations like the beer example illustrates. Also, it is important to note that for this Shia woman multiculturalism exist when these differences aren't paid attention to but rather go unnoticed: 'it's all the same, the same smiley face'.

A Sunni Spanish participant also emphasizes the value of a diverse cultural heritage:

*'What does it mean to be Spanish? Well, to me it is to know the culture and history of my country, which is extremely rich, and always talks about cultural influences, a country, a geographic territory that has been a meeting point of many cultures [...] I mean, I keep that, with that history and that melting pot that Spain is and that we still haven't learn how to take advantage of. We have not made good use of that legacy. Culturally we have not developed an offer that reflects all that ... at the level of financing/financing and business, we don't see that shine, that diversity ...'*

(Maj\_Min\_05)

The fragment above illustrates dissatisfaction with the idea that Spain has not learned to use its history, its past, to promote a multicultural society: 'we have not made good use of that legacy'. This is interesting because it suggests that diversity and multiculturalism are in a way a social construction. Also, it is worth noting how this participant endorses the idea that institutions, businesses, public funding should also reflect this diversity. This could be interpreted as a grievance insofar as the current situation does not fully reflect and cater to diversity in Spain.

### ***Multiculturalism versus social isolation***

Some participants seemingly implied not supporting multicultural values constitutes a form of cultural protection. This Shia woman understands this stand but endorses the positive aspect of overcoming that 'fear' and having the courage to cross the line between the known and the unknown:

*'To the extent that you accept others, that's the extent to which [multiculturalism] is important ... to have the curiosity to cross bridges right? To get closer to the other, understand, try to understand [the other], I think that is important, of course. To get to know the other and respect that he/she is different ... I think people have not really assumed all this; they lock themselves in their own thing and don't want to know anything else. It's an option, a kind of social protection ... as long as they don't hurt others and respect them ...'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

Her words are interesting because they suggest that positive impulses (e.g., curiosity) should trigger the multicultural experience. This contrasts with views of multiculturalism as accommodating the other because it is politically correct or there are few alternatives outside that given the increase of immigration and other social factors.



A Sunni woman offers a view that seems like a spinoff of the notion that it may not be desirable to live in social isolation:

*'You can't lock yourself in your culture because that is not going to take you anywhere. If you want to do that you must remain in your country ... but in your country there are also many cultures ... [You virtually need to lock yourself] in your home with people who are not exposed to others either.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

This participant has an intriguing perspective. Her views apparently imply that the social isolation cycle is never-ending and only triggers further isolation. The unwillingness to share your culture or the desire to protect it from influences may appear to simply force you to remain in your country of origin but then, she further elaborates, countries are also diverse so one must also limit his/her social relations (e.g., stay at home), furthermore, the relations of those around him/her (e.g., family and friends). Her testimony implies that people are easily influenced by diversity and that it is inescapable. An extreme desire to stop this process would only result in endless isolation.

### ***Multiculturalism and religion***

Participants were asked to elaborate on the connection between multiculturalism and religion. Their answers were diverse but still many participants were very unsure about what to say, especially those who had little awareness on multiculturalism more generally.

The testimony of this Catholic woman brings up the issue of how religious communities are must deal with increasing diversity due, presumably, to immigration: 'I suppose the community [her religious community] does not have a problem accepting people from other cultures.' (Maj\_Maj\_04).

The issue, however, is not represented very positively, which is illustrated by the use of tentative speech such as 'I suppose' (indicating she isn't totally sure) and the negative wording 'does not have a problem accepting'.

When asked about the relationship between multiculturalism and religion, one Catholic respondent answered:

*'Each [group] has their own religion. [...] [But] Here [in this church] Latin American children took their first communion ... and in Easter, I was not here but, they did the Passion of Christ and a Latin American kid played the role of Jesus [...] A lot of women, Latin American women go to mass daily [...] And we take them, right? I was cleaning the church once [...] and a woman [a Latin American woman] came up and said "can I help?" and I said "look, talk to the priest" ... "In fact this Church is giving Spanish classes to foreigners".'*  
(Maj\_Maj\_02)

The fact that this participant recalls a series of stories involving Latin American members is striking. It suggests that this is viewed as exceptional rather than routine modus operandi. In addition, the remark on how 'we' (Spanish Catholics) 'take them' (foreign Catholics) implies distance. Despite sharing the same faith, this participant apparently views non-Spaniards as foreigners first, and as Catholics second.

The views of the following Catholic interviewee are more positive. She appears genuinely glad about steps taken to make Catholicism more inclusive. She also discusses the inclusion of non-Spaniards in the religious community as something that will have a positive impact in the majority and not merely as an illustration of a charitable act to help minority groups:

*'I was very happy when this Pope ... he seems to have opened up to Orthodox Catholics ... even in our own neighbourhoods, here we have a lot of ... immigrants, there are a lot of Romanians who have other types of religions and, listen to me: it is good to our community that we understand other types of [cultures].'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

One Evangelical participant explains how she has become more tolerant and open-minded about other religious groups. But her remarks imply that her acceptance partly stems from the idea that individuals belong to religious groups as a result from where they have been born. Her viewpoint implies that individuals have little control over their religious adherence; thus, they should not be blamed or discriminated against on that basis:

*'To come here has helped me live by the word of God because I thought only the Evangelist religion was God's [religion] ... However I now think that there are other cultures, other religions ... it depends on where you are you are*

*taught [those religions] ... It's nobody's fault to have been born in a Muslim country, for example. I am not in favor of Islamism ... but I respect it and have had contact with Muslim people who I know are believers in God, and search for God in their own way ... So, a variety of cultures, habits and all that is enriching for one. [...] I talk to people from other religions and I connect with them, but because it is God, God is not one religion, it's never been like that and it never will, do you know what I mean? Because God sent his son Jesus Christ [...] he came to choose a group ... he could have chosen the Jews ... The Bible tells you that God loves everyone equally, he created us all and loves us all, to him there are no distinctions and no exceptions.'*

(Min\_Maj\_02)

This participant also considers all individuals as God's creation and sees particular religions as somewhat 'accidental' in two senses. First, your religion is largely determined by your birthplace. Second, Jesus Christ could have chosen any other group as 'the group'. This is extremely interesting because emphasis is placed on commonalities - e.g., we are all God's creation - and other aspects are deemed as circumstantial and somewhat beyond individuals' control.

### ***Barriers to Citizenship***

This section examines whether participants experienced barriers or advantages to their participation in society as a result of their faith. Interviewees were asked 'have you, or anyone close to you, experienced any barriers or limitations in terms of participation in society due to your religious faith?' Most women, however, only addressed their personal experience; some however, related other people's stories.

The majority Catholic participants were unaware that as adherents to the majority religion they may experience things differently from other minority religious groups. Most of them did not think they either experienced neither advantages nor disadvantages as a result of their faith. This is rather surprising but supports ideas already discussed in the citizenship section; in general, at least from these interviews, Spanish participants (particularly Christian women) are utterly unaware of what a diverse society is and the mechanisms that may and/or should govern it.

One Catholic participant says:

*'Advantages? I think we Catholics don't enjoy many advantages, right? I think that what we do is, let's see, commit ourselves to many things ...'*

(Maj\_Maj\_02)

Her mentioning of commitment may suggest that she interprets the term advantages negatively - e.g., unwarranted privileges. Thus, her response appears slightly defensive. She is seemingly making the point that Catholics are more dedicated and engaging than non-Catholics or non-religious individuals.

The next few testimonies, all from Catholic women, illustrate their reactions when asked about whether they experienced barriers because of their religion:

*'I have not experienced serious [disadvantages], I don't know anybody who had problems because of his/her religion.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_04)

*'So far I have not experienced anything like that [disadvantages]. No barriers, no limitations because of my religion. Nothing like that at all.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_05)

*'Well I don't think so personally, I have not experienced advantages of any kind for adhering to Catholicism.'*

(Maj\_Maj\_05)

Interestingly, almost all Catholic participants said they had not experienced advantages either. This suggests it may be difficult for these women to don't think in relative terms. In other words, advantages can be understood as privileges a group enjoys vis-a-vis other groups. Similarly, barriers may be defined as difficulty your group, but not others, encounter. The perception of advantages and disadvantages is in a way grounded on social distinctions and comparisons. Since there seems to be little awareness of the status of other groups (see Multiculturalism section), then whatever it is majority women experience cannot be framed as either advantages or disadvantages.

One Catholic woman did assert:

*'This is something I have discussed with people ... no, there are no limitations in society, of course, now it seems we Catholics are persecuted, I don't know why. You no longer feel like you used to feel ... free. I don't know if it is the desire to be modern or what ... but there are opinions within governments against Catholicism ...'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

This participant complains that Catholicism does not enjoy a privileged status like it used to but it does not occur to her that individuals from minority religious groups may experience this even more violently. She establishes the following comparison: Catholicism now versus Catholicism before. Interestingly, her discourse illustrates a well-known tendency in Spain, namely the secularisation of the country and the decreased relevance (even downplay or trivialisation) of religious affairs relative to 10-20 years ago (and particularly during and in the immediate aftermath of Franco's dictatorship).

Another exception is how this Catholic participant discusses advantages:

*'My environment [is Catholic] so of course I enjoy a lot of advantages. I have a lot of friends who have proved to me that we truly are a community, you think they are not there but they are when you need them [...] In 1962 I worked in Austria, I left with a contract but had no idea how to speak German [...] I bought a book so that I would learn how to say "yes" and "no" and went directly to the priest of the parish with the book. From then on all doors opened for me. He himself found me a Catholic group to take lessons after work; he put me in touch with other Spanish people [...].'*

(Maj\_Maj\_01)

Being Catholic and resorting to a Catholic reference (e.g., a Catholic German priest) when facing a new context returned important gains to this participant. Specifically, she was able to learn a language, adapt to a new country, become part of a community in a new environment, etc.

The Evangelical group offers a completely different story. Their discourse is richer and even though many of them start their answers by stating that there are no barriers they go on elaborating what are sometimes serious limitations indeed.

*'With my husband's family, yes we have [experienced barriers]. We were considered a bit like the black sheep. And then my mother, my mother was a bit upset when we didn't baptise the children, but then since we continued to be more or less like the same ... I would say 'Mommy, is it the case that you've seen any change in us?' Perhaps a positive change. [...] But I know she was worried about sects and things like that.'*

(Min\_Maj\_01)

The above testimony reflects family controversy resulting from adhering to Evangelism insofar as it probably means distance from Catholicism. In other words,

this woman probably belonged to a Catholic family. The remark on sects can be viewed as an illustration of profound ignorance whereby anything outside Catholicism is considered strange, different, and by that token, negative.

The same participant mentions:

*'I haven't had problems with friends ... in fact, I don't know, sometimes you say you're Evangelical and people become curious about it. [...] But here there have been people who had a very hard time, right? Even some people were in jail. A long time ago, yes, yes, there are people who have stories, right?'*

(Min\_Maj\_01)

The quote below illustrates how this Evangelical interviewee, although she herself has not experienced problems with the law, is aware that serious barriers existed for the Evangelical community in the past.

Another Evangelical woman brings up negative family reactions that she perceives as barriers:

*'Sometimes, even your own family criticises you [...] people are critical because they think you are exaggerating. But I can't do it [...] I want my family to be a decent family.'*

(Min\_Maj\_02)

This fragment suggests that Evangelicals are sometimes perceived as unnecessarily strict or more so than Catholics.

One Evangelical respondent distinctly acknowledges to have experienced a lot of drawbacks because of her faith:

*'I have experienced a lot of barriers. Not now. Not now because now it's almost fashionable to be Evangelical. But 45 years ago ... to be a protestant was a risk, right? It was a big risk. The use to imprison our priests, they have thrown stones at them ... I think now we are a bit more civilised.'*

(Min\_Maj\_04)

In a similar vein, this Evangelical woman tells a real story of oppression, violence and abuse against Evangelists:

*'When he [an acquaintance] was young and converted, they [law enforcers] made him kneel before an image - we do not accept that of course, because God is not a piece of wood or a piece of ... God is alive - and then the sergeant put a gun to his head and said "you either kneel or I shoot you", "well then shoot me". But then another church member intervened ... so, yes, threats, being fired from jobs, being stared at, spitted on ... So yes, we have had limitations, stones being thrown at our door, tearing up our Bibles ... but it seems, thank God, that people are more civilised now. Or perhaps they really don't care about any religion, which is sad, not one [Catholicism] nor the other [Evangelism].'*

(Min\_Maj\_04)

The interviewee above describes a very violent situation of complete abuse of authority and humiliation. She then admits things have improved but she is seemingly regretful that the situation has become better for the wrong reasons, namely, religion is no longer important to anyone.

Another Evangelical woman acknowledges she may have experienced difficulties but her attitude is positive as well as forgiving. Moreover, her arguments stem from her faith. In other words, because of her religion she harbours no grudge against those who discriminate against her on the basis of her religion:

*'Perhaps I have [experienced disadvantages] in some area but since they were small [disadvantages] it hasn't influenced me. Moreover [...] since I believe in God and Evangelism, I also believe in Catholicism, so I won't criticise other religions. I need to respect because I know God is in people's hearts and that is not religion that saves people but God who saves [them]. So, perhaps there have been some criticism sometimes but has not influenced me negatively.'*

(Min\_Maj\_02)

This woman says to have experienced barriers in her home country due to her civil or marital status (e.g., she got a divorce) not her religion:

*'No, [I haven't experienced disadvantages] not here, thank God. There, [country of origin] a woman gets divorced and ... although not anymore. It's just that I've been here for 20 years. So, 20 years ago perhaps there was more prejudice and things like that. But not today, in fact now I feel respected, valued ...'*

(Min\_Maj\_02)

The next answer offered by an Evangelical woman is striking. First she mentions barriers are nonexistent. Next, she brings up the weighty issue of being discriminated against in the job place because of thinking differently:

*'Well, these days it is a bit difficult to find barriers. Well, perhaps one barrier is that sometimes we are denied jobs because they [employers] don't want people who think differently, or when people say something that is not nice. [...] But actual barriers, well, no, I have not experienced any.'*

(Min\_Maj\_03)

Surprisingly, this participant insists that there are no real barriers nonetheless. This begs the question of what a real barrier is to this participant. It is likely that she is referring to legal barriers - e.g., formally, there are no job restrictions based on religious (or any) consideration. So, subtle barriers do not seem as important to her even though as her own words illustrate soft barriers can have tremendous impact.

The same Evangelical woman offers more interesting views on what disadvantages are, in this case, how others (presumably non-Evangelical or non-religious) view them:

*'Look, that's a very important question because apparently I have disadvantages. Why? Because I am a woman, young, a lot of people say I am attractive although I don't think I am, I mean, I think I am normal. But people say I am at a disadvantage because I am Evangelical, because, apparently, according to most people, I am missing out on a lot of things. But those things I may be missing out on according to them, I don't feel them as a loss; it's things like going around doing things ... it's not just because of my religion but because I am just not interested in them. Go out every day, get drunk, do inappropriate things, do drugs, those kinds of things ... be with a boy today, with another one tomorrow ... These things have more to do with moral than religion. What I mean is, to some people, this is to be at a disadvantage but to me it is not.'*

(Min\_Maj\_03)

Apparently, non-adherents view religion as constraining behaviour in undesirable ways. However, this woman sounds somewhat frustrated to have to explain that she doesn't experience restrictions and limitations because she is in fact uninterested in all the elements she apparently needs to avoid. She insists that she would not engage in such behaviours anyway and that it doesn't that much to do with being Evangelical. This resonates with issues discussed in Chapter 4, such as dress code in the Muslim community. Some Muslim participants expressed dissatisfaction with



how others perceive their dress code as a sign of oppression when they in fact chose the hijab freely. It is interesting how outsiders view religions as imposing constraints and not as people choosing to adhere to a religion precisely because of the social norms it includes. In other words, perhaps this Evangelical woman was attracted to Evangelism because of the values this faith promotes, so, to her, following such code of conduct is not an external imposition, but rather her intrinsic code of conduct.

When asked about advantages and limitations Muslims offer a different set of perspectives. For Shia women, barriers relate to the usual limitations other foreigners may experience, their nationality, and society's ignorance and tendency to stereotyping. Religion is hardly ever brought up as the primary source of these barriers.

One Shia respondent explains when asked about existing barriers:

*'Well, paperwork. Paperwork but like all foreigners. It is difficult ... not so much if you come with a purpose, with all your paperwork taken care of, then you get a residence card without difficulty. As for social integration, I am very good at it ... That [proficiency in Spanish] helps a lot because I can communicate with anyone.'*

(Min\_Min\_02)

This woman believes the limitations she experiences are to be expected due to residence and citizenship requirements. She acknowledges that these apply to all immigrants and that there is no connection to religion. She discusses personal traits and skills (e.g., she's extrovert and proficient in Spanish) as personal resources that help her participate and integrate into the society.

The next Shia woman first mentions she has not experienced barriers but then complains that she is associated with immigrants - she is probably referring to Moroccan immigrants:

*'The truth is I have not [experienced disadvantages]. I have felt included and always wanted to participate in things ... perhaps simply if I am from abroad I am associated with the worse [of the foreigner category], the first thing that comes to mind, because it is precisely what they [Spaniards] have seen here, and you're asked questions and they [Spaniards] have prejudices which,*

*honestly, sometimes ... make you lose interest and enthusiasm about participating or being social.'*

(Min\_Min\_03)

It is interesting how her testimony does illustrate how societal prejudices and stereotypes trigger disinterest and disconnection despite what she describes as an innate orientation to participation. The same respondent says:

*'In general, the truth is, [I feel] well [included] and, in general, comfortable. I have been working, doing a bit of everything, studying, and in general all good but there are always small things that make you feel bad, a bit uncomfortable. For example, "where are you from?" "From Lebanon" "Well I met a Moroccan who ... " To start a sentence like that simply doesn't make you feel the same. Or they hear Lebanon and think terrorist, bomb, war, or they ask you "have you worn a bikini here? Do you also wear it in your country?" Comments like that which display ignorance and lack of familiarity with other types of immigration.'*

(Min\_Min\_03)

Even though this woman admits she is satisfied because she held jobs and was able to study and lead a normal life in Spain, her words suggest that she expected more. In the first fragment she recalls feeling enthusiastic about getting involved socially but then turned off when facing certain attitudes. Clearly she does not appreciate being associated to Moroccan immigrants and is uncomfortable with the general lack of information and knowledge about Muslim countries. Not all Muslim countries are equally conservative or have the same social norms. This woman expresses disappointment about the unfamiliarity of Spaniards with diversity in Islam and Islamic immigration.

The same Shia woman mentions her nationality carries more weight than her religion. Also she specifies what are uncomfortable situations for her, namely first interactions. It is important that she feels included and accepted at her workplace and with situations outside short encounters. It is natural that she feels uneasy and awkward in short interactions - social psychological research demonstrates that it is precisely in these situations when stereotypes are more likely to emerge; when individuals lack specific information about those with whom they interact, people draw and rely on beliefs and assumptions about groups so as to fill informational gaps given that minimal information is necessary to initiate social interaction:

*'I think my nationality [has more impact on others] than my religion. I am not saying I always feel uncomfortable, it is just small situations, short encounters,*

*in my daily routine I am working and with time you become one of the group, they know you. Discomfort occurs when people don't know you, at the beginning of a conversation, or the first interactions, which last very little.'*

(Min\_Min\_03)

When asked about barriers and limitations, a woman from Lebanon replies:

*'Well, not really ... The only time I felt a bit of racism was when I arrived in Spain because I had forgotten my Spanish. So, I couldn't really say "I am from XXXX [name of Latin American country]" because "but, how come you can't speak Spanish then?" So ...'*

(Min\_Min\_05)

This participant discusses barriers experienced as both the result of not speaking the language but, more importantly, having to explain herself as to why given that she was born in Latin America but was raised in Lebanon. Her diverse background becomes a barrier when other people find the 'pieces' contradictory.

Sunni participants seem to experience important barriers due to their faith although they try to downplay them, presumably to avoid negative feelings. A young Sunni woman describes it like this:

*'Well ... for example ... when I ... I do Ramadan, right? And people come and start eating in front of you and start laughing ... I think it is funny because it shows ignorance. [...] Or when you go pray ... it's always like "and why do you do this?" And then what I hate the most is that they always associate religion with terrorism. When people ask "where are you from", "my parents are Moroccan", "then you are Al Qaeda" and so on. I am not traumatised but I did get upset when they said "watch out, you you're going to bomb us" and things like that. Those years of 9/11 and 3/11, you know? If you're ignorant it's not my fault but still makes me feel bad.'*

(Maj\_Min\_01)

The interviewee quoted above discusses disrespectful behaviour such as eating in front of her during Ramadan and making fun of it, demanding explanation for her behaviour (e.g., praying) but points out that what bothers her the most is when people associate Islam and terrorism. Even though she is convinced this is an erroneous association she cannot avoid feeling misery and discomfort.

An older Sunni woman discusses prejudice in very practical terms:

*'Well sometimes you feel a bit rejected, but it doesn't matter because even Spanish people feel that sometimes. Sometimes it happens when you change not just cities but neighbourhoods ... There is no need to dwell on these things and try to find an explanation for it because it is normal and could happen to you in your own country, in Morocco.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

It is not so much that she excuses this behaviour, as it is that she does not believe such responses are prompted by her religion, or her situation within a given context. Conversely, she believes these incidents are commonplace everywhere and could happen to anyone. Therefore, why dwell on them?

The same woman acknowledges Muslims have a minority status but takes comfort in the fact that Muslims have nonetheless 'a presence'.

*'There is one thing, we may be a minority but our presence is felt. [In Seville, Cordoba, Granada] these people, almost all have ... there are people of pure Spanish Christian blood, but there is something Arab in their behaviour. Where that comes from, we don't know, from contact, coexistence ... from culture ... Arab culture is felt wherever you go.'*

(Maj\_Min\_02)

Another Sunni interviewee sees her diverse background as problematic. She is second generation Moroccan (children of immigrant parents, first in a family line to be born in the new country) and describes how others still don't consider her Spanish or Moroccan:

*'Well, it affects you a little, since your parents are from Morocco even though you're born here ... and in a way, like I always say, you're from nowhere. You're not from here because even though you were born here your parents were not ... and then you're not from there, from Morocco, either because "the way you dress is different from ours". It affects you, it affects you a lot because it is you against the world.'*

(Min\_Maj\_03)

In addition, this woman feels religion, and the social norms attached to it, affects her social relations, her participation in activities with friends, and so on. She experiences it as a major problem because all her friends are non-religious (she made these friendships before she embraced Islam herself) and so she doesn't feel

understood or at liberty to describe her personal decision to embrace Islam and the new behavioural norms she must adhere to:

*'Islam is something that carries a profound influence in your life. It is not like Christianity, where you go to church on Sundays and that's it. Islam is a heavier load, meaning, you need to pray five times a day, you always worry about behaving well, about not hurting anybody, dress code is very important. It [embracing Islam] has affected how I relate to my friends, my relationship with my friends ... there you are, having a drink and: "I have to go pray", you know? Where can I wash up? Where can I pray? I try to keep them [friends] but in a way things have changed. In a way my friends did not understand my change, before my friends are like I used to be, meaning we were all agnostic or atheists, we never talked about religion. I don't have Moroccan friends; all my friends are Spanish. [...] My change "now I believe in God", they saw it as negative ... something like "this is not you". It is different, I also thought it was different and I didn't know how to explain things to them ... I also felt a bit attacked ... So this somewhat grew ... not being able to share things with them ...'*

(Min\_Maj\_03)

A Spanish Sunni expresses similar concerns. Again, it is people's perceptions of contradictory information that creates barriers for some women. We have seen that not speaking Spanish and being born in Latin America triggers puzzlement; being Spanish and having Moroccan parents displaces people both socio-cultural contexts, Morocco and Spain; being Spanish and Muslim is seen as suspicious. However, this Spanish Sunni woman asserts:

*'I am just another one. And I show myself as I am. And there are many other people like me, who are different. They are different in the sense that they don't follow what's advocated to define oneself as Spanish because it is very basic ... Call yourself Spanish because you like cured ham ... it's very primitive to define yourself as Spanish you go to bullfighting.'*

(Maj\_Min\_05)

The quote above illustrates that this woman believes change is required from others not her. She adds:

*'It [barriers] is not something that depends on me ... it is not my initiative it is simply that society still has not defined its mechanisms to understand itself as multicultural. It [society] is still at its infancy ... identifying that it wants to be a multicultural society.'*

(Maj\_Min\_05)

Finally, another Sunni respondent had interesting observations on gender (Maj\_Min\_05). She described that she experiences disadvantages at the workplace

because she doesn't follow prescribed gender norms. Unfortunately, she discussed all this when the interview was over, the recorder stopped, and so a verbatim narration cannot be offered. However, notes were taken and essentially, what she pointed out is that women in Spain act in a flirtatious and sensual manner toward work colleagues. In her mind that constituted a lack of professionalism and something that she was unwilling to do. She didn't explicitly mention this had been a disadvantage to her but the way she described it, it certainly triggered feelings of isolation and alienation.

#### **4.4.7 Concluding remarks: Section 4.4**

Participants aligned along three major lines when discussing citizenship, namely, citizenship as contributing/participating based on religious/ethical values, active/good citizenship as an Islamic obligation, and third, citizenship as progress from a more rational and experience-based (less religious/ethical) foundation. Many participants, particularly Christian women, were unsure what citizenship meant and offered very uncomplicated views. This suggests that at least part of the Spanish population may not have developed a sense of unity through citizenship. Participants made very few references legal dimensions of citizenship. A plausible explanation is that most participants were either Spaniards, second-generation immigrants, or immigrants who had been in Spain for a considerable amount of time. It is plausible that such as obtaining citizenship were no longer relevant or salient to them. Finally, interviewees implied citizenship is a broader concept than the formal definition related to civic duty or nationality. Often interviewees invoked images of belonging, selflessness, and respect, thereby implying a more emotional, fluid, multifaceted and personal dimension. Finally, interviewees made scarce references to political aspects of citizenship. This may be so because Franco's dictatorship was characterised by authoritarian values of subordination, obedience, and maintenance of the status quo. The educational system, however, was not very successful in promoting the values desired by the government. As a result young people became apathetic and uninterested in politics rather than successfully indoctrinated.

More recently, in 2006, the Spanish government introduced a new subject in the school system, Education for Citizenship. The incorporation of this discipline into the academic curricula was made under the Recommendation (2002) 12 of the Council

of Europe, which advises member states 'to make education for democratic citizenship a priority objective of educational policy-making and reforms'. Among the contents of this matter the Recommendation mentions 'civic, political or human rights education'. By following these guidelines, the new law of education introduced Education for Citizenship on a mandatory basis across over the cycle in primary and secondary education. The aim of the subject 'is to offer all students a space for reflection, analysis and study about the fundamental characteristics of a democratic regime, the principles and rights set forth in the Spanish Constitution and the treaties and declarations of human rights, as well as the common values that constitute the foundation of democratic citizenship in a global context'. In addition, Education for Citizenship is intended to help young people skills such as learning to live together in a pluralistic society, acquiring civic virtues such as cooperation, tolerance, critical respect for different lifestyles and human dignity as a basic element for coexistence. In this sense, the strengthening of attitudes as discussion, dialogue and non-violent resolution of conflicts becomes a key point. It also focuses on the critical analysis of media information.

The discussion above connects well with the second topic explored in Section 4.4 namely how participants understand multiculturalism. Our data largely illustrate how the concept has yet to permeate some segments of Spanish society. Although the women interviewed cannot be considered representative of the broader Spanish population, it is worth stressing that the overwhelming majority of participants were hardly familiar with the concept and the in-depth implications of a multicultural society. Many of the women interviewed, particularly Christian women, were not even sure how to define the term. Discourses on multiculturalism among participants in our study reveal that the notion of a pluralistic society is still not fully grasped and has not entirely permeated in all its dimensions.

Few respondents discussed multiculturalism in positive terms. For example there are very few references to the cultural advantages of diverse contexts - e.g., diverse music, art, cuisine etc. These appear to be unimportant or unknown to most of the women interviewed - with the exception of a Sunni participant who discussed the underuse of Spain's rich cultural heritage. Importantly, this lack of awareness may have a positive side. Discourses have neither become empty or superficial because

political correctness does not seem to affect participants much. Simply put, there is an important level of unfamiliarity and cluelessness about what a multicultural society is, should be, as well as what its potential advantages and challenges are.

Some interviewees however showed a marked multicultural sensitivity and advocated a diverse society expressing interest and eagerness to achieve it. Finally, most interviewees agree that other cultures need to be respected and accepted. Sometimes the wording suggests a somewhat ethnocentric view whereby the majority culture must accept newcomers but references about the benefits to be obtained in return are often missing.

The last part of section 4.4 offers an analysis of the barriers and advantages participants have experienced to their participation and integration in society. Our data suggest that there are many subtle barriers even though interviewees, in general, were not extremely aware of them. Most participants showed a forgiving attitude and believed the limitations they experienced were not 'real barriers'. This further proves, at least according to these interviews, that Spain still needs to develop a more advanced framework regarding discrimination and prejudice. In other words, the women interviewed were not even aware of the seriousness of some of their grievances.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter first examined participants' identity, particularly their religious identity, and religious practices (Section 4.2). The main finding is that for many of the women in our study, identity and religious experiences are complex, situational and often used as a resource for integration, and more generally for being content and satisfied in life.

Second, we looked at participants' gender views by studying how they discussed gender roles, gender equality, as well as the women's movements and feminism. The main finding of this section is that our participants still hold largely conservative views of men and women; also, this seems independent from religious adherence if, perhaps, some of the Sunni women were the most traditional. Views of feminism are



negative for the most part and associated with extremism. Women's movements, however, are viewed in a more positive and diverse light.

Finally, we looked at citizenship and multiculturalism and found that the notion of unity in pluralism has yet to permeate participants more thoroughly. Understandings of citizenship were fragmented and the idea of a diverse society is still not fully understood. Participants endorsed basic principles such as respect and tolerance but appeared rather clueless about how to put all that into practice and, in general, what to expect from and be willing to give within a culturally diverse society. Discourses on multiculturalism reveal that the idea of a pluralistic society is still not fully grasped. Last, Section 4 looked at the barriers and advantages participants experience to participation in society. Our data suggest that there still exist many subtle barriers even though interviewees are not even aware sometimes of what constitutes a disadvantage and why, which suggests that Spain still needs to develop a more advanced framework regarding discrimination and prejudice.

## **5 CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Overall Conclusions**

In this study we have asked whether and how women within Christian and Muslim faith traditions use their religious identities and practices to define and mark their identities as women and as citizens, and how religious organizations they participate in provide opportunities and/or constraints for their citizenship practice.

We conclude from our study that religion is a flexible resource that individuals can use to support their own identities, beliefs and practice, and as such it may have empowering effects. Religious identity and belonging to a religious community is of crucial importance in our interviewees' lives. The practicing of religion is viewed by the women as intimately linked with responsible behaviour and a deep concern for the well-being of others. We have noted a high degree of participation in civil society through voluntary work for the particular congregation/mosque or the wider religious community. Our study confirms the important role of religion as 'social glue', and as a site of inclusion, participation and community cohesion. Based on these findings, we find the notion of religious citizenship to be meaningful.

Our respondents describe and clearly appreciate much of the impact of women's movements, and they support major items of the movement's agenda including women's rights, equal opportunities, and women's empowerment. However, they do not identify with the concept of 'feminism'. They demonstrate support for the ideal of gender equality, but in terms of complementary gender roles (and often with a focus on the family rather than the individual). Thus, their views represent an important challenge to the ideal of gender equality as 'sameness'.

#### **Religion, identity and meaning**

We examined how participants describe their identity, including their religious identity, and religious practices. Also, we explored admired religious figures thereby obtaining a different perspective on what participants value within their religious traditions as well as an indirect look of their understandings of men and women.

We learned that for all religious women except Catholic participants, identity, religious identity and the religious experience is complex, multifaceted, and situational. For these women, religion is malleable and often becomes as a resource for social integration and personal satisfaction. Conversely, Catholics seem to view religion in more static or fixed fashion; thus, their discourses often offer a rather uncomplicated view of their religious identity.

### **Gender equality, feminism, and the women's movement**

Our work examined participants' perceptions of gender roles, gender equality, as well as the women's movements and feminism. While most participants endorse the notion of 'equal value' and equal rights for men and women, they still hold traditional gender views and most either ignore or object to feminism and the women's movement - although the latter is viewed in a more positive and flexible manner. In fact, participants' views of feminism are predominantly negative with feminism being associated with extremism and purposeless struggle.

### **Citizenship**

Our study examined perceptions of citizenship and multiculturalism and found that the notions of unity in pluralism have yet to permeate more thoroughly.

Understandings of citizenship were fragmented, and the requirements for and advantages of a diverse society were not fully grasped by participants. Participants endorsed basic principles such as respect and tolerance but appeared to experience difficulties in connecting abstract ideas about respect and tolerance into everyday practice in a multicultural society. In general, participants seemed unsure of what to expect from (and be willing to give in return) a culturally diverse society. Discourses on multiculturalism reveal that the idea of a pluralistic society is still in its infancy in Spain. Finally, we examined perceived barriers and advantages to participation in society. Our data suggest that there still exist many subtle barriers even though interviewees are not even aware sometimes of what constitutes a disadvantage and why, which suggests that Spain still needs to develop a more advanced framework regarding discrimination and prejudice.

## 5.2 Good practice and policy recommendations

For faith groups and women's movement organizations, our good practice recommendations are:

- For faith groups to develop equal opportunities for women to take on roles that are currently preserved for men.
- For women's movement organizations to engage in dialogue with religious women in order to increase understanding and create policy alliances on gender equality issues between women of faith and secular women.

For governmental institutions at various levels, our policy recommendations are:

- Local Authorities should ensure that all public buildings, or any plots of land/buildings for which planning permission is sought, for the purpose of a Mosque, are inspected to secure that they include a designated space where women can participate in collective worship.
- All governmental institutions should insist on equal representation of women and men when faith groups are invited to hearings, committees, religious dialogue, etc.
- Public funding should require compliance with gender equality legislation.
- Equal access to public funding for majority and minority faith groups.
- Motivate and fund dialogue and cooperation between women's groups across religious beliefs and secular beliefs.
- No public ban on the use of headscarf (hijab) in public spaces.
- Governments to address the contradiction between freedom of religion and women's rights in national and international contexts.
- Promote religious tolerance and thus support community cohesion.
- Address challenges arising from the ideal of complementary gender roles. To what extent does such an ideal collide with the notion that women's economic independence is 'the bottom line' of gender equality?

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## **Appendix Topic Guides**

### **WP4 Strand 2: 'Gender, religion and citizenship' Topic guide (Christian participants)**

#### **1. Preparation**

Introduce yourself and the project;  
share information letter, FEMCIT leaflet,  
and go through consent form and permission to record.

#### **2. Citizenship in the religious arena – Religious identity**

I'd like to start by asking some general questions about your religious activities:

What motivated you to start attending Church of England (a particular issue or experience?),

Do you have any specific roles in your congregation?

Can you tell me about the types of activities you are involved in/participate in within your religious community? (attention: are any of these activities for women only, or are they gender-mixed)

Do you attend any women's meeting?

What does women's fellowship/meetings within and outside your congregation mean to you in your everyday life – how important is it to you?

How would you describe who you are – what is your identity?

How important is religion to your identity? And in your everyday life?

Are there any women in your religious tradition that you admire? (historical or contemporary figures) Why do you admire them?

Are there any men in your religious tradition that you admire (historical or contemporary figures)? Why do you admire them?

Are there any discussions within your religious community about the roles and positions that women and men can take on - both within the religious community itself and outside it (in public life)?

At this point in time, do you feel that gender relations within your religious community are under pressure or changing, or are they more or less stable?

### **3. Gendered citizenship – Gender and religion**

You belong to a women's group within your church. Are there any special issues that are important to you as a woman within the context of your own faith or religion?

In your view, is there an ideal role for a woman within Christianity today?

In your view, is there an ideal role for a man within Christianity today?

How do you view the relationship between the ideal role for women prescribed by your own religious tradition, and the roles that women have in today's society? Is there any conflict between the two, or not?

'Gender equality' can mean different things to different people. Some people may say that gender equality means that women and men have the same status and rights and can do exactly the same things, while others may say that women and men have equal value but should concentrate on doing different things and complement each other.

How does the term gender equality relate to your own understanding of the relationship between women and men?

The women's movement has for a long time supported the development of women's rights in different spheres of society.

What is your understanding of the importance of the women's movement in general?

Has the women's movement had any effects on your religious tradition, as you see it?

What about your own personal life and beliefs – have you been influenced by the women's movement?

What does the word 'feminism' mean to you? Is feminism in your understanding of the word something that you identify yourself with at all, if so, how?

### **4. Towards full citizenship - Perception of citizenship**

When I say the word 'citizenship', what do you think about?

What does citizenship mean to you?

How would you describe your own nationality? (British? English?) Do you feel British? Do you feel accepted and included as a citizen in Britain?

What do you think makes a good citizen? (and, conversely, a bad citizen? Alternatively, use the notions of 'active' and 'passive' citizen to solicit answer)

Have you or anyone close to you experienced any *barriers or limitations* in terms of participation in society due to your religious faith?

Have you experienced any *advantages* in terms of participation due to your religious faith? (Further explanation: In this country, your own religious tradition can be considered *the majority religion/a minority religion*. In other words, you are a member of a *majority* religion in this country. Have you, in these respects, experienced any barriers/limitations or advantages?)

To what extent do you feel included or excluded in society, considering your own religious faith and belief?

Or, as a member of a particular faith in this country, to what extent do you think you can exercise full citizenship in this country?

Are there other aspects of your identity that affect the way you feel about inclusion or exclusion? (e.g., ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, age....)

What does multiculturalism mean to you, or the fact that people from different cultural backgrounds are living together in society?

Is multiculturalism important to you in your religiously based work?

In our research project, FEMCIT, we are trying to develop a multi-dimensional understanding of citizenship. We are thinking that a notion of full citizenship would imply that both women and men can participate in many different arenas – be it on the political arena, the social and economic arenas, on private arenas such as the family, and in the religious arena.

Do you think it makes sense to talk about citizenship in the religious arena? Why/why not?

## **5. Additional aspects of citizenship related to civil society and work–Civil Activities**

Do you do any voluntary work outside the church? (how often, how long, what is your motivation?)

Do you participate in any other community groups? Campaigns, protests, petitions? (how often, how long, what is your motivation?)

Do you actively use trans-national or international contacts? To what extent are such ties important to your identity?

Did you vote in the last political election? Do you intend to vote in the next election?

You participate in all the activities you have described to me during the interview. Would you say it matters to you whether or not these activities can contribute to bringing about change in society?

Do you have a job in addition to your participation in the religious activities? What kind of job, and is it part-time or full-time? How do you like your job situation? If not working, how do you like your situation?

Do you care for children? How do you organise childcare?

## **6. Ending**

If not already discussed, obtain details related to age, marital status, children, education, occupational status, ethnicity and nationality, how long in this country (if not from birth).

Thank you for your time. Reiterate anonymity. Obtain contact information for future correspondence (thank you letter/note and project findings).

Ask if they would recommend anyone they know to be interviewed by you. Ask if they are willing to give you contact details of such persons.

## **WP4 Strand 2: 'Gender, religion and citizenship' Topic guide (Muslim participants)**

### **1. Preparation**

Introduce yourself and the project;  
share information letter, FEMCIT leaflet,  
and go through consent form and permission to record.

### **2. Citizenship in the religious arena**

How would you describe who you are – what is your identity?

How important is religion to your identity? And in your everyday life?

What mosque do you attend?

What motivated you to start going to this particular mosque? (a particular issue or experience?),

and when did you become involved?

What motivated you to become involved in religious activity?

Do you have any specific roles in your mosque?

Can you tell me about the types of activities you are involved in/participate in within your religious community? (attention: are any of these activities for women only, or are they gender-mixed)

Do you attend any women's meeting?

What does women's meetings within and outside your mosque mean to you in your everyday life – how important is it to you?

Are there any women in your religious tradition that you admire? (historical or contemporary figures) Why do you admire them?

Are there any men in your religious tradition that you admire (historical or contemporary figures) Why do you admire them?

Are there any discussions within your religious community about the roles and positions that women and men can take on - both within the religious community itself and outside it (in public life)?

At this point in time, do you feel that gender relations within your religious community are under pressure or changing, or are they more or less stable?



### **3. Gendered citizenship**

You belong to a women's group within your mosque. Are there any special issues that are important to you as a woman within the context of your own faith?

In your view, is there an ideal role for a woman within your faith today, or, does your faith influence your view of women's roles?

In your view, is there an ideal role for a man within your religious tradition today, or, does your religion influence your view of men's roles?

How do you view the relationship between the ideal role for women prescribed by your own religious tradition, and the roles that women have in today's society? Is there any conflict between the two, or not?

'Gender equality' can mean different things to different people. Some people may say that gender equality means that women and men have the same status and rights and can do exactly the same things, while others may say that women and men have equal value but should concentrate on doing different things and complement each other.

How does the term gender equality relate to your own understanding of the relationship between women and men?

The women's movement has for a long time supported the development of women's rights in different spheres of society.

What is your understanding of the importance of the women's movement in general?

Has the women's movement had any effects on your faith, as you see it?

What about your own personal life and beliefs – have you been influenced by the women's movement?

What does the word 'feminism' mean to you? Is feminism in your understanding of the word something that you identify yourself with at all, if so, how?

### **4. Towards full citizenship**

When I say the word 'citizenship', what do you think about?

What does citizenship mean to you?

How would you describe your own nationality? (British? English?) Do you feel British? Do you feel accepted and included as a citizen in Britain?

What do you think makes a good citizen? (and, conversely, a bad citizen? Alternatively, use the notions of 'active' and 'passive' citizen to solicit answer)

Have you or anyone close to you experienced any *barriers or limitations* in terms of participation in society due to your religious faith?

Have you experienced any *advantages* in terms of participation due to your religious faith? (Further explanation: In this country, your own religious tradition can be considered *the majority religion/a minority religion*. In other words, you are a member of a *minority* religion in this country. Have you, in these respects, experienced any barriers/limitations or advantages?)

To what extent do you feel included or excluded in society, considering your own religious faith and belief?

Or, as a member of a particular faith in this country, to what extent do you think you can exercise full citizenship in this country?

Are there other of your identity that affect the way you feel about inclusion or exclusion? (e.g., ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, age....)

What does the fact that people from different cultural backgrounds are living together in society mean to you? Or multiculturalism

Is multiculturalism important to you in your religiously based work?

In our research project, FEMCIT, we are trying to develop a multi-dimensional understanding of citizenship. We are thinking that a notion of full citizenship would imply that both women and men can participate in many different arenas – be it on the political arena, the social and economic arenas, on private arenas such as the family, and in the religious arena.

Do you think it makes sense to talk about citizenship in the religious arena? Why/why not?

## **5. Additional aspects of citizenship related to civil society and work**

Do you do any voluntary work outside the church? (how often, how long, what is your motivation?)

Do you participate in any other community groups? Campaigns, protests, petitions? (how often, how long, what is your motivation?)

Do you actively use trans-national or international contacts? To what extent are such ties important to your identity?

Did you vote in the last political election? Do you intend to vote in the next election?

You participate in all the activities you have described to me during the interview. Would you say it matters to you whether or not these activities can contribute to bringing about change in society?

Do you have a job in addition to your participation in the religious activities? What kind of job, and is it part-time or full-time? How do you like your job situation? If not working, how do you like your situation?

Do you care for children? How do you organise childcare?

## **6. Ending**

If not already discussed, obtain details related to age, marital status, children, education, occupational status, ethnicity and nationality, how long in this country (if not from birth).

Thank you for your time. Reiterate anonymity. Obtain contact information for future correspondence (thank you letter/note and project findings).

Ask if they would recommend anyone they know to be interviewed by you.

Ask if they are willing to give you contact details of such persons.